

THE HOLIDAY / HOUSE PLANT ISSUE

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TEXAS
MASTER  GARDENER
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION
Galveston County

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

The Joy of House Plants



MG Kathy Maines (left) with MGs Rachel Montemayor (center) and Sharon Zaal (right) at Fall Festival.

Photo by MG Karolyn Gephart

"Plants give us oxygen for the lungs and for the soul." — Terri Guillemets

Plants make me happy. I enjoy looking at them. They help clean the air. These are some of the benefits of house plants. We are very fortunate in that we can grow in our own outdoor gardens what many in other parts of Texas can only consider to be house plants. This does not mean that we do not have house plants. Quite the contrary. With COVID-19 there has been a surge in outdoor gardening and house plants. According to gardenpals.com, house plant demand increased by 18 percent during COVID-19 and 66 percent of households have at least one houseplant. They add that 15 minutes of interaction with houseplants reduces stress levels and having a house plant in your workspace improves productivity by 15 percent and leads to fewer sick days.

Who doesn't have at least one house plant? Maybe an orchid, bromeliad, or passalong plant that you hold dear. Christmas cactus and poinsettia

are favorite house plants for the holiday season. African violets seem to be making a comeback into our homes. Then there are those of us who bring our dwarf citrus and plumeria inside for the winter. Do these count as house plants?

According to Doug Welsh, Texas A&M University Horticulturist Emeritus, "Thus the task of the house plant owner/enthusiast is to select plants that can best withstand indoor conditions of a specific location." <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/publications/house-plant/houseplant.html>. We are reminded of the importance of the right plant in the right place.

This newsletter focusing on house plants will help you get through those wet, windy, cold winter days and into spring. I hope you enjoy it. I know I will!

Kathy Maines

Kathy Maines

Here come the Holidays



Karolyn Gephart

We are heading toward the countdown to a new year. The holidays with possibly a few cool days are headed our way. Time to turn our attention on indoor plants and how to best care for them. This issue will cover types of easy to grow varieties, pests that prey on house plants, common mistakes and the *Queen of Houseplants* with 116 in her home. Need a vintage pastime that could be gifted? Macrame is back and you too could do it! MG Mary Jane Fortney will help you get there in her article. Flash back to October and revisit the Fall Festival in photos.

Enjoy three great holiday recipes from Sandra Gervais in *Seasonal Bites*.

A round of applause to the 30 new interns who complete their textbook learning this month and will begin their outdoor Discovery Garden hours. Happy to have you, Class of 2022!

New Book Club books for 2023 are inside this issue as well as New Year's Resolutions for Master Gardeners. Add another resolution to the bunch:

in 2023 why not send in a photo for the Photo Gallery or a topic you would like to see covered in an issue. Feedback is exciting to receive. New ideas, questions and input welcome. Send to kbgephart@comcast.net.

Happy November & December! Make both months memorable!

Karolyn Gephart

Karolyn Gephart



MG Cheryl Brueggeman at Fall Festival. Photo by MG Karolyn Gephart

Photos by MG Michelle Thompson



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Health Benefits of Indoor Plants



Bronia Michejenko
GCMG 2015

There are many benefits to plants. Plants enrich our lives, improve our health and wellbeing, connect us to nature and are essential to our survival. Researchers have shown that plants can help clean, oxygenate and moisturize the air, reduce noise and stress, stimulate creativity as well as adding warmth, color and joy to our lives. (Wolverton 1989)

Phytoremediation are practices using plants to clean chemically contaminated soil, air and water. In this case, we use the ability of plants to scrub airborne volatile organic compounds from the air. A NASA study conducted in 1980s suggests that chemicals such as benzene, trichloroethylene and formaldehyde common in many household items such as paints, adhesives, aerosols, rubber and plastics, were reduced by plants and their associated microorganisms. An article in the *Houston Chronicle* May 1, 2020 stated that over 80 percent of volatile organic compounds can be removed every 24 hours.

Researchers found that plants decreased dust and mold in rooms. Leaves and other parts of the plants act as natural filters to catch allergens and other airborne particles. Common low-light houseplants like Chinese evergreen or the Peace lily are good filter plants. (Claudio L. 2011).

Plants transpire, which means the water they absorb through their roots, circulates to the leaves and then evaporates into the air. A six-foot Areca palm can transpire one liter of water a day. Houseplants that act as natural humidifiers include Boston fern, Spider plant, Peace lily, Snake plant, and Rubber plant.

During the day, plants use photosynthesis by using the energy from sunlight and converting carbon dioxide into carbohydrates and oxygen and release excess oxygen. At night plants absorb oxygen and release carbon dioxide. There are some plants that release oxygen at night which include Aloe and Snake plant that make them ideal for the bedroom.

Five easy to grow indoor plants for the beginner:

Spider Plant (*Chlorophytum comosum*) A NASA study found that the spider plant can remove up to 90 percent of harmful indoor air pollutants. Spider plants tolerate low light, are safe for pets and also help remove ammonia odors from pet urine.

Soil- provide a general well-draining potting soil.

Light - prefers bright indirect sunlight and can tolerate semi-shade and bright, indirect sunlight.

Watering - water when the soil is dry. The roots will rot if overwatered. If you forget to water do not worry, their thick, fleshy tuberous roots store water and compensate for water loss.

Fertilizing - once a month during the growing season with a half strength fertilizer rated for houseplants.

Snake Plant (*Dracaena trifasciata*) Also known as mother-in-law's tongue. This tough plant can remove formaldehyde toxins as well as benzene, and toluene. Sansevieria is mildly toxic to animals. This plant converts carbon dioxide into oxygen at night.

Soil - provide a well-draining potting soil such as a cactus and succulent potting mix.



Aloe Vera



Snake Plant



Spider Plant. Photo by pexels.com

“Plants bring color and joy to our lives...”

Light - bright, indirect sunlight but tolerates low light levels.

Watering - water every couple of weeks. It is drought tolerant. Do not overwater.

Fertilizing - once in the spring and once in the summer growing season with a balanced house fertilizer.

Bamboo palms (*Chamaedorea seifrizii*)

Bamboo palms are not bamboo but are a type of palm in the Araceae family. These elegant tropical plants are native to Mexico and Central America. *Chamaedorea* grows slowly with clustering short elegant fronds and upright stalks which look like bamboo canes. Bamboo palms moisturize and filter noxious household chemicals and are pet friendly.

Soil - moist, well-draining soil.

Light - do well in variety of light conditions from low to bright light. Avoid direct sunlight.

Watering - keep soil evenly moist, and best to under water than overwater. Allow the top of the soil to dry slightly between watering.



Fertilizing - apply a granular, time-release balanced fertilizer in the spring and summer. (Cori Sears. 2022)

Succulents and cacti – Aloe vera (*Aloe barbadensis*)

Succulents are a good way to start for those worried about keeping plants alive. They tend to be drought-tolerant and thrive in bright, direct sunlight. You can go up to two weeks without watering. Aloe vera is the most widely grown succulent in the world

and has been grown for its medicinal properties for centuries. Aloe vera is used as a topical treatment for burns and rashes and acne. Oral ingestion is not recommended. It is mildly toxic to animals.

Soil - plant in cactus potting soil mix.

Lighting - bright, indirect sunlight.

Watering - water when the soil is completely dry. Aloe vera plants cannot tolerate standing water.

Fertilizing - generally, not necessary but if you fertilize do this once a year in the spring.

Moth Orchids (*Phalaenopsis* spp.)

Moth Orchids have been hybridized to produce many shades of white, pink and purple colors. Orchids are epiphytes or air plants. They grow upon another plant or object for physical support. They have no attachment to the ground. The flower blooms from six weeks to five months. Do not discard after blooming because with a little care it will rebloom year after year. Orchids are non-toxic to pets.

Soil - orchids do not grow in soil. Use a bark medium.

Light – bright, indirect sunlight

Watering - water every 7 to 10 days. Allow plant to dry out a little before watering. Use room temperature water.

Fertilizing - use a balanced fertilizer (20-20-20) at half strength. General rule is to water weekly, and weakly. You can also use a foliar spray.

Temperature - best 65 to 85-degrees is optimal. Any temperature changes should be gradual as the plant can fail exposed to cold drafts, cold water, wet feet or wet foliage in cold weather.

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Time to Grow an Orchid



Joyce McMillan
GCMG 1994

I've been growing orchids for 31 years and I continue to be fascinated by these plants. If you are new to the orchid hobby, your first plant is likely to be a *Phalaenopsis*, also commonly known as the moth orchid. *Phalaenopsis* make very good houseplants because they can exist in reasonable light conditions and grow well in normal household conditions, 60 to 90-degree temperatures. A well-grown plant can produce flowers that will last for months - three, four or even five months.

What should I look for when I buy an orchid?

The flower should be lustrous and held well above the foliage on a strong, well-supported spike, unblemished, free of fungal spotting, and have some buds yet to open. Never buy a plant with flowers that are already all open to the tip of the spike as life of the flowers will be short.

Basic Orchid Culture

Light

Without enough light, orchids may produce lush looking vegetation but no flowers. Not giving orchids enough light is the most common reason for failure to bloom. Give them as much light as they will take without burning. Never grow in direct sunlight.

Air

Orchid roots, and eventually the entire plant will die if they do not receive oxygen exchange, and with the exception of a few terrestrial varieties, this is the reason orchids do not grow in

soil. They grow in a special fir bark mix. Gentle air movement must be provided at all times. For orchids grown in the home, this can be provided by ceiling fans.

How do I water my orchid?

Overwatering leads to the demise of many more orchids than under watering. Constant wetness will cause the roots to rot and will eventually kill the plant. Drooping leaves are often a sign of overwatering. Water the day before the plant dries out, usually 7 to 10 days depending on the temperature. Water early in the morning. The best place is in the kitchen sink. Use rainwater if you have it, otherwise use lukewarm water (do not use salt softened or distilled water), water your plant for about 15 seconds and be sure to thoroughly wet the media. Then allow the plant to drain for about 15 minutes.

Some people like to place the pots on humidity trays or on saucers of gravel or pebbles and water. The pot is placed on the pebbles above the water line. This helps to ensure that the base of the pot is not immersed in water, increases humidity for the plant, and provides some air circulation under the pot.

Fertilizer

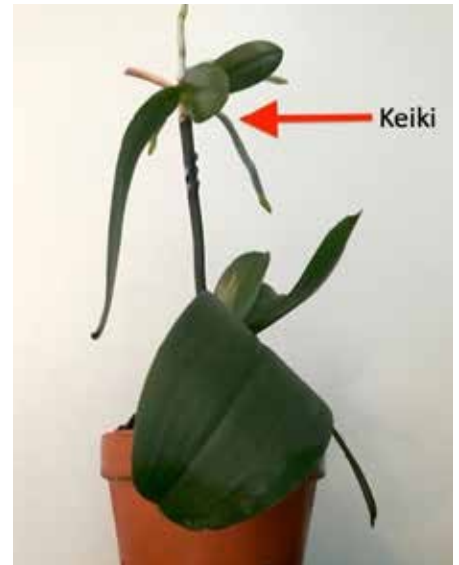
Blooming orchids do not need to be fertilized because they already have expended the energy required to produce flowers. It is a good idea to give them a rest, allowing them to approach dryness after the flowers have faded. Typically, plants are fertilized once a week during the summer and every two weeks in the fall and winter. Use no more than one-half the label recommended strength. Water first to wet the potting medium before you fertilize. Growers suggest using a balanced fertiliz-



Phalaenopsis on cork mount



Close Up of Orchid



Phalaenopsis spike on an old spike

“Observation is the most important key to growing orchids well.”

er such as 20-20-20 that includes all necessary trace elements. it will grow several leaves and then roots, at which time it can be removed to propagate a new plant. Once the roots grow a

What is the best potting media?

Your first orchid will most likely be potted in sphagnum moss. Growers find that this medium holds moisture best for shipping purposes. However, the problem here is that once you get it home, you will have a tendency to overwater your plant thus suffocating its roots. Let your plant dry out completely before watering again. After it has finished blooming then it is time to repot with a fresh, fast-draining but water-retentive medium that is essential to the healthy root system necessary for good growth. Use a mix that has a good blend of fir bark, chunky peat moss, charcoal and perlite. Simple potting instructions can be found on the back of these bags, and most are also reasonably priced.

Where in the house can I grow my orchid?

South and east-facing windows work best for orchids. You can also grow them under covered patios, bright bathrooms (they love the humidity) and on a windowsill (indirect light).

Why won't my orchid rebloom?

Insufficient light is the most common cause of failure to rebloom your orchid. Most orchids will only bloom once a year but for a long period of time.

Where do I cut the flower spike when it is finished?

Only Phalaenopsis will rebloom from its old spike (inflorescence). When the last flower fades, you can leave the spike (stem) on and it may continue to produce flower buds but not as prolific as the initial blooms. One of these nodes will then initiate and generally produce flowers within eight to twelve weeks. If the spike turns brown, then it is time to cut that spike back to the base of the plant.

What is growing on the flower stem?

A plantlet called a keiki (kay-kee), the Hawaiian word for baby, will sometimes grow on a flower spike. Initially small,

couple of inches long, gently remove the plantlet with a sterile knife and pot in a container to which you add a label with the plant's name (if it came with a name).

Most experienced growers will agree that observation is the most important key to growing orchids well. Examining your plants on a regular basis will allow you to adjust and correct any problems before they become severe.

I hope you will love growing orchids as much as I do.



Common Mistakes Made with Houseplants



Briana Etie
GCMG 2017

Growing houseplants can bring us joy. This kind of horticultural therapy can only be achieved if you are not stressing out about plant conditions. Avoid your plant stress by avoiding common plant care mistakes.

The first mistake - not knowing what houseplants need. Research your plant through articles with scientific, fact-based information. Mimic where the plant is natively grown. Plants that are epiphytes (grow on other plants) do not need heavy soils. In fact, they prefer a soilless mixture similar to orchid bark mixes that is light with a high porosity. Succulents from desert areas where night temperatures drop to 40-degrees have adapted to day and night temperature differences, as cold nights are an important part of growth for these plants.

Pot size is important. Transplanting into a too large container can cause root rot. A plant adapted to dry between watering cannot achieve this in too large a pot. When necessary, increase the pot size only one or two inches larger than the root ball. A root bound plant needs repotting every two or three years.

Do not ignore roots. Leaves can give clues to problems with roots. Unpot your plant and examine the roots. Healthy roots are white or light brown, except Sansevieria that is a carrot color. If the roots are soggy or brittle and are turning dark brown, these are signs of disease or rot. Remove dead or diseased roots. Wash and sterilize the pot. Dip the roots in a fungicide and repot with fresh soil in a sterilized pot.

Too much or too little water can cause problems. Signs of over or underwatering can be similar. Use moisture meters or use your finger to check on soil moisture. Research a plant's growing environment and humidity needs; some plants grow in high humidity. Sometimes placing them in bathrooms can be enough. Humidifiers placed near a plant can help too.

Too much applied fertilizer can be a common mistake. The leaves can have tip burn, or appear to have brown edges and can fail to thrive. Use fertilizer at recommended strength to prevent this. Not all plants tolerate multi-purpose fertilizers. Using fertilizers formulated for African violets, orchids, or hibiscus are specific blend examples. Always read labels and follow mixing instructions.

Nutrient deficiency can be seen in leaves. There are many guides that show the strange colors and patterns on leaves you might be experiencing. By answering yes or no to their questions, you can arrive at a possible reason for the issues your plant is having. It is important to note that not all plant mysteries can be solved in this way. Many plant diseases and nutrient issues can look quite similar, but it can be helpful to start the process of troubleshooting plant issues by using a guide to eliminate possibilities. Here are two examples of guides from Montana State University. <https://landresources.montana.edu/soilfertility/images/DefFlowChartMobile.png> and <https://landresources.montana.edu/soilfertil->

[ity/images/DefFlowChartImmob.png](https://landresources.montana.edu/soilfertility/images/DefFlowChartImmob.png)

For most plants, repotting them every 12 to 18 months can prevent compacted soils. Roots need oxygen exchange, and compacted soil prevents air getting to healthy roots. This practice can also prevent some diseases.

Do not ignore signs of disease like yellow and brown leaves. Symptoms include small, brown spots with yellowish margins on the leaves. Spots may have a concentric ring or target pattern. Fungus can appear as dots with necrotic tissue around the black fruiting bodies of fungus. With root or stem rot, leaves and stems show noticeable wilt. Stems may be girdled at or near soil level by a ring of brown or black tissue. Infected roots are brown to black and may be soft. The fungi survive in the soil or on infected plant debris in the soil. Spores are spread by wind, splashing water, or moving of infected soil. Most fungal problems can be treated by removing and disposing of affected leaves and using an antifungal treatment. Researching and identifying the problem can help target the best cultural practice or solution.

Moving plants around the house frequently is disruptive to plant growth. Lighting, drafts, humidity, and heat are all conditions to be considered in placement. A plant adapts to the area and frequent change can cause shock. If a stressed plant is under the air conditioner vent or too close to a window with cooler temperatures or radiating heat, move it. Making smaller changes regarding light exposure can prevent shock.

Not winterizing plants is the last common problem. In general, try to mimic winter conditions of the regions where the species are native. Most plants do best with less water and no fertilizer during winter. If you use central air and heat, the humidity in your home can drop 10 to 20 percent. If you are not providing a humidifier, grouping plants together can allow them to share their transpiration. Using a tray of water near them or placing them on top of stones in a tray of water can also provide humidity.

A few tips

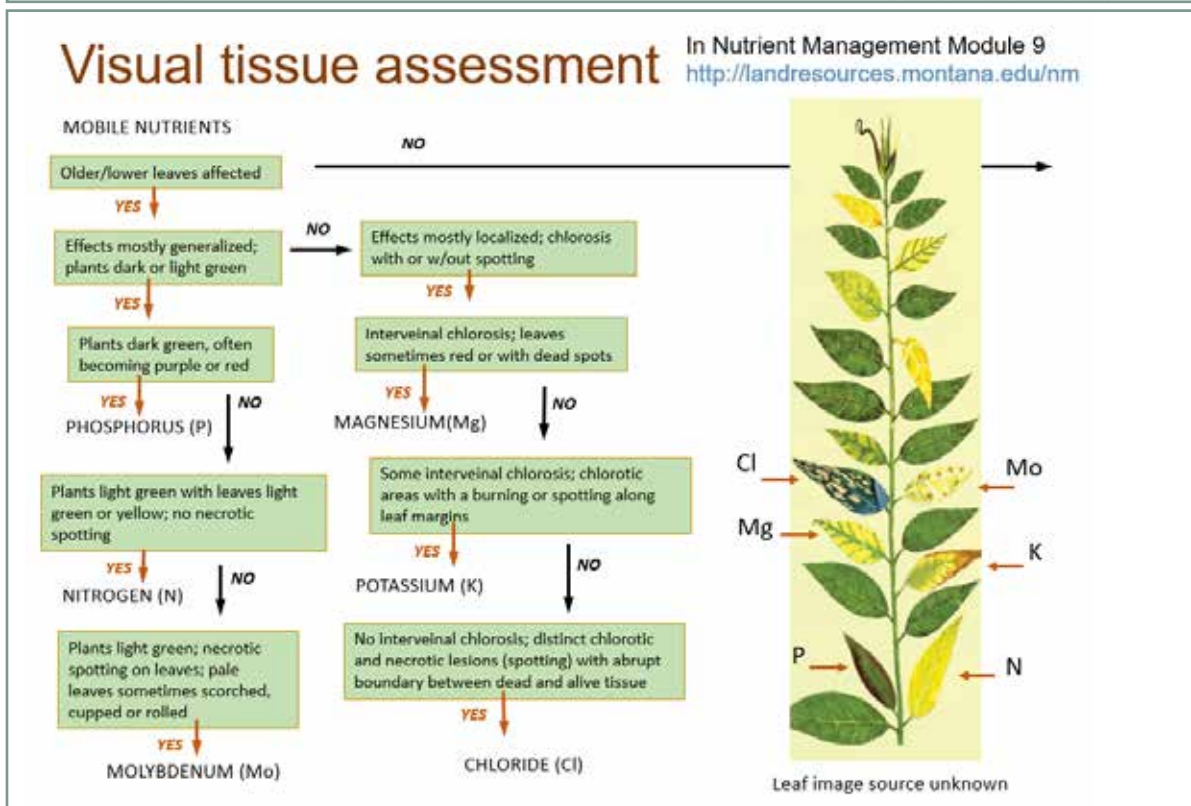
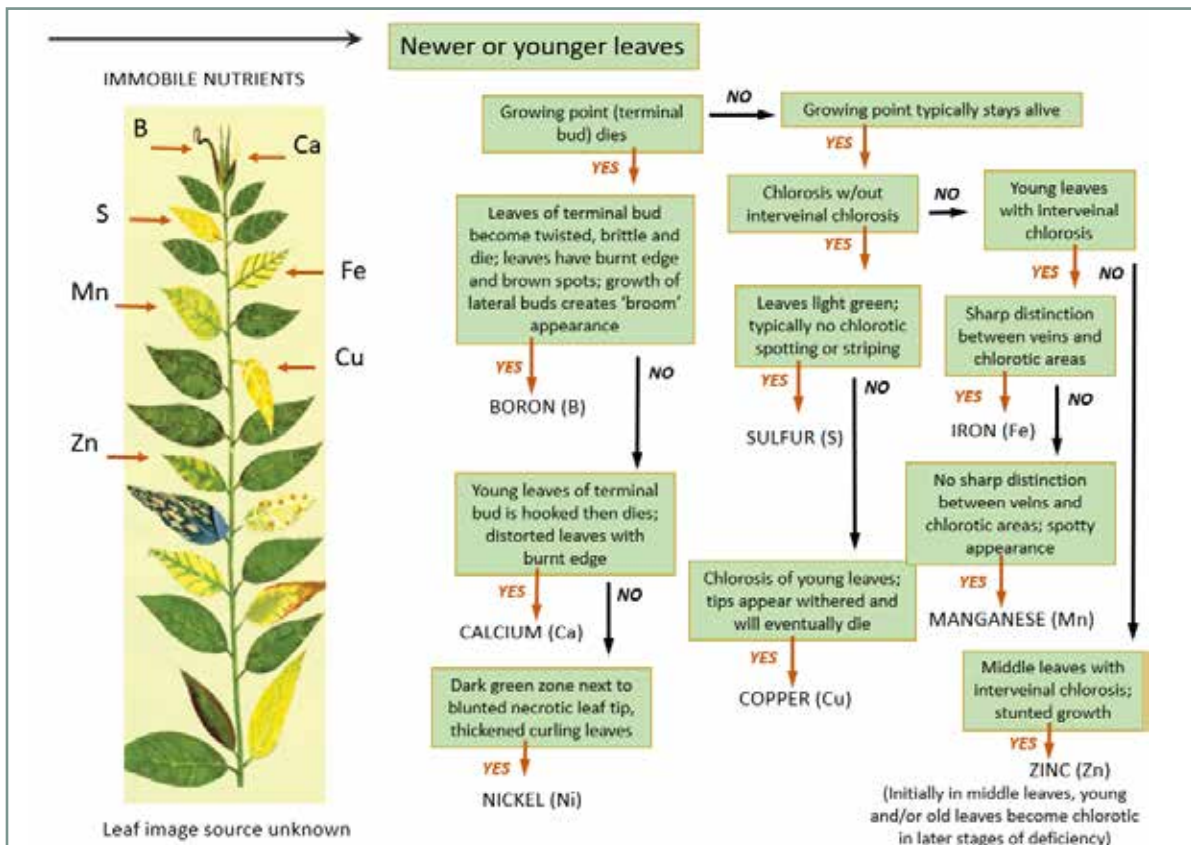
☀ Some plants are sensitive to city water and chlorine or chloramines that are added. To avoid these additives, fill an open water jug and let it stand for 24 hours before use. Those additives will dissipate as a gas. The larger the opening on the container and the warmer the water, the faster chlorine will dissipate.

☀ Add mosquito dunks to the water. Dunks contain Bt, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, a natural occurring bacterium in soil used as a biological pesticide.

☀ Most potting mixes are soilless. Adding nutrients on a regular schedule is important. If the potting mix dries too much it can become hydrophobic, meaning it repels water. This can happen to the potting mix components peat moss and sand. Allowing the pot to sit in water for a few minutes can soften the soil.

Source: The House Plant Expert by Dr. D.G. Hessayon.

“Mimic where the plant is natively grown.”



The Best Indoor, Windowsill Plants for Your Home



Pam Hunter
GCMG 2018

Ready to add some pizzazz to your holidays? Houseplants are your answer. In addition to purifying your environment, they also make excellent gifts. The best window sill plants for your home require very easy care. This list includes a combination of low light choices as well as visually appealing options. They don't require much effort on your part to thrive since they can tolerate some neglect.

Spider Plant (*Chlorophytum comosum*)

What is a better plant than a spider plant? Multiple spider plants. They have fast growing shoots which produce little 'babies' that you can repot. Be sure to place in well lit areas and don't forget weekly watering. Please note: This plant is toxic to dogs and cats.

Snake Plant (*Dracaena trifasciata*)

The snake plant is hearty and tough to kill. They can go for a month without water. Also called Mother-in-law's tongue, the leaves are typically stiff, sharp and spiky. Please note: This plant is toxic to dogs and cats.

Pothos Ivy (*Epipremnum aureum*)

This trailing vine also has the nickname of Devil's ivy for its ability to handle extremely low light indoor conditions, as well as under and overwatering. Please note: This plant is toxic to dogs and cats.

Swiss Cheese Plant (*Monstera deliciosa*)

The Swiss Cheese Plant are native to Mexico and Central America. This tropical plant features leaves with holes which lend to their exotic appearance. It needs moderate watering and indirect light with bright to medium best. Please note: This plant is toxic to dogs and cats.

Cacti

Cacti are the best low maintenance houseplants and they love bright sun. Plant them in a gritty soil that is well draining and water sparingly.

Dragon Plant (*Dracaena* sp.)

Dragon Plants, also known as corn plants, come in several different colors; more commonly long green leaves with yellow stripes. Never place in direct sunlight as the rays will scorch its foliage. Dracaena plants require less water than most indoor plants, and keep them hydrated by misting the leaves with water.

ZZ Plant (*Zamioculcas zamiifolia*)

ZZ plant needs very little water. The thick leaves have a natural shine and perform well in any light. The only drawback is its slow growth. That means, it might cost a little more because it takes longer to grow.

Chinese Evergreen (*Aglaonema* sp.)

Sturdy and beautiful, the Chinese evergreen tolerates about any growing condition indoors. The leaves are varieties of eye-catching patterns and if there is bright enough light, these tough plants produce Calla lily look-a-like blooms.

Peace Lily (*Spathiphyllum* sp.)

The Peace lily make suitable floor plants as it can reach 2 to 3-feet tall and wide. It will droop when it's thirsty giving you visual clues. After watering let the plant drain well. Please note: this plant is toxic to dogs and cats.

Peperomia

These colorful plants grow great indoors and also hold water in their stems and leaves, making them drought tolerant. When watering, make sure not to overwater. Plant should be completely dry in between watering sessions.

Philodendron

Philodendrons make excellent indoor plants because they adapt to various lighting and watering conditions. The plants have large, dark green leaves which allow them to absorb even the tiniest traces of light and water.

No matter which house plant you pick, it will make your home glow. Do your research for location and you will find that growing a houseplant is easier than you thought.

Sources: TheSpruce.com. Gardenersworld.com



Peperomia. Image by Pexels.com



Pothos Ivy. Image by Pexels.com



Swiss Cheese Plant. Image by Pexels.com

Queen of Houseplants: Reese Daily



Kaye Corey
GCMG 2001

It has been my pleasure to meet Charissa “Reese” Daily, administrative assistant at the Galveston County Agrilife Extension office to Family and Community Health agent, Ginger Benson and Better Living for Texans nutrition education associate, Sharon Mitchiner.

Reese is a native Indiana Hoosier and attended Purdue University with honors where she focused on a degree in visual communication design. She moved to Texas in 2010 where she met her husband David. He is her amazing “MacGyver.” He can solve any problem and fix and build anything. Their home is in La Marque where Reese is a gardening artist, aunt to Ruby, sister to Terris and Leigh, and daughter to father Tony, other mother Kaye, and late mother Sue. Most importantly, she’s a dog mom to Isabelle and Shadow.

“My love of plants comes from my late mother, Sue, who was a garden bed landscape designer, and houseplant enthusiast through her love of plants,” Reese said. “We also had a two-acre vegetable garden growing up. We would can or freeze everything in our garden for the coming year.”

Living in the coastal region of Texas, Reese now enjoys the opportunity of both indoor and outdoor gardening with many plants that thrive with the proper care.

With 150 outdoor container plants and 116 indoor container plants, Reese’s favorite houseplant is the Rattlesnake plant (*Goeppertia insignis*). It is a tropical evergreen perennial native to Brazil. Growing the Rattlesnake plant with its beautiful long ornamental foliage is a challenge, even for Reese. She is trying to encourage blooms outside of a greenhouse. For not only Rattlesnake plant information but also how-to information on multiple houseplants see North Carolina Extension website: <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/goeppertia-insignis/>.

African violets have a special place in her heart. A multi-generational plant from grandmother to mother to Reese, she says they are not thought of as an old lady plant anymore, but rather a plant for everyone. African violets are truly showstoppers with beautiful smooth, round to ruffled leaves. They bloom in all shapes, sizes and colors. Anyone can enjoy these gorgeous plants that grow vigorously and are known to bloom nearly all year round.

Propagating her African violet leaves failed multiple times before she finally experienced success with help from Galveston County Master Gardener Briana Etie. She uses a successful

leaf propagation method in a soil-less rooting medium. For vegetative African violet propagation, see North Carolina Cooperative Extension: <https://dare.ces.ncsu.edu/2021/02/african-violets-part-2-propagation/>.

Reese has also been an avid succulent gardener and designer for many years. She finds succulents easy to propagate and relatively stress-free and fun.

At home in her art cottage is where creativity and design are her specialties. Her favorite medium is oil pastels and acrylic paint pouring. In the cottage she draws, paints, sews, designs, and quilts. With an eye for the unique and beautiful, Reese is also a photographer of her growing and creative art.

Her art cottage is named from her inspiration, Aunt Shannon and is the guest house when she visits, thus named, Sha Sha’s Cottage. To honor Aunt Shannon, Reese plans to paint the door of the cottage in one of Sha Sha’s quilt designs.

When Reese retires, she will inherit a visual aid presentation to teach the beautiful story of her Great Aunt Della’s quilting legacy and incorporate her Aunt Shannon into the program. Although talented, Reese is many years from retiring. We can enjoy her creative design work through programs presented out of the Galveston County Agrilife Extension Office.



Best Patterened Rattlesnake Plant



Great Violet



Indoors



Reese Daily

All photos courtesy of Reese Daily

Caring for the Gifted Plants During the Holiday Season



Sandy McBride
GCMG 2018

Holiday plants and flowers add special warmth during the season. There are so many lovely plants to enjoy during the holidays, all adding color and beauty to your home. A few varieties to enjoy are Amaryllis, Azalea, Cyclamen, Christmas Cactus, Gardenia and Poinsettia. Many of these plants are grown in greenhouses where the night temperatures are cool, the air is moist, and the lighting conditions are perfect. Unfortunately, the climate in our homes is not so ideal. However, many can thrive for years with the correct care. Others may not be worth the extra effort needed to keep them alive and get them to bloom again, so enjoy them to the fullest during this season.

Amaryllis (*Hippeastrum* spp.)

You may receive your amaryllis as a bulb in a box with a pot and planting material, or already planted in a pot. Once potted, it will usually bloom within four to six weeks. These are prized for their beautiful blooms; some varieties will send up the bloom stalk initially and follow with wide, strappy leaves. Keep it in bright light and rotate the pot so it grows evenly straight and tall. Keep the soil evenly moist.

Once it has bloomed, cut off the flower stalk when it is yellow and leave the foliage to feed the bulb. You now have a couple of options for planting. You can move it outdoors after danger of frost has passed and plant it in the ground in a sunny location. It will generally bloom again in late spring. As time passes in your garden the bulb will multiply and you will end up with more beautiful blooms. Your other alternative is to put the potted bulb outdoors in a shaded area until fall, letting it go dormant. Remove any yellowed leaves and store it in your garage — and ignore it. In November, start watering and bring it back into the house to enjoy its holiday blooms once more.



Amaryllis

Azalea (*Rhododendron* spp.)

Most holiday azaleas have been grown in a greenhouse and forced to bloom in time to be enjoyed for the season. They require direct sunlight and night temperatures around 60-degrees to prolong blooms and remain healthy. Keep the soil evenly moist and if the leaves turn pale green to yellow, the soil is not acidic enough; you may try an acidic plant food. In most cases, these will not bloom again, so enjoy them while they are beautiful.

Cyclamen (*Cyclamen persicum*)

This is a cool season plant, and its blooms can last about eight weeks under the right conditions. Cyclamen likes cooler temperatures from 40 to 60-degrees. It prefers diffused sunlight but keep it out of warm drafts. Water from the base when dry and do not get water on its leaves. Remove dying blooms at the base. It is tough to keep them through another season, so appreciate the blooms while they last.

Christmas Cactus (*Schlumbergera x buckleyi*)

These hardy flowering plants can last for years with the proper care. They prefer bright indirect lighting but keep them out of the hot sun and drafts. They enjoy humid conditions and only water when the top of the soil is dry. After the plant has bloomed, stop watering it for several weeks. When you notice new growth, start watering again. Fertilize about four times per year.

The key to getting your cactus to bloom for the holidays is controlled watering, temperature, and light. It will set buds when day and night length are about equal, and when the temperature drops to around 55-degrees. If you placed your plant outside after blooming, keep it where it will be shaded by other plants. Start watching it around September and October as



Azalea

“Enjoy to the fullest during this season”

it then should start producing flower buds. Protect it so the temperature does not drop below 50-degrees, and make sure it has about 12 hours of darkness each day. If you need to bring it inside, keep it in a closet or dark area so it gets the required hours of darkness. Reduce watering and it should surprise you with beautiful blooms for the holidays. This is a plant you can enjoy for years!

Gardenia (*Gardenia jasminoides*)

These fragrant plants are often available around the holidays. Give them bright light and consistent moist soil. This plant is a bit fussy and is not acclimated to living in the house, so enjoy it for the season. If it makes it until spring, plant it outside.



Christmas Cactus



Cyclamen

Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*)

Poinsettia plants have been associated with Christmas since the 1500s. Traditionally in red, they are now available in pink, white, green, and other variations. If you are selecting your own plant, choose one that has the little yellow flowers in the center of the colored leaves. This plant requires bright light and temperatures between 65 and 70-degrees. Avoid drafts and keep the plant watered. Either cut holes in the foil around the pot or remove it to be sure the plant is not sitting in water.

This is another holiday plant that requires extra efforts in having it bloom again; it usually will not look as good as a new specimen. So in its first season, enjoy for decorating and giving during our winter holidays.

Source:

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/publications/house-plant/houseplant.html>



Gardenia



Poinsettia

Macramé Plant Hangers Are Back!



Mary Jane Fortney
GCMG 2017

Disco may have died, but another quintessential part of that '70s era is making a comeback in today's homes: the art of macramé.

Though many people associate macramé with 1960s and 1970s crafty creations, it in fact has a long, rich history as both a decorative and functional art form. Sailors, for instance, made macramé objects (such as hammocks and belts) during their downtime, and macramé was also sometimes used as a less costly lace-like adornment for clothing and decor. Today macramé is back in favor, revitalized by modern makers who are putting their own stamp on this age-old craft. Vintage decor and throwback styles are more popular than ever. These nostalgic design trends have never gone out of style.

Knot-tying origins go back to 13th-century Arab weavers who used the knots to secure loose ends of woven textiles. The term macramé comes from the Arabic word "fringe." Starting in the 1700s, European sailors were practicing their keen knowledge of tying knots; they would exchange their findings with others to gain knowledge of unfamiliar knots.

Macramé textiles are made through knotting instead of weav-

ing. The knots can be combined to create intricate patterns, and the piece often, though not always, includes a length of fringe at the bottom. Today's crafters pull inspiration from macramé designs of the past but update them with a modern twist. The new versions are simpler than the over-the-top vintage versions, and you will see them in unique shapes, bright unexpected hues or a fresh color combination.

Bring a touch of bohemian style to your porch or patio with a row of hanging macramé planters. Because macramé is now typically made from natural fibers, it is best to use it in a covered area. In addition to looking absolutely stunning, they are a great addition to your home interior because they do not take up valuable floor space and most require very little care. Having them off the floor also means that they are out of the reach of kids and pets, and you can take advantage of natural light near windows. Systems for hanging indoor plants continue to expand — from boho macramé to sleek, modern hangers and minimalist setups that make the plants look like they are hanging in space.

My personal macramé journey began 48 years ago as my indoor plant collection grew while I was still in high school. Long before the age of the internet with Pinterest and Instagram, I found myself going to the local nursery and crafts



1970s Macramé plant hanger with armadillo beads



1970s macrame plant hanger with close up of armadillo bead

“Bring a touch of bohemian style to your porch or patio”

center. There I found several 10 to 15-page macramé publications that would give me the patterns and a list of supplies needed. It is not that hard to get started, just a willingness to learn. I could work on a macramé hanging planter and put it down as my schedule required and not lose inspiration. I was on my way to making numerous macramé plant hangers for myself and others. I loved the creative vibe, yet they were so functional. A macramé plant hanger made a great gift along with a plant that I potted up for the recipient. I also began to teach relatives, friends and work mates how to make the basic knots. My starting advice was always to start simple and stick with square knots which are the basis for everything. Master the basic knotting patterns and neat and tidy knots will come with practice. You can combine basic macramé knots in different ways to create any pattern you can imagine. There were many how-to print works in the 70s, full of patterns for various experience levels. I had quite a collection of them that were popular back then. Those skills sparked joy and caused us to buy hundreds and hundreds of yards of technicolored polypropylene rope to make many macramé plant hangers.

Recently, my son had been trying to figure out how to accommodate his collection of plants. Asking me if I could help him

with some macramé plant hangers led me to pull out a storage bin full of those that I made many moons ago — long ones with wooden beads and those with a combination of rope, wood beads and ceramic beads with the likes of cute raccoons and gray armadillos. I gave each a gentle hand wash to freshen them up and they looked like they were just made yesterday. He loved them enough to grab his Canon camera for a photo shoot.

As delightful as it feels to time travel back into the heyday of those long ago published macramé magazines, we can hand-craft items today that are beautiful, functional, and newfangled. You could start with making a simple all natural macramé plant hanger. There are many inspiring YouTube videos to guide you along with thousands of ideas on Pinterest and Instagram. Search the internet for DIY tutorials for making macramé plant hangers; it is amazing how much information is available. You can also look local for guidance on how to make them.

Macramé plant hangers are great for elevating plants and make a wonderful feature in any room.



1970s Macrame plant hanger with raccoon beads



1979s macrame plant hanger

Photos by MG Sean Fortney

Pests in the Garden and On Indoor Plants



Jan Brick
GCMG 2001

Nuisance pests can be found both in the garden and on household favorites. Most common among them are the following:

Aphids are tiny soft-bodied insects that cluster on leaves, flowers and stems of plants. Aphids may cause distorted, curled or yellowing leaves and malformed blooms. Black sooty mold is often associated with the presence of aphids as they secrete undigested fluid called honeydew. Aphids are extremely prolific and populations increase rapidly in the summer months.

Fungus gnats are mosquito-like flies as adults, while the larvae have black heads with white to transparent looking bodies and are found in damp soil feeding on root hairs and organic materials. Symptoms of infestation include wilting, poor growth and yellowing of plant and leaves.

Leaf miners are tiny moths or flies as adults that mostly go unnoticed. Trails on the leaves and visible lack of chlorophyll will draw attention to damage being done by the cream colored larvae that live in the layers of leaves, creating visible tunnels as they feed on chlorophyll.

Mealy bugs appear on stems and leaves as white cotton-looking clusters. The affected leaves may be sticky and covered with black sooty mold from honeydew. The young mealy bugs are fairly mobile and will spread rapidly to nearby plants if not eliminated.



Aphid infestation
[William M. Ciesla, Forest Health Management International, Bugwood.org](#)



Spider Mites
[Ward Strong, BC Ministry of Forests, Bugwood.org](#)

Spider mites are related to spiders though not beneficials, and a common garden pest that causes widespread damage while having the advantage of being difficult to spot. About the size of pepper grains, they cause damage by sucking sap from the undersides of leaves. Place a white paper under a leaf and tap the plant; if specks drop to the paper and crawl around you have spider mites. Unfortunately, spider mites thrive in hot weather such as we experience during our summer months.

Scale insects are sapsucking pests that attach to leaves, branches and fruits. Over a thousand species of scale insects exist. Hardshell types live and feed without moving around on the plant while the soft species secrete a waxy film, are able to move short distances on the plants and will produce profuse amounts of honeydew.

Whiteflies are tiny white insects found on the undersides of leaves where both the larvae and adults suck sap from the leaves. The above-mentioned problem of sooty mold is also associated with this pest. A sure indication that whiteflies are present is when the plant is moved or shaken; the insects can be seen fluttering rapidly around it.

Prevent pest and disease problems with good gardening practices, paying close attention to your plants' needs: healthy soil, water and light requirements, your love and attention. Most pests are generally small to tiny and may have already done extensive damage to your plants before you realize that they are there.

Learning diagnostic expertise and management of pests and diseases that strike your garden or indoor plants can prevent their continued occurrence and simplify their control. Begin with purchasing healthy seeds and plants from a reputable supplier and always select healthy looking plants, preferably ones that are resistant and less susceptible to more common blights and insects. It is possible to bring pests and diseases into your garden or home from an outside source on plants, trees and groundcovers.

Broad spectrum insecticides are formulated to kill nearly every bug they come in contact with. They may be toxic to birds and bees, beneficial insects and humans as well, and as a result upset the natural balance between the good and the bad bugs critical to maintaining biodiversity that allows both to coexist in harmony. The first line of defense should be natural management and an ounce of prevention. Grow healthy disease free plants, inspect your plants for signs of distress or damage, deadhead or remove spent blooms and leaves, water appropriately (do not over water) and keep weeds under control.

“Prevent pest problems with good gardening practices.”

Combination control is more effective than individual approaches and may dispense with a variety of challenges in a single swoop. Combine wise species selection, cultural control and chemical use (as a last resort) as you plan your pest management program while removing the mystery of plant disease control with confidence.

Disease, symptoms, causes and control

Seedlings decay at the ground line, fall over and die (damping off): soil fungi – remove affected plants, apply fungicide as needed; overwatering - reduce watering

Root and stem rot, discolor and die: soil fungi - remove damaged plants, apply fungicide as needed

Marginal leaf burn on leaf edges: root failure, excessive fertilizer, overwatering – modify watering and fertilizer application

Leaf spots such as black spot on roses: usually fungal - prune for air flow, reduce water on leaves, apply fungicide as needed

Powdery mildew covering leaves: fungal (usually seasonal) – remove affected leaves, prune to allow adequate air flow through foliage, apply fungicide if severe

When applying insecticides, proceed with caution, remembering that it is alright to have some bugs that prey on your plants as long as you encourage a wide range of the good guys that will prey on them. Attract natural predators to your garden... birds, lizards, frogs, wasps, ladybugs, lacewings, and dragonflies are good examples.

As one experienced gardener remarked, “Clearly, we have friends as well as foes out there in the garden. The battle of the bugs is ongoing, and you don’t want to wipe out your allies in a misguided attack on your enemies. Rather than bombing everything in sight at the first hint of an invasion, take the more rational approach of identifying the pest, assessing its

damage and applying the least toxic control.”

Sources:

“Instant Guide to Insects” Pamela Forey and Cecilia Fitzsimmons

“Texas Insects” Bastiaan Drees Phd. and John Jackman Phd.

“The Houseplant Encyclopedia” Maggie Stuckey

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Mealy Bugs

[Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org](http://WhitneyCranshaw.ColoradoStateUniversity.Bugwood.org)



Leaf Miner

[Gyorgy Csoka, Hungary Forest Research Institute, Bugwood.org](http://GyorgyCsoka.HungaryForestResearchInstitute.Bugwood.org)



Scale Insects

[Eric R. Day, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Bugwood.org](http://EricR.Day.VirginiaPolytechnicInstituteandStateUniversity.Bugwood.org)



Fungus Gnat

[David Cappaert, Bugwood.org](http://DavidCappaert.Bugwood.org)



Whiteflies

[John C. French Sr., Retired, Universities: Auburn, GA, Clemson and U of MO, Bugwood.org](http://JohnC.FrenchSr.,Retired,Universities:Auburn,GA,ClemsonandUofMO.Bugwood.org)

Photos by insectimage.org

Plant of the Month: Paperwhite Narcissus



Pam Hunter
GCMG 2018

The holidays are almost upon us, and with that said let's add some dazzle to your life. Paperwhite narcissus (*Narcissus papyraceus*) is just the thing for you. They are easily forced into flowering for some cheerfulness in the upcoming holidays. If you would prefer, plant them in your garden for a springtime bouquet of

beauty and fragrance. They make wonderful indoor garden projects; plant pots of these bulbs and place around the house. They also make gorgeous holiday gifts.

Forcing paperwhite narcissus to bloom is easy. Plant bulbs over a few inches of small stones or pebbles (or even alone in a forcing vase) in a container with no drainage. Keep enough water in the container to cover the bottom base of the bulb. In four to six weeks your bulbs will have cheerful, fragrant blooms. Or plant in potting soil six inches deep and six inches apart in full to partial sun.

A few paperwhite narcissus recommended for blooming are Ziva (white) and Grand Soleil D'Or (yellow).

Common Name(s):

Paperwhite narcissus, jonquil

USDA Hardiness Zones: 8-11

Plant Characteristics:

Type: Bulb

Family: Amaryllidaceae

Height: 12-15"

Spacing: 6"

Bloom Information:

Bloom color: White, yellow, orange

Bloom size: Clusters of small white, yellow or orange flowers

Bloom time: Paperwhite narcissus bulbs can be forced into bloom almost any time but it is very common to bloom over the winter months. When planted outside they will bloom during the winter and spring. Bloom time is determined by planting time.

Culture:

Light exposure: Full sun, partial sun



Paperwhite Narcissus Courtesy of Pixabay.com



Paperwhite Narcissus Courtesy of LSU Ag Center



Paperwhite Narcissus Courtesy of LSU Ag Center

Houseplant Quiz!



Lisa Belcher
GCMG 2014

We all have either owned a houseplant or given one as a gift. Perhaps it was a housewarming gift, something for your office desk or a last-minute gift when you've noticed tomorrow was your mother-in-law's birthday. These plants are nearly everywhere, but look closely and see how quickly you can recognize these common plants with only a snippet of their full photo! *Answers on page 36*



The Joy of Planting Bulbs in the Fall



Fran Brockington
GCMG 2016

Oh, the joys of planting bulbs in the fall! Cooler temperatures usually arrive in late October or November in our area; time to choose spring-blooming bulbs. Bulbs to plant in November are Allium, Amaryllis, Crocus, Narcissus, Freesia, Leucojum, Muscari and Rain Lily (Zephyranthes).

“Bulbs” may botanically be true bulbs, but are collectively known as corms, rhizomes, or tubers. They each store nutrients in different ways to produce flowers.

Our southern gardens require careful bulb selection. Be sure selections are for rated USDA Hardiness Zones 9-10. Bulbs here do not need to be pre-chilled or dug up when the bloom season is over. Bulbs will come back multiple years or naturalize on their own.

Choose firm bulbs and keep cool until planted. Locate a spot with 6 to 10 hours of sun. Good drainage is essential so the bulbs will not decay. Prepare the planting holes in loamy soil with sand or leaf compost to loosen the soil. This preparation allows water to drain away. Bulbs do not need much fertilizer. Use of phosphorous fertilizer should only be applied if deficiency is noted by soil test, and always make sure applied fertilizer never touches the bulb.

In our area, bulbs are usually planted at a depth 1/2 to 2 times the height of the bulb. Use a ruler or marked trowel to confirm the depth. Plant the bulbs about 4 to 6-inches apart with the pointed end up. If planted upside down, growth from the bulb

will right itself. If a bulb has roots, create a soil mound in the hole and spread the roots over it. Even planted out of season, bulbs will survive and bloom the following year.

After planting, cover lightly with mulch to protect them during cooler weather.

While you could use organic hardwood mulch on the bulbs, The Garden Club of Houston in their *Horticulture Guide* suggests using composted organic matter for bulbs which helps soil retain needed nutrients (especially nitrogen). (www.gc-houston.org) Water new bulbs in the mornings as a rule of thumb. Rain in fall and winter may be all you need. Label and mark where you have planted your bulbs.

When foliage begins to appear, pull back mulch so the lower leaf portion receives sunshine.

Amaryllis are often planted in containers October through January. When you plant them in the ground, 6 to 8 weeks later you will have huge, long-lasting blooms; the bulbs will divide and multiply year after year. Amaryllis grow rapidly and need water but should be allowed to dry before watering again. They perform best with a 5-10-5 fertilizer. Once the blooms have faded, remove the bloom so that the bulb will not set seed. The foliage should remain attached to the stem until brown. All of the bulb's energy will go into restoring the nutrients for next season.

Narcissus is the genus in which daffodils, jonquils and narcissus belong. Daffodil is the name generally given to the large



Allium



Amaryllis by Annette Meyer



Crocus by Anca at Pixabay.com



Daffodil

“Lilies may be the lowest maintenance bulb.”

13 to 19-inch yellow, white or apricot flowers whose centers are large and trumpet-shaped. Jonquil is the name given to 11 to 12-inch very fragrant yellow flowers. Narcissus are the bulbs with a dainty flower and short cup. Paperwhite narcissus are often container-grown for holiday blooms, but when planted in the ground, they bloom as early as December or January. Some narcissus bloom as late as April. Choose cultivars such as ‘Dawn’ daffodil that can extend bloom season.

Crocus are some of the earliest blooming spring flowers. Photos often show them blooming in the snow in northern regions. Varieties grow and multiply well here. The tiny corms can be planted 1 to 2-inches apart. Crocus look best in clumps or drifts, often accomplished by tossing out a handful when planting. Add more each year for continuing blooms.

Leucojum aestivum are some of the first surprises in early January, hence their common name Snowflakes. Easily identified by the green dot on each little nodding white bell, Snowflakes doesn't mind some shade and will grow under large trees. Clumps grow larger every year.

Muscari bloom February to March. Tiny round, blue-violet bells with white tips arise on a ten-inch stem, having an extremely sweet smell. Often they are called Grape hyacinth even though they are not in the Hyacinth family.

Freesias bloom in March. Known for fragrance, they come in many varieties and are available in many colors. Some have two-inch flowers that face upward and open in succession. The stems rise about 12 to 14-inches and may require stak-

ing as they grow. Also called Woodland Painted Petals (*F. laxa*) tolerates heat and humidity well. Grass-like leaves grow throughout winter until March when reddish-oranges flowers last for weeks. They reseed and multiply.

Alliums are small bulbs, producing globe-shaped flowers that bloom late spring to summer. They will increase by offsets and reseed. Drumstick allium, (*A. sphaerocephalon*) blooms 2 to 3 feet tall in late spring. Variety ‘Purple Sensation’ (*A. aflatunense*) does well in the heat.

Rain lilies may be the lowest maintenance bulb there is. Rain lilies bloom reliably after rains from spring to fall — and cannot be fooled. Habranthus and Zephyranthes varieties have six-petaled star-shaped blooms with grass-like foliage. *H. robustus* blooms pink. *H. tubispathus* is golden-orange. Zephyranthes come in many varieties and colors. Rain lily seeds will naturally disperse or can easily be saved.

When spring flowers fade, let foliage turn brown without removing. Then remove. Replace mulch to protect the bulbs during summer dormancy. Divide established clumps of bulbs to alleviate overcrowding, to increase next year's blooms and to make perfect pass-along gifts.

Sources

Squire, Sally McQueen, *A Gardener's Guide to Growing Bulbs on the Gulf Coast*

Weisinger, Chris and Welch, William C., *The Bulb Hunter*

Welch, William C. and Grant, Greg, *Heirloom Gardening in the South*



Freesia by Ftanuki



Muscari by Couleur



Rain Lily



Snowdrops

Meet a Master Gardener: Barbara Canetti



Trish McDaniel
GCMG 2001

Arriving on a steaming hot day in late August, I was greeted by Barbara Canetti from the balcony of *Speakeasy*, a lovely and carefully restored 1890 cottage in Galveston's East End.

It took a full year of saturated sweat equity for her and her husband, Carlos Rios, to turn this long-neglected eyesore into a beautiful vacation home. As we took a seat inside this cool little jewel, it was a pleasure to get more familiar with Barbara, a woman of immense talent and one who wears her many hats with chutzpah.

Barbara is an exuberant and ever inquisitive fellow Texas Master Gardener. As I learned, these are qualities she grew up with as a kid from Long Island, New York, and it is our great fortune that her professional career as a journalist and college lecturer eventually carried her to Galveston Island.

The story of her education and career is truly inspirational, traversing her *Tampa Times* beginnings through her recruitment by the *Houston Post* and United Press International and her professorship at the University of Houston-Downtown. Rather than include it here, please visit the attached link to read - in her own words - *Never Give Up*:

<https://www.uhd.edu/academics/university-college/transition/first-generation/Pages/cr-stor-canetti.aspx>

Now retired, Barbara says she will always relish her experience of having “a front seat to history” as a news reporter.

Currently, Barbara is a contributing writer and photographer to *Coast Monthly* magazine as well as our *Gulf Coast Gardening* newsletter. With a laugh she says it's great fun to write about folks who “actually want to talk to me” – a downright about-face from reporting the news.

Barbara's interest in gardening began in Houston. Her mentor was none other than her pal and neighbor Kathy Huber, Garden Editor for the *Houston Chronicle* and Texas Master Gardener. As their friendship grew and years of Barbara's inquiries were answered, though dear friends, one day Kathy finally told her to “Stop calling me!” and encouraged her to join the TMG program in Galveston County.

Barbara is now a prolific propagator of native trees and plants (anybody want a *Vitex*?), the bounty of which she shares with her neighborhood and friends. Barbara also lectures about



“Barbara is a prolific propagator of native trees and plants.”

the lifecycle and migration of the Monarch butterfly, which is currently on the IUNC Red List of Threatened Species. Her interest in Monarchs was buoyed by trips she and Carlos took to see the butterfly’s overwintering enclave in the forests of Michoacan, Mexico.

In 2015, Barbara and her sister attended a program by Terry Cuclis (GCMG 1987) on fig propagation. Both were hugely inspired. Her sister is now a self-proclaimed figaholic, and Barbara serves on our Discovery Garden’s Orchard Team, with a special commitment to all things fig. Currently, the orchard grows six varieties of fig trees. Barbara hopes to increase that number to 10 in the near future, and is surely on course to becoming known as the “Fig Lady.” Barbara’s hard work can also be seen at a beautiful accessible garden at Libbie’s Place, an adult day care facility in Galveston, where she has been a devoted volunteer for many years.

Barbara met her husband Carlos, award-winning *Houston Chronicle* photojournalist now retired, during a staff football game between the two Houston newspapers. After being “tagged” repeatedly by a certain young man, she got the message, got interested, and got married in 1981. They raised two talented kids, a boy and a girl, both married now and enjoying successful careers. Their son and daughter-in-law have since presented them with their new love, a grandbaby girl, now 2 years old.

In asking what books she has read lately, I hit the jackpot! Barbara is a voracious reader and offered up a stack of titles: *The Island of Missing Trees* by Elif Shafak, *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus, *Why Fish Don’t Exist* by Lulu Miller, and *The Soul of an Octopus* by Sy Montgomery. For the last selection, Barbara strongly recommends the audible version narrated by the delightfully passionate author. Barbara is also a member of a multinational book club in which she has participated for many years.

Barbara’s lovely photograph for this story features her with her portrait in wood, a petite sculpture which vogues proudly in her front yard. Originally, Carlos wanted artist Jimmy Phillips, now famed sculptor of trees claimed by Hurricane Ike, to create *Venus on the Half Shell* in Barbara’s image. However, because of their proximity to a grade school, Barbara requested a more modest version. Now called “Barbie on the Half Shell,” Barbara says, “but she is me -- curly hair and all.”



Book Review: *Maverick Gardeners: Dr. Dirt and Other Determined Independent Gardeners*



Lisa Belcher
GCMG 2014

In September the Green Thumb Book Club read the quirky gardening book *Maverick Gardeners: Dr. Dirt and Other Determined Independent Gardeners* by Felder Rushing, being the second book by this author our club has read. I use the word *quirky* in the most sincere and respectful manner as this book is unlike any of Felder's previous writings. It showcases his suggestions and examples of bottle gardening, a gnome here and there is not only acceptable but encouraged,

and garden art is something to "go big or go home." It also reinforces the idea of "your garden is actually *your* garden" and it's yours to enjoy on a daily basis. You are the one who puts untold hours into making your garden your own. Not only does the author share tried and true

gardening advice, he turns to those who are near and dear to him for their gardening practices — whether they are completely foreign to you, me and Felder, but work wonderfully and prove satisfying for themselves. You will read stories

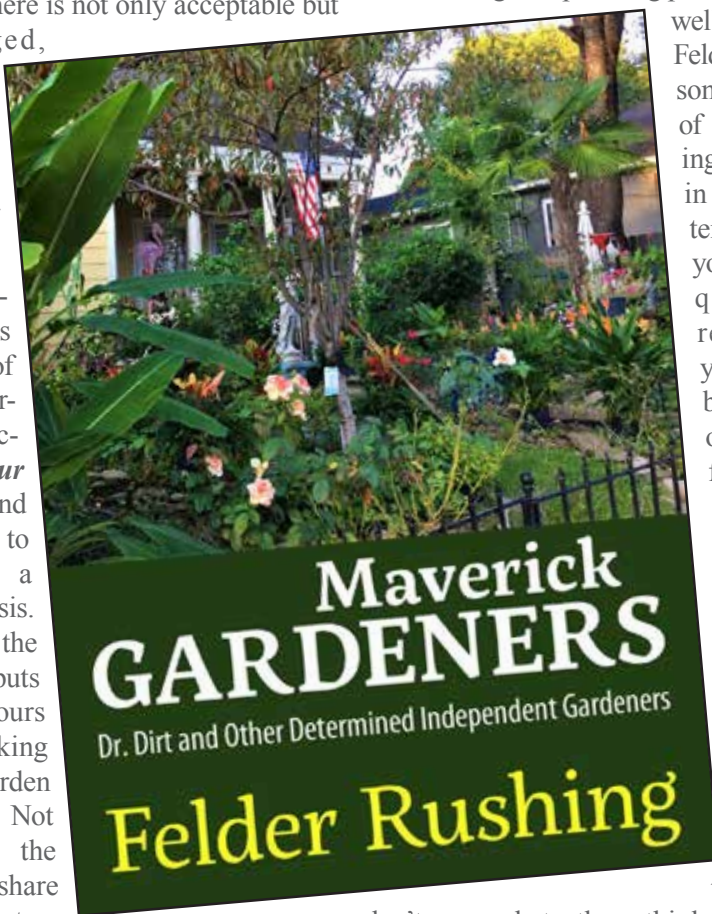
from "Dr. Dirt," who labels himself a rebellious gardener veering from the norm, to Felder's neighbors who share their unique passions for gardening.

The reader will be reminded that dirt is not just a medium in which one places a plant, rather how all of our gardening decisions and relationships revolve and revert back to dirt. Make no mistake; these pages are not just musings of gardeners and their passions. Intertwined between stories and gorgeous photos are lists of successful perennials that thrive in the south, great passalong plants,

as well as Felder's personal coda of gardening. Within a chapter or two you will quickly recognize yourself as being one of Felder's fellow "DIGrs" aka *Determined Independent Gardeners* whose mantra is "It's not that I

don't care what others think — *it just doesn't matter.*"

A book for both novice and pro, it might be a perfect gift to a first-time homeowner while easily bringing a smile to the face of a seasoned gardener.



The Green Thumb Book Club is happy to share the books selected for next year's reading! We will be reading seven books, the most our group has read in a single year. When you read and attend a book club meeting, the time spent counts towards Continuing Education hours. As of October, Green Thumb Book Club readers have logged 23 continuous education hours all the while enjoying interesting and lively discussions.

Next year's books include a variety of gardening/nature topics as well as two garden-themed fiction books.

January/February

A Southern Garden
by Elizabeth Lawrence

March/April

Bicycling with Butterflies
by Sara Dykman

May

The Seed Keeper by Diane Wilson

June/July

Bees in the America; How the Honeybee Shaped a Nation by Tammy Horn

August/September

Down to Earth Gardening Wisdom
by Monty Don

October/November

This is Your Mind on Plants
by Michael Pollan

December

The Forgotten Garden by Kate Morton

The Green Thumb Book Club meets the fourth Wednesday of the month in the conference room at the Extension office. If you have any questions regarding the books, club, time, etc., please contact Lisa Belcher at:

hydrangeababe@gmail.com

Discovery Garden Update



Tom Fountain
GCMG 2008

The change of seasons is always greatly anticipated by everyone, yet hot summer days continued to linger well into the fall this year. Temperatures have been two to three degrees above normal and rainfall has been two to three-inches below normal this past month. So, drought conditions remain with us.

The outlook from the National Weather Service indicates temperatures will likely continue to be above normal with rainfall less than normal into 2023. Our drought conditions will continue to haunt us into the New Year. On a brighter side, this hurricane season is almost behind us and so far, it's been mostly uneventful.

In the garden, hot dry weather limited the number of people coming out. Some of those that made it out regularly (Fig.1): Hedy Wolpa, Hazel Lamp-ton, Keven Lancon, David Cooper, Vicki Blythe, and Sue Bain were all busy repairing beds and getting them ready for fall planting. Now, with cooler mornings our numbers have increased.

This fall has been a time for firsts. We have our first fall Texas Master Gardener class, and we are conducting our first fall tomato trial. We have had our first ever Fall Festival and Plant Sale that followed our online fall plant sale. They were both very successful. It was fun having a large group of visitors in the garden again.

As usual, a new group of Texas Master Gardener interns seem to fit in well. Most showed up to help at the plant sale, had smiles on their faces and all were enthusiastic. They should be a very interesting group to get to know. Some of the interns working the fall plant sale were Tina Woods and Marilyn Hakim with Master Gardener Sandy McBride in (Fig. 2).

The never-ending hot, dry weather we had this summer seemed to accelerate the speed things in the garden fell apart. Thankfully, even during our hottest days we had gardeners that were willing and able to come out and take care of the garden essentials. On one of those hot days David Eskins and Kevin Lancon were busy repairing the tomato trial bed and getting it ready for the new class in (Fig. 3).

In other parts of the garden trimming and weeding are constant tasks. Pictured in (Fig. 4) Judy Anderson was throwing a weed from the Earth-Kind Garden. She and Patsy Jewell in the background had been busy weeding that morning.

The reasons that our plant sales are so successful range from our planning groups to those of us willing to come out and help load the plants. This includes a group of gardeners that help in the greenhouse. The other day while wandering around I came across Nancy Langston-Noh and Briana Etie repotting and labeling plants for fall planting in (Fig. 5).

Now, before you get the idea that it is all work, work, work - the garden is a good place to get a little exercise, it is an excellent place to visit with great people and learn something new. I learn from fellow Master Gardeners all the time. In addition to all of that, we have fun get togethers. Hedy Wolpa, Sue Bain, Vicki Blythe, Judy Anderson, and Jan Fountain posed for me at our Galveston County Master Gardener's backyard September monthly meeting in (Fig.6).



Joy 2022

Photos that brought JOY to the photographer in 2022.

By MG Vicki Blythe

On a walk on the beach in Galveston, Vicki caught this incredible landscape of a storm coming.

By MG Joanne Hardgrove

This lovely yellow dahlia is from Joanne's front yard.

By MG Linda Steber

Firebush (*Hamelia patens*) brings joy to Linda Steber who said this plant "just makes me smile."

By MG Stacey Phillips

Stacey Phillips finds joy in her Cranberry hibiscus (*Hibiscus acetosella*)...perfect for an Aggie's garden! This beauty is a late summer blooming perennial. Deadheading isn't necessary, and it easily reseeds. Culinary usage includes use in salads and stir fries, teas and beverages (using sepals).

By MG Briana Etie

This Paul Weissich Plumeria brings joy to Briana Etie. It was named after the director of Foster Botanical Garden in Honolulu. The plumeria was given to Briana by MG Mary Jane Fortney.

By MG Penny Bessire

This evening landscape in Galveston was taken on a night of turtle patrol.

Send in a photo to be considered for this page in the January/February edition.

Next Photo Gallery topic will be Garden Art. It can be in your yard or another location but it caught your eye and then your camera.

Please send photo in a large size, any information you want to give and your name and general location of art.

Deadline is December 1, 2022.

Send to kbgephart@comcast.net.



Seasonal Bites: Simply Delicious!



Sandra Gervais
GCMG 2011

It can still be hot outside but Fall holidays have started their relentless march into our lives.

Christmas carols in big box stores are not far off. Pumpkin scent and flavor are everywhere, from the coffee at Starbucks to harvest time house decorations to new recipes for big holiday dinners. Here are some recipes that might fit into your holiday celebrations and still be a bit different. The trifle, made by Brianna Etie for one of our Galveston County Master Gardener meals, is an American version of the British Christmas dessert loved the world over. The chutney is an unusual relish that goes well with any roasted meat, especially turkey. And the carrot soufflé is a yummy way to get everyone to eat more veggies. Happy Holidays!



Black Forest Chocolate Trifle

Swiss or Devil's Food chocolate cake, baked in a 9 x 13 pan, according to directions. (Feel free to use a package mix or your own scratch recipe.)
4 oz. Cherry brandy or amaretto, if desired.
2 regular size boxes of chocolate pudding.
16 oz. whipped topping at room temperature.

Bake cake according to directions, cool completely and cut into 1-inch cubes.
Place half of the cake cubes in bottom of trifle bowl or other deep bowl.
Drizzle cake cubes with half of brandy or amaretto, if using.
Top with half of the pudding.
Layer with half of the cherries.
Cover with half of the whipped topping.

Repeat these three layers, ending with whipped topping.

Refrigerate minimum of four hours or overnight.
Decorate with shaved chocolate.

Keep leftovers refrigerated.....if there are any!

Serves 12



Cranberry Apple Chutney

12 oz. fresh or frozen cranberries
1/4 cup water
2 large apples, peeled, cored, chopped
1 1/2 cups sugar
2/3 cup finely chopped onions
2/3 cup golden raisins (can use regular raisins)
2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger
1 teaspoon minced garlic
1 teaspoon salt
3/4 teaspoon ground allspice
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
2/3 cup dark corn syrup
1/3 cup cider vinegar
2/3 cup chopped pecans

Combine all but last three ingredients in a large saucepan.
Bring to a boil over medium high heat.
Reduce heat and cover.
Stir occasionally for 15 minutes.
Add last three ingredients.
Cook uncovered for 15 minutes, stirring frequently.
Cool and serve at room temperature.
Leftovers may be refrigerated and are great on a sandwich.

Note: this is a forgiving recipe that just wants to be sweet, sour, and spicy all at once. If you dislike one of the ingredients, leave it out or substitute.



Carrot Soufflé

350° oven
2 pounds peeled carrots, sliced lengthwise
1/4 cup sugar
2 tablespoons flour
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
3 large eggs at room temperature
1/4 cups butter, softened butter to grease soufflé dish
1 1/2 tablespoons sugar to coat soufflé dish

Cover carrots with water in large saucepan and bring to boil.
Reduce heat to medium and cook 30 minutes or until very tender.
Drain.
In food processor, purée carrots with sugar, flour, baking powder, and vanilla.
Add eggs, one at a time and pulse after each until blended.
Add softened butter and pulse until blended.

Lightly grease 1 1/2-quart soufflé dish.
Coat bottom and sides with the extra sugar.
Add carrot mixture.
Bake for 45 minutes until soufflé is set when tested with fingertip.
Serve immediately with whipped cream as a dessert, or plain as a vegetable in place of sweet potato casserole. Can dust top with powdered sugar if desired. Serves 10.

Note: Even if it doesn't rise as high as a soufflé should, we still love it as a vegetable in place of sweet potato casserole!

Welcome the Fall 2022 Class of GCMG Interns



Stacy D. Mills
GCMG 2022

The Texas Master Gardener program is a partnership. The program provides an intensive training for local residents in the many diverse aspects of horticulture and as a direct benefit to the residents themselves. Managed

by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, the program also trains participants so they can cooperate with the staff of the Galveston County Extension office in carrying out educational programs and activities that address horticultural issues of concern to county clientele. Participants must provide 50 hours of volunteer service in the area of horticulture within nine months after completing the course.

The program has had a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19 but has returned with a first time fall group, the Fall Class of 2022. It is taking place at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension office at 4102 Main in La Marque, Texas.

The following is a view of the program by intern Stacy Mills who is a member of the 2022 class.

Welcome Fall Class of 2022. We have shown up with enthusiasm and vigor. Being the inaugural fall class, we have embraced our position. We are excited to see results from the first fall tomato trials.

Our class is full of colorful characters spanning several decades. We have a wealth of knowledge with varied backgrounds including military veterans, a nurse, architect, teachers, a doctor, business owners, a flight attendant, the spouse of a Texas Master Gardener, retirees, and several avid anglers.

Our classroom instruction began August 30, 2022 and will conclude on November 8, 2022. Our classroom hours are Tuesday and Thursday from 8:30 am to 1 pm. We will have 50 volunteer hours to accumulate in order to graduate on June 13, 2023.

Covered topics have included Intro to Plant Growth, Tomato Trial Project, Earth-Kind Program, Soils, Propagation, Water, Fruit Trees for Galveston County, Turf and Lawn Maintenance, Organic Gardening and Beneficial Insects, Urban Forestry, Plant Hybridization, Plant Pathology, Pollinator Gardening, Ecology, Fruit and Nut Development, Vegetables, Entomology, IPM (Integrated Pest Management), and a presentation we develop and share with the class.

I applied, and was accepted into this group. I am thrilled to be learning many new concepts. Think “drinking from a fire hose.”

Who knew viruses need vectors, fruit trees need scaffolding for better yield, leaves have venation, Huanglongbing is a Citrus Greening disease? Plant processes include respiration, transpiration, and photosynthesis. Walnuts and pecans come from the same plant family. Seeds are dispersed from animals, wind and water. If you are looking for pollinators, keep color, shape, and scent in mind. Factors for plant growth are light and temperature. There are 12 soil orders in Texas, and seven species of Bluebonnets. The number one contaminant in Texas is bacteria. Hydrozoning is one key to water conservation. Get your SOIL tested every 2-3 years.

Now, if I can determine whether to plant a determinate or indeterminate tomato. Hm-mmmmm ...time to get my nose back in the *Texas Master Gardener Handbook* and read up on pollinator gardening and ecology for tomorrow's class.

Look out! This inaugural fall class is almost ready to volunteer, improving the lives and economy of Galveston County.

Don't forget to stop and smell the roses. May it be a blooming and fragrant Multiflora, French, Climbing, Hybrid Rugosa, Mr. Lincoln, Prairie, Virginia, Dogrose, or one that you hybridize.

Interns Class of 2022

Pam Abbott-West
Theresa Abell
Shinny Anand
Wendy Baldwin
Mindy Basye
Debby Brady
Larry Brizendine
Linda Crowston
Inge Duran
John Ely
Angela Farris
Candace Gamble
Justin Gripon
Marilyn Hakim
Sharon Hemeon
Steve Holliday
Carla Isbell Shannon
Nemo Jackson
Helene Lieb
Carey Little
Patty McElhany
Karyl Mehleman
Stacy D. Mills
John Mitchiner Jr.
Michael Reed
Christina Reynolds
Heidi Roth
Norma Torok
Michelle Turner
Tina Woods



Houston Botanic Garden (HBG) visit. Photo by Stephen Brueggerhoff.



Group shot by Stephen Brueggerhoff.



In the tropical area with banana plants at HBG. Photo by Stephen Brueggerhoff.



Ira Gervais gives tomato tips to interns. Photo by Stephen Brueggerhoff.



MG Alysha Davila with interns at Fall Festival. Photo by Tom Fountain.



MG Pam Hunter with intern Carla Shannon at Fall Festival. Photo by Karolyn Gephart.



Ready to plant. Photo by Stephen Brueggerhoff.



Tomato Trials bed prep. Photo by Stephen Brueggerhoff.

Fall Festival, October 8, 2022 Discovery Garden in Carbide Park



Blender Bike Booth. Photo by MG Karolyn Gephart.



Children's Activities. Photo by MG Karolyn Gephart.



Craft Booth. Photo by MG Karolyn Gephart.



Garden Tour.
Photo by MG Karolyn Gephart.



MG Gene Speller giving seminar Cruciferous Vegetables.
Photo by MG Tom Fountain.



Information as well as plants were offered.
Photo by MG Karolyn Gephart.




Master Grown Plant Booth. Photo by MG Tom Fountain.




Plant Sale. Photo by MG Karolyn Gephart.

Galveston County Master Gardener Bulletin Board

Check out the 'Request a Speaker' form. 

It is available online: <https://tx-mg.org/galveston/speakers-bureau/>. It is located on the pull-down menu under 'About' in the header bar of the website, and choosing 'Request a Speaker'. Are you a garden club, community group or other group inquiring about the Speakers Bureau and requesting a program? Use this website to get a speaker/topic. 

Learn about gardening on Floral Fridays
Join horticulturist Stephen Brueggerhoff for Floral Fridays, an ongoing Facebook live presentation every Friday at 11 am. The event is hosted by Galveston County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and Galveston County Master Gardeners. Topics are related to Horticulture. Previously live videos can also be viewed. 

2022 GALVESTON COUNTY PECAN SHOW

ENTRIES ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED FOR THE GALVESTON COUNTY PECAN SHOW, WITH THREE CATEGORIES FOR COMMERCIAL, CLASSIC AND NEW DIVISION, AND NATIVES. SUBMITTED SAMPLES MUST SUBMITTED TO GALVESTON COUNTY AGRI'LIFE EXTENSION OFFICE BY FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2020 AT 3 PM. FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT ONLINE [HTTPS://GALVESTON.AGRILIFE.ORG/HORTICULTURE/](https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/) OR CALL 281.309.5065.

MGs need to report hours
Galveston County Master Gardeners:
Don't forget to log your volunteer hours for 2022.
Use the Texas Volunteer System through the website
at <https://txmg.org/galveston/>.



Hazel with chickens



October meeting hosts Robin and Hazel with Kathy Maines



Robin with her turkens

Chicken Coop Tour

New Year's Resolutions for GCMG's



Kathy Maines
GCMG 2017

There are probably a lot of us who make New Year's resolutions. Probably a lot of us who abandon those New Year's resolutions. Resolutions I feel are important for Galveston County Master Gardeners (including myself) are:

Volunteer outside your comfort zone. Volunteer in an area you are not familiar with. This can be done thru plant sales, community outreach, newsletter articles, electronic mediums and many more. You may find something you really enjoy.

Garden outside your comfort zone. Plant something different. Last year I grew potatoes at home in a container. It worked!

Enter your volunteer hours. We do so much and it feels so good to get credit for all we do. (If you need help submitting hours, please let me know.) This was submitted for our Association award in 2021 for which we won first place:

GCMGA is a group of 234 highly trained, hardworking Master Gardeners (MGs) dedicated to their motto, "Knowledge not shared is knowledge lost". GCMGs volunteered 19,919 hours in 2021, averaging 84.4 hours per MG (equating to 9.6 full-time employees, \$568,488.26 for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension support) and logged 109,318.5 miles. GCMGs delivered 33 free seminars (virtually and in person) serving 1,004 residents/visitors and providing 104.75 educational hours. We expanded outreach by developing outdoor workshops and 'how to' YouTube videos. We maintained the Discovery Garden (4.1 acres), researching and showcasing best horticultural practices and harvested 1,143 pounds of produce for local food banks. GCMGs supported Junior Master Gardener programs, an adult daycare, 100 Kitchen Gardens of Galveston and annual herb fair. GCMGs produced four *Gulf Coast Gardening Newsletters*, *Galveston Daily News* and *Coast Magazine* educational and horticultural articles and conducted six online plant sales which included member grown tomatoes propagated from seeds at home.



Plant something for butterflies to enjoy. Photo by MG Vicki Blythe.

While researching New Year's resolutions, I came across this list from the January-February 2002 issue of *Horticulture Update*, edited by Dr. Douglas F. Welsh, and produced by Extension Horticulture, Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System. https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/newsletters/hortupdate/hortupdate_archives/2002/jan02/art-8jan.html

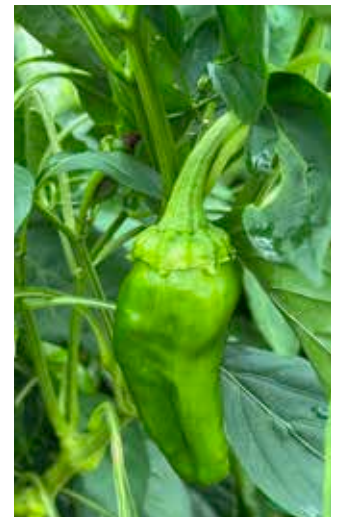
Top 10 New Year's Resolutions for the Gardener and 'Yardener' from *The Weekend Gardener*.

- I will use a pesticide only when absolutely necessary, and will use the least toxic one.
- I will continue to wage war on fire ants by using baits.
- I will not water the lawn in the middle of the day, and will only water when it needs it.
- I will prepare the soil by adding pine bark when planting shrubs and flowers, but not when planting a tree.
- I will add one new feature to my garden this year (i.e., a new bed, a bench, a statue, an arbor).
- I will put up a bird feeder or plant a butterfly friendly plant.
- I will mulch all flower and shrub beds to conserve water and prevent weeds.
- I will plant at least one vegetable crop in my garden (i.e., green beans, a cherry tomato, bell peppers, a row of corn).
- I will not over prune my crape myrtles.
- I will plant a tree.

Good luck with your New Year's resolutions and I wish you a very happy 2023.



Add a birdhouse. Photo by MG Robin Collins.



Grow a vegetable. Photo by MG Karolyn Gephart.

2022 Master Gardener Recertification Hours

Date	Name of Program	Speaker	MG CEUs
1/8/2022	Wedge Grafting	Hazel Lampton, Herman Auer	2.50
1/11/2022	MGA Jan. Meeting - Looking Ahead in 2022	Kathy Maines, Stephen B.	1.00
1/13/2022	Discovery Garden Lunch & Learn - Pollinator Garden	Sue Bain	0.25
1/15/2022	Planting Fruit Trees	Herman Auer	2.00
1/15/2022	Fruit Tree Selections	Robert Marshall	2.00
1/22/2022	Growing Great Tomatoes, Part 2 of 3	Ira Gervais	2.50
1/22/2022	Successful Spring Vegetable Gardening	Kevin Lancon	2.00
1/29/2022	Growing Peaches in Galveston County	Herman Auer	2.00
1/29/2022	Garden Bulbs for Galveston County	Lisa Davis, Fran Brockington	2.00
2/5/2022	Growing Irish Potatoes	Kevin Lancon	2.00
2/5/2022	Growing Avocados	Hazel Lampton	2.00
2/8/2022	MGA Feb. Meeting - <i>Citrus Problems in Texas</i>	Janis Teas	1.00
2/10/2022	Discovery Garden Lunch & Learn - Pergola	Pam Hunter	0.25
3/3/2022	Discovery Garden Lunch & Learn - Louisiana Irises	Monica Martens	0.25
3/8/2022	MGA Mar. Meeting - <i>The Native Plant Conundrum</i>	Stephen Brueggerhoff	1.00
3/12/2022	Growing Great Tomatoes, Part 3 of 3	Ira Gervais	2.50
3/19/2022	Cucurbits - The Squash & Cucumber Family	Kevin Lancon	2.50
3/19/2022	Successful Container Gardening	Karolyn Gephart, Kaye Corey	2.00
3/26/2022	Irises for the Gulf Coast Garden	Monica Martens	2.00
3/26/2022	Rainwater Harvesting	Nat Gruesen	2.00
4/21/2022	Discovery Garden Lunch & Learn - Paste Tomato Trials	David Eskins	0.25
4/23/2022	Looking Down on Insects	Hedy Wolpa	1.50
4/23/2022	Incredible, Edible Herbs	Briana Etie, Karen Nelson	1.50
5/14/2022	2022 Fruit Orchard Tour	Stephen Brueggerhoff, Herman Auer, Robert Marshall, Bill Verm	3.00
5/26/2022	Discovery Garden Lunch & Learn - Shop Update	Rachel Montemayor	0.25
5/28/2022	Summer Pruning Fruit Trees	Stephen Brueggerhoff, Robert Marshall	2.00
6/4/2022	Growing Strawberries	Robert Marshall	2.00
6/4/2022	Plumeria Propagation Workshop	Loretta Osteen, Penny Besire	2.00
6/16/2022	Discovery Garden Lunch & Learn - Grapes in the Garden	David Cooper	0.25
7/7/2022	Discovery Garden Lunch & Learn - Discovery Garden Update	Kevin Lancon	0.25
7/9/2022	Arranging Fresh & Artificial Flowers	Jackie Auer	2.00
7/16/2022	Ramble On: Blackberry Culture	Stephen Brueggerhoff	2.00
7/16/2022	Fabulous Figs w/ Discovery Garden Tour	Stephen Brueggerhoff	2.00
7/28/2022	Discovery Garden Lunch & Learn - Biscamp Pears	Herman Auer	0.25
8/9/2022	Moody Gardens Greenhouse Tour & Buffet Banquet	Greenhouse Horticulture Technician - Nick	1.00
8/20/2022	Growing Upwards: Vertical Gardening	Kevin Lancon	2.00
9/10/2022	Growing Garlic & Onions 2022	Kevin Lancon	2.00
9/10/2022	Herbs for the Gulf Coast 2022	Briana Etie, Nancy Langston-Noh	2.00
9/24/2022	T-Bud Grafting 2022	Hazel Lampton	2.00
10/1/2022	Backyard Citrus 2022	Robert Marshall	2.00
2022 Recertification Hours for MGs		Total CEUs (Hours)	64.00
Last Updated: October 3, 2022			

Brueggerhoff, Rogers Receive Awards



Barbara Canetti
GCMG 2016

Stephen Brueggerhoff, the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Horticulture Agent, is the recent winner of two awards for achievements he has accomplished in the past few years.

The National Association of County Agricultural Agents and the Texas County Agricultural Agents Association each awarded him an achievement award at their respective conventions this spring.

The award is given to agents with less than 10 years of experience who have shown advancement in their careers. It is a competitive award. Three agents are chosen from the statewide awards to also receive the national recognition. The National Convention was in West Palm Beach; the state convention was a week later on South Padre Island.

He said the award was given to him for work he has done in both Brazoria and Galveston counties “and what we have planned here for the future.”

“We have strong programs here that I stepped into to help cultivate and advance what we have locally,” he said. “I am honored.”

Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent Phoenix Rogers also received NACAA Distinguished Service Award at the annual Conference in Florida. The purpose of the Distinguished Service Award Program is to encourage and recognize excellence in the field of professional Extension for members with more than 10 years of service.



Stephen Brueggerhoff



Phoenix Rogers

December 2022 GCMG Calendar of Public Educational Programs

2022 GALVESTON COUNTY PECAN SHOW

Accepting entries through December 2, 2022

Bringing pecan pride, open to commercial and backyard growers, and celebrating pecan culture in Galveston County. Entries are now being accepted for the Galveston County Pecan Show, with three categories for commercial, classic and new division, and natives. Submit samples to Galveston County AgriLife Extension office by Friday, December 2, 2020 at 3 pm. For more information, visit online: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/> or call 281-309-5065.

GROWING TOMATOES FROM SEED

Saturday, December 10, 2022

9 – 11:30 a.m.

This is the first in a series of three programs presented by Galveston County Master Gardener Ira Gervais learning how to grow great tomatoes in Galveston County. Part 1 will cover growing from seeds, where to obtain seeds and supplies, and starting/growing your seedlings. Discussion topics include picking the best seed varieties for Galveston County, seed starting methods, growing techniques and preparing starter plants for spring garden planting. To register, visit online: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/events/> or call 281-309-5065. Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located inside Carbide Park at 4102-B Main Street (FM 519), La Marque

GOING NUTS FOR PECANS

Saturday, December 10, 2022

2 - 4 pm

Join Horticulture Agent Stephen Brueggerhoff, presenting pecan cultivation and tree maintenance in Galveston County. We will also exhibit award winning pecans and distribute ribbons for winners of the 2022 Galveston County Pecan Show. To register, visit online: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/events/> or call 281-309-5065. Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located inside Carbide Park at 4102-B Main Street (FM 519), La Marque

Last Word: Cleanest Tools on the Block



Stephen Brueggerhoff
Extension Agent - Horticulture
Texas A&M Agrilife Extension
Service - Galveston County

Garden tools are lovingly exchanged as gifts during the holidays, a gesture of friendship that serves as a practical memento. You can actively honor these gifts by caring for your tools throughout the year, and keep in mind the following tips for tool maintenance.

Tools benefit from cleaning immediately after use. Remove collected soil on metal surfaces with a hard stream of water and a sturdy bristle brush.

Use a rag to wipe off water and allow the metal to dry overnight. Afterwards use steel wool to scrub affected surfaces if you see rust, then lightly oil with a lubricant. There are different lubricants recommended for metal care such as food grade silicone spray, light motor oil, even vegetable oil. My preference is mineral oil: it provides an effective, long-lasting protective coating and is less caustic to skin contact. While it may not be practical to lubricate our tools after daily use, it is important to treat them for long-term storage.

I admit I have been that forgetful person that has left tools in the garden overnight, and have had to rehab rusted hand pruners and shovels. You can remove a patina of rust with household vinegar, saturating a folded paper towel or cloth and rubbing till you see smooth metal. Keep in mind that vinegar itself is corrosive and can damage aluminum and copper. This practice is best used as a last resort rather than for continual maintenance. More severe cases of rust may require soaking in vinegar overnight. Hand pruners can be dismantled to submerge exposed metal. Use glass or thick plastic containers large enough to host the metal parts, and make sure that rubber parts or plastic coated handles remain exposed. Remove from the vinegar bath, wipe with paper towels or rags, and then use steel wool to finish the work. Once these actions are completed, immediately apply your preferred lubricant for a protective coating.

Continual tool sterilization for general plant maintenance is not a practical solution. The action of cleaning will reduce the potential of your tools becoming a vector for pathogens. However, sterilizing pruners is the best practice when actively pruning plants susceptible to viral or bacterial infection (i.e. oak wilt, citrus greening). You can lessen the chance of spreading pathogens by pruning below affected wounds and not through discolored or gummy tissue. Consider using available and least caustic materials. I do not recommend diluted bleach because it is corrosive. Isopropyl alcohol at full or diluted strength is often mentioned in literature and used because of its availability. Another option that may be practical is non-corrosive household disinfectants at full strength.

Garden tools are often lovingly given as gifts during the holidays, and what better way to celebrate friendships and honor the gift-giver than to proudly show that you are caring for this meaningful gift throughout the year.



Photos Courtesy of Pixabay.com

2022 Master Gardener Association Leadership

President

Kathy Maines

Sr. Vice President

Kevin Lancon

Treasurer

Debra Brizendine

Assistant Treasurer

Sharon Zaal

Secretary

Briana Etie

Assistant Secretary

Nancy Langston-Noh

State Association Delegates

Terry and Velda Cuclis

State Association Alternate Delegates

Ira Gervais and Sharon Zaal

VP for Programs

Herman Auer, Education Programs

Judy Anderson, Monthly Meetings

Speakers Bureau Coordinators

Nancy Langston-Noh

Plant Sale Chairmen

Kathy Maines and Kevin Lancon

Discovery Garden Coordinator

Kevin Lancon

Discovery Garden Area Leaders

Judy Anderson, Sue Bain,

Linda Barnett, David Cooper,

Briana Etie, Pam Hunter,

John Jons, Kathy Maines,

Monica Martens,

Rachel Montemayor,

Tish Reustle, and Jim Waligora

VP for Volunteer Development

Nancy Greenfield

MG Intern Course Team Leader

Pam Hunter

VP for Media Relations

Nita Caskey

Newsletter Editors

Karolyn Gephart and

Robin Stone Collins

Fellowship

Penny Bessire

MG Volunteer Hour Recorders

Dr. Margaret Canavan,

Wayne Elliott and Linda Steber

Jr. Master Gardener Programs Leaders

Kaye Corey and Gayle McAadoo

Photography Team Leaders

Herman Auer, Tom Fountain

and Chris Anastas

Webmaster

Stephen Brueggerhoff

Board of Directors

Judy Anderson, Ira Gervais,

Frank Resch, Tish Reustle,

and Linda Steber

CEA-HORT and Master Gardener

Program Coordinator

Stephen Brueggerhoff, M.S.

Judy's Corner and Galveston County Monthly Meetings



Judy Anderson
GCMG 2012

November - GCMG Annual Meeting

November is when the Galveston County Master Gardeners host the Annual Meeting to inform the members of the business status of the Association. Tuesday, November 8, 2022 is the day planned for this meeting. This is required by the GCMG bylaws. Reports will be made concerning presentations, finances, intern training and garden projects. All Master Gardeners are encouraged to attend this meeting and take an active role in participating.

Officers with expiring terms include Board Members Frank Resch and Linda Steber (both have agreed to continue in their office if re-elected). Officers Kevin Lancon, Sharon Zaal and Nancy Langston-Noh have agreed to serve another term in their current position. Velda and Terry Cuclis have served as State Associate Delegates, but have declined to serve another term. In their place, Tom and Jan Fountain will be on the proposed slate of officers for the next term.

Prior to the meeting, a potluck dinner will be served. Please bring a dish to share and enjoy the tasty treats provided by the members. Don't forget to pick up your dish before leaving for home.

December - Holiday Meeting

The holidays seem to bring out the festivities along the Gulf Coast. Sometimes the calendars get full before all our activities are scheduled. Be sure to mark your calendar for the Master Gardener Holiday Party, Tuesday, December 13, 2022. The event will be held at the home of Mikey and Allen Isbell. This is a GCMG tradition that includes festivities on the porch, weather permitting, with all the outdoor decorations.

Join the Spirit of Giving by bringing an unwrapped gift for a child to be donated to a local shelter. There will be the annual Grinch Gifting for Master Gardeners. Bring a wrapped gift for a man or woman valued at \$15. The gift exchange will take place after dinner. Be prepared for gift stealing and mayhem!

Sometimes the social goes a little longer than planned so bring a potluck dish ready to serve;

if chilling or warming is needed, bring hot or cold packs to keep food at safe temperatures. This will truly be a feast to celebrate the joy of the season. Bring your holiday spirit and share the good times with your MG friends.

January 2023

The month of January is a forward-looking month. It is an opportunity to reflect on the year ahead and plan accordingly. It is also important to attend the January Monthly Meeting, Tuesday, January 10. Association President, Kathy Maines will present the activities planned for the year. Texas Master Gardener President Robin Collins whose term expires December 2022 will discuss issues from the state organization. Robin will hold the Past President office beginning January 2023. Stephen Brueggerhoff will give an update on the organization with the Extension Office perspective.

A traditional New Year's meal is planned for the potluck before the meeting. Ham, cabbage, corn bread and food surprises will be on the menu. Please bring a dish to share. Wishing you all a Happy 2023.



Christmas Party at Mikey Isbell's in 2021.
Photo by MG Karolyn Gephart.

Answers to Veggie Quiz on page 19

Photo #1 *Adenium obesum* - Desert Rose

Photo #2 Bromeliad

Photo #3 *Calathea orbifolia* - Zebra Plant or Peacock Plant

Photo #4 *Saintpaulia ionantha* - African Violet

Photo #5 *Anthurium andraeanum* - Flamingo Lily

Photo #6 *Phalaenopsis* sp. - Moth Orchid

Photo #7 *Tradescantia zebrina* - Inch Plant or Wandering Jew

Photo #8 *Codiaeum variegatum* var. *pictum* - Variegated Croton