



## Texas Master Gardeners



Earth Day is celebrated annually on April 22 with events worldwide in support of the environment and to raise awareness for the environmental protection and care of our planet.

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The first Earth Day on April 22, 1970 is considered to be the birthday of the modern environmental protection movement. It is said that nowadays more than one billion people worldwide take part in activities on Earth Day, making it the world's most widely observed secular (non-religious) holiday.

### Facts About Plants:

- Plants are essential for life on Earth, providing us with the food we eat, the medicines we use, and the oxygen we breathe.
- There are more than 390,000 different species of plants, with 2,000 new species discovered annually.
- An estimated 8,800 different plant species are threatened with extinction.

### What You Can Do to Help Protect Plants:

- Support a ban on the use of pesticides, especially neonicotinoid insecticides.
- Support native plants: Planting and growing native plants is a significant and cost-effective way to help save plants as they are best adapted to local environment conditions, they require less water, and they also improve air quality.
- Purchase sustainable plant products: Being an informed consumer and knowing your plants and plant-based products is an important first step. When purchasing teas, herbal medicines, beauty products or other plant-based products, make sure they have a sustainable certification logo.

*This article was taken from [earthday.org/campaigns/endangered-species/plants](http://earthday.org/campaigns/endangered-species/plants)*

**A** new month  
**P**ush yourself  
**R**ejuvenate  
**I**nspire others  
**L** laugh lots



*Hugel Culture Example*



*Easier Harvesting*



*Hugel Culture in Containers*



*Walled Hugel Bed*

## *Hugel Culture*

Have you ever heard of **Hugel Culture**? Well, it's a gardening technique developed in Germany hundreds of years ago. The actual name is Hügelkultur (pronounced Hoo-gul-culture) which means mound culture or hill culture. The idea behind this technique is to use existing logs, branches, leaves, grass clippings, and kitchen scraps in a mounded, no-dig bed to increase moisture retention, build up fertility and maximize surface areas for growing fruit, vegetables, and herbs.

There are several advantages to a hugel bed:

- The long-term decay of the wood and organic matter provide a consistent source of nutrients to plants.
- Soil aeration increases as the logs and branches break down.
- The logs and branches also act like a sponge, retaining water until a very dry spell then slowly releasing it. This decreases the use of watering and according to some sources after a couple of years no watering is required at all.
- The mound structure will allow a larger surface area for plants and easier accessibility for harvesting.
- You can also do hugel culture in any kind of container.
- And, the best part, you don't have to dig or till the soil.

There are some disadvantages:

- The first year the wood will actually steal a lot of nitrogen back from the surrounding biomass so if there is not a lot of organic material on top of the wood, gardeners will have to add an organic fertilizer to balance out the nutrients. Once the wood starts to decay, then it will begin to give nitrogen back to the soil, but this may take one to two years.
- Some types of trees like cedar and walnut can actually prevent germination. So, research which types of trees are the best.
- As the organic matter decomposes, the mound will shrink and eventually have to be rebuilt.

How to build your hugel bed:

1. Lay down logs first followed by branches.
2. Water these first layers well.
3. Fill in all the open spaces with leaf litter, manure and kitchen scraps.
4. Top off with 1" to 2" of soil and a layer of mulch.
5. Optimize height should be at least 3 feet or more if you are not using a container.
6. Allow the hugel bed to "cure" for a few weeks before planting. Many gardeners prepare the bed in fall for spring planting; however, once you feel the bed is ready then start planting and watch the results!

## Growing Citrus



*Improved Meyer Lemon*

**Improved Meyer Lemons, Satsuma Oranges and Mexican Limes** are the most popular citrus trees grown in our area; however, because they are tropical to sub-tropical plants, they cannot withstand prolonged temperatures below 26 degrees. That is why many local gardeners plant citrus in containers so that during the coldest winter months they can be moved indoors. However, be aware that growing in a container will produce less fruit than a planted tree and will require a careful watering schedule.

One of the biggest mistakes gardeners make with citrus trees is overwatering. The container must have good drainage and loose organic soil to help maintain a proper water level. Water once a week during cold weather then increase to 3-4 times in very hot weather. To maintain proper watering let the top 2" of the soil dry out before watering again. Then water at a very slow rate to ensure that the moisture percolates down to the drainage holes.



*Satsuma Oranges*

### **Improved Meyer Lemons:**

- The Improved variety introduced in the 1970's has eliminated the worry of the *Citrus tristeza virus* which killed off many citrus trees before that time.
- Needs at least 6 hours of sunlight.
- Self-pollinating
- Prune to open up the center for air circulation and remove straight up-growth.
- Fertilize 3-4 times a year: late winter, spring, fall.
- Blooms on small immature trees should be removed to allow only four to six lemons to grow. Blooms all year, but they have two main blooming times: fall and early spring.

### **Satsuma Oranges:**

- Needs at least 8 to 10 hours of sunlight.
- If grown in large containers will only reach four to six feet in height.
- Use loose potting soil with sphagnum peat moss but no sand.
- Pick fruit off the tree as soon as they are ripe, as fruit left too long on the satsuma tree can lose flavor.
- Fertilize the tree with a balanced, slow-release fertilizer or fertilizer labeled for citrus in late winter or early spring.
- Produces November—February.



*Mexican "Key" Lime*

### **Mexican Limes:**

- Sometimes referred to as a "Key Lime" and a favorite of cooks.
- Requires at least 10 hours of full sunlight.
- Needs loose well-draining soil with a pH level between 6.1 and 7.8.
- Water deeply and slowly.
- Grows limes year-round but with heavier yields during two main seasons, in May and June and November and December.

## The Giant Leopard Moth



I wrote a few months ago about the wooly caterpillars that were in our area. Well, look what they transformed into! This is the Giant Leopard Moth (*Hypercompe scribonia*) which is everywhere right now emerging as adults for their breeding season. These moths are one of the largest of the “tiger moths” with a wingspan of up to 3”. Their very distinctive markings that resemble a leopard are a warning to their predators. When they emerge from their larva, they are only interested in breeding and do not even eat, so they are not a pest for the gardener while in this state.



The female giant leopard moth emits pheromones that are carried on the wind and are detected by the male’s antennae. The male then follows the scent to find his primary target and breeds with the female. She will lay her eggs on host plants and then die. Mating and laying eggs occur at night with the adult moth spending most of its short life reproducing.

It is believed the spots are a warning to predators, but their real defense mechanism is a yellow goo emitted from their eyes. The liquid is very distasteful to would-be predators and is a common trait among tiger moths.

## Herb of the Month—Italian Parsley



*Italian Parsley*

### **Italian Parsley**

(*Petroselinum crispum*) is a flat-leaf parsley which is much more flavorful than its cousin the curly leaf parsley. Due to its better flavor it is a great favorite of cooks for soups and sauces. It has

a distinctive flat leaf appearance very similar to Cilantro and is often confused with the Mexican herb.

Italian parsley is a biennial which means that it grows for two years—in the second year of growth, the flowers produce seeds and then die. The leaves are still edible into the early part of the second spring, but as soon as the flower shoots appear, the leaves will be bitter, so you will need to pull out the plant at that point.

Italian parsley grows to

about 12 inches mostly in a clump. They do great in cooler weather but will freeze if not protected.

While they do not like our Texas summers, you can successfully keep Italian parsley going if you plant it where it will get afternoon shade and heavily mulched.

One other benefit of planting parsley in your garden is that it's a favorite food of the striped caterpillar (called a parsleyworm) that becomes the black swallowtail butterfly. Simply by growing parsley, you'll be feed-

ing butterflies as well. Just be sure to plant enough parsley to share with the caterpillars.

### How to freeze:

- Put cut parsley in doubled up freezer bags to use later in soups & sauces.
- Blend the parsley leaves only (picked from the stems) in a blender or food processor with enough water or olive oil to make a thick puree. Freeze in ice cube trays. Once frozen, transfer to freezer bags for long term storage.

# April 2019

## Schedule of Events

- **Apr 2, 9: Grimes MG**, “2019 Intern Classes”, 9 a.m.—2:30 p.m., Go Texan Building, Navasota, TX
- **Apr 3: Brazos MG**, “Gardening with the Masters—Herbs”, Noon to 1:00 p.m., Demonstration Garden, Bryan
- **Apr 4: The Arbor Gate**, “Organic Pest, Disease & Weed Control”, 10:00 a.m.
- **Apr 6: The Arbor Gate**, “Bring Back the Pollinators”, 10:00 a.m.
- **Apr 6: Producers Cooperative**, “Maximize Spring Vegetable Garden Potential”, 10:00 a.m., Producers Conference Center, Bryan
- **Apr 10: The Arbor Gate**, “Lunch with the Experts—Miniature Gardens”, Noon
- **Apr 11: The Arbor Gate**, “What’s New and Unique in the Plant World”, 10:00 a.m.
- **Apr 11: Grimes MG**, “Spring Social”, Cathey Hardeman’s Residence, 15400 Micrea Road, Plantersville, 6:00 p.m. (**Bring your favorite dish**)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 	3 	4 	5	6 
7	8	9 	10 	11 	12	13 
14	15	16	17	18 	19	20 
21	22	23 	24	25	26	27
28 	29	30				

## Events (cont'd)

- **Apr 13: Montgomery MG**, “The Which, What & How of Spring Blooms”, 8:00 a.m.—10:00 a.m., Tom LeRoy Building, Conroe
- **Apr 13: Montgomery MG**, “Multiplying Your Blooms”, 10:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m., Tom Leroy Building, Conroe
- **Apr 13: The Arbor Gate**, “Creating the WOW Factor with Color”, 10:00 a.m.
- **Apr 18: The Arbor Gate**, “Spring Tonics & Safe Detox with Plants”, 10:00 a.m.
- **Apr 20: Producers Cooperative**: “Lawn Care/Management for the Brazos Valley”, 10:00 a.m., Producers Conference Center, Bryan
- **Apr 20: The Arbor Gate**, “Neatly Natural—The Texas Cottage Garden”, 10:00 a.m.
- **Apr 23: Brazos MG**, “Simply Herbs”, 7:00 p.m., Brazos Center, Bryan
- **Apr 28: The Arbor Gate**: “Design Your Style”, 10:00 a.m.

## *Progress on the Grimes County Extension Beds*

Thanks to our volunteers, we are starting to make progress on the Grimes County Extension Beds! Our hard working volunteers removed and/or transplanted old plants, leveled pavers and borders, and laid down a commercial-grade weed barrier. Next step: mulch and containers and plants! If you have the energy and time, please join us for the next phase of this very important GCMG project.



# Class of 2019

Our Trainees will soon be Interns! Only two more classes.



# Texas Master Gardeners

203 Veterans Memorial Drive  
Navasota, Texas 77868

Website: [txcmg.org/grimes](http://txcmg.org/grimes)



## Grimes County Master Gardeners

Please send submissions and photos by the 20th of each month to: [pwparmley@gmail.com](mailto:pwparmley@gmail.com)



*Can you spot the Anole in the Garden?*

## 2019 Board of Directors

- President.....Cathey Hardeman
- Vice President .....Sharon Murry
- Secretary .....Paula Parmley
- Treasurer .....Dia Copeland

## 2019 Committees/ Chairs

- Administration .....Herb Abraham
- Advertising/Publicity .....Peggy Sloan
- Auditing.....Stephanie Cunningham/Jena Jackson
- Communications .....Georgia Abraham
- Community Garden.....Cathey Hardeman, Jamie Bruns, Paula Parmley
- Co-op .....Fred Vesperman
- Facebook.....Jamie Bruns
- Fair Judging.....Marti Luedtke
- Fundraising .....Carol Garnet
- Historian.....Sharon Murry
- Master Gardener Class Coordination .....Herb Abraham
- Newsletter .....Paula Parmley
- Nominating.....Carol Garnet
- Social Awards .....Connie Arden
- Timekeeping .....Martha Brogdon