



# Grimes County Master Gardeners



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## February is Rose Month

February in Grimes County is *Rose* month. Now is the time to prune, fertilize, spray and mulch your roses so that you have large beautiful blooms that are disease and pest free. Depending on the type of roses you have dictates the manner of care and pruning.

Pruning is the best method for shape and maintenance. If you don't prune at all then eventually your roses will become smaller and smaller. Traditionally heavy pruning, appropriate for Hybrid Teas, Floribundas, and Grandifloras, is done around Valentine's Day. Generally, shrub roses only need to have dead and diseased canes removed and cut back about one-third. You can do this by cutting at a 45-degree angle above a strong outer bud with clean, sharp-edged pruning shears. Opening up the center of the bush will also promote better airflow. Old fashion and one-time blooming vines should not be pruned except after their yearly blooms have been expended. If you are not sure when and how to prune, then consult the **American Rose Society** for more detailed instructions.

After pruning, remove all weeds and debris from around the roses. Pull back any mulch and fertilize about one to two cups per bush of organic or specialized fertilizer (see recipe below). Water your rose bed thoroughly before and after the fertilizer has been applied.

Once bushes have been pruned, a clean-up spray consisting of Ortho Funginex and Malathion should be applied to both the bush and the ground area around the bush. This will take care of any over wintering fungus or insect problems.

And finally, replace or add an organic mulch to keep weeds down, help preserve moisture and add nutrients to the soil.

## Organic Rose Fertilizer Recipe

Use this recipe for one standard rose bush:

- 1 cup alfalfa meal
- 1 cup fish meal
- 1/2 cup blood meal
- 1 cup cottonseed meal
- 1/2 cup bone meal
- 1/2 cup Epsom Salt

Mix all ingredients together (for 1 plant use a 3 lb. coffee can and shake it to mix the ingredients). Rake the mulch away from the plant and pour the mix in a ring at the drip line of the plant. Do not scratch or dig it into the soil. Cover the mix with mulch and water the plant as you normally would. This feeds the plant and the soil for about 6 months. Apply in early spring and early fall for continuous feeding throughout the year.

***"The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second best time is now."***

*Chinese Proverb*



Beefsteak



Paste



Cherry



Heirloom

## Going Tomatoes

The tomato is THE most popular vegetable in the garden due to its versatility in taste, size, and color. Everyone knows that home-grown tomatoes are ten times better than any store-bought tomato and growing them can be pretty satisfying. Because there is so much versatility, it can be pretty overwhelming in choosing which varieties to plant so here are some definitions to help the beginner tomato gardener.

A tomato is not "just" a tomato. There are several basic types: determinate, indeterminate, hybrid, open-pollinated and heirloom. **Determinate** tomatoes are a bush type that reaches a predetermined size then puts most of its energy into producing the fruit all at the same time. **Indeterminate** tomatoes tend to be vining and will continue to grow until either frost or disease kills them. **Hybrids** are a cross between other varieties that have been found to be disease resistant or can set fruit at high temperatures. If you see a VFN after the tomato variety, it means that that particular hybrid is resistant to *Verticillium Wilt*, *Fusarium Wilt*, and *Nematodes*. **Open-pollinated** tomatoes mean that the wind and insects pollinate them. Finally, **heirlooms** are typically defined as open-pollinated while being at least 50 years or older and prized because of their unique characteristics.

Depending on your taste in tomatoes also determines which variety to grow. If you are looking for large, juicy tomatoes, then Beefsteak will be the winner. If you want to make tomato paste or do some canning, then plum and Roma will be perfect because they have more meat with less water and less seeds. Cherry tomatoes are a salad favorite, and heirloom tomatoes can provide extreme versatility in color and taste.

Below are some tomato varieties that are proven winners in the Brazos Valley. You can order seeds now from several seed catalogs (see below) and start your transplants indoors for planting later in the spring once the temperatures are outside the freeze zone.

- **Beefsteak:** Better Boy, Bush Goliath (D), Sunny Goliath
- **Medium:** Carnival (D), Celebrity (D), Champion (I), Dona (I), Early Girl (I)
- **Paste:** Chico III (D); Roma (D), Viva Italia (D)
- **Cherry:** Juane Flamme (I), Jolly (I), Juliet Grape (I), Small Fry (D), Sun Gold (I)
- **Large Heirloom:** Red Brandywine, Cherokee Purple, Golden Jubilee, Persimmon
- **Small Heirloom:** Gold Nugget, Red Alert, Yellow Pear
- **Paste Heirloom:** Amish Paste

There are literally hundreds of available seed catalogs but here are some suggestions:

- Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds
- John Scheepers Kitchen Garden Seeds
- Heirloom Solutions
- Annies Heirloom Seeds
- Agrilife Vegetable Resources
- Burpee
- Pinetree Garden Seeds
- Totally Tomatoes

*Happy Tomato Growing!*



*Sideways Planting*



*Soaker Hoses*



*Tomato Cages*



*Tomato Hornworm*

## *Tomato Growing 101*

You've successfully grown tomato seedlings from your seeds that you're ordered from the seed catalog. Now what?

Here are some facts about growing tomatoes:

- **Timing:** In our area, AgriLife Extension recommends planting within 2-3 weeks of the last spring frost, usually mid-March. Tomatoes are best put in the ground as transplants because they need that extra time to grow and set fruit before the summer heat. So, you want to get them in the ground as soon as there is no danger of freezing.
- **Location:** Tomatoes take at least 6-8 hours of full sun to fuel photosynthesis which in turn produces the fruit. Tomatoes grown in less than the required sun hours will take longer to produce and will yield less fruit. So, pick a sunny spot in your garden that is not covered in shade.
- **Soil Preparation:** One of the most important stages is adding at least 3 inches of organic matter to your soil to help enrich it, aerate it and elevate it to improve drainage. Raised beds or containers are excellent for this purpose.
- **Watering System:** A drip irrigation or soaker hoses provide the best way to water tomatoes. This method waters the roots directly, keeps moisture off the leaves and can be set up on timers for automatic watering. Consistent watering is required for good growth. Start with 1 to 1 ½ inches of water per week. Adjust according to the weather. Like many plants, it's better to water deeply less often than to frequently water shallowly.
- **Planting:** Recommendations are to set tomatoes at least 3 feet apart to improve air-flow and root development. Space out your tomato transplants accordingly. Dig the holes and add 2-3 tablespoons of fertilizer into each hole. Next, you want to harden off your transplants by putting them outside either on a cloudy day or with increased exposure to the sun. If your transplants have become leggy then you can plant them sideways by first removing the lower leaves.
- **Support System:** Set up tomato cages or use heavy duty staking to help elevate your tomatoes so they don't end up on the ground where they will be more subject to disease. Also, to keep transplants from being bruised by heavy winds, wrap plastic around the lower parts of the cages. This can be removed once the plant matures.
- **Pests:** As your tomatoes grow, watch for aphids, spider mites, hornworms, and leaf-footed bugs. You can wash leaves for aphids and spider mites, handpick tomato hornworms and spray if necessary, with an insecticide containing neem oil or pyrethrin.
- **Disease:** Wet, humid weather promotes disease so the purpose of good spacing, drip irrigation, and mulching helps to discourage disease. The most common disease to attack tomatoes is early blight. Consult with your extension agent or master gardener if you need advice on treatment.

## For the Birds



One reason we need to plant more native plants in our garden landscape is to continue the symbiotic relationship between our native birds, insects, and wildlife. Displacing native plants with foreign species disrupts the fragile foundation that is the underpinning of our ecosystems.

Texas has 12 diverse ecoregions, so the first step is to find where Grimes County falls and look up those native plants, trees, and shrubs that are natural providers. The Audubon Society has an excellent on-line Native Plants Database categorized by zip code ([www.audubon.org/native-plants/search](http://www.audubon.org/native-plants/search)).

Once you are on the site, you can filter on **Types of Plants**, **Plant Resources** and **Bird Attraction**. Gardeners should try to provide a full menu of food for birds by providing plants from these five groups:

- Larval insect hosts
- Nectar-producing
- Berry-producing
- Nut-producing
- Seed-producing



## *South of the Border*

Most people think that Cilantro (*Coriandrum sativum*) is the quintessential Tex-Mex herb. However, about 15% of the population describe it as tasting like soap, so it's not always a favorite herb to add to recipes. To me, Cumin (*Cuminum cyminum*), is by far the most vibrant herb that gives Tex-Mex food its distinctive taste but you don't see it offered in most nurseries. It may be because gardeners are not sure how to grow it or if it will even grow in Texas. Well, the answer is "yes." There is actually native cumin found in Texas.

If you are interested in growing cumin try sowing seeds indoors and then plant after frost danger has passed.

Here are some facts about cumin:

- Member of the parsley family
- Plant 4 inches apart
- An annual that grows to about 1 foot
- The flowers are short-lived then become the clusters of the cumin seed
- Has a long growing season (takes to 4 months to mature)

- Takes full sun with damp but well-draining soil. Cannot tolerate long periods of dry heat
- Plant seeds close together so the plants will support each other
- To harvest, cut down plants at the stem and place in paper bag to dry.
- Seeds must be absolutely dry before storage.
- Dry roasting brings out more flavor.



*Cumin*



*Cumin Seeds*

# February 2019

## Schedule of Events

- Feb 2: **Waller MG.** “Rose Pruning & Propagation”, 9 a.m. - 11 a.m., Waller County Community Center, Prairie View, TX
- Feb 2: **The Arbor Gate.** “Pruning 101”, 10:00 a.m.
- Feb 2: **Walker MG.** Tree Sale, 8:00 a.m., 455 SH 75 North, Huntsville, TX
- Feb 5: **Washington MG.** “Growing Tomatoes Successfully”, 12 p.m.—1 p.m., Washington County Fairgrounds, Brenham, TX
- Feb 5, 12, 19, 26, **Grimes MG.** “2019 Intern Class”, 9 a.m.—2:30 p.m., Go Texan Building, Navasota, TX
- Feb 6: **Brazos MG.** “Gardening with the Masters—Rose Care”, Noon. Brazos County Ext. Office, Bryan, TX
- Feb 9/10 : **Brazos MG.** “2019 BCS Home & Garden Expo”, Brazos County Expo Complex, Bryan, TX

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		

## Schedule of Events

- Feb 9: **Montgomery MG.** “Want the Greenest Lawn in the Neighborhood?” 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., Thomas R. Leroy Building, Conroe, TX
- Feb 9: **Martha’s Bloomers.** “Determinate and Indeterminate Tomatoes”, 11 a.m. - 12 p.m., Navasota, TX
- Feb 14: **Grimes MG.** “Monthly Business Meeting”, 9 a.m.—11 a.m., **Court Annex Building**, Navasota, TX
- Feb 16: **The Arbor Gate.** “Rose Pruning & Planting”, 10:00 a.m., Tomball, TX
- Feb 19, **Brazos MG.** “Soil Testing for Spring Fertilization, 6:00 p.m., Lick Creek Nature Center, College Station, TX
- Feb 23/24: **Walker MG.** “Spring Garden Expo”, 9 a.m., Walker County Fairgrounds, Huntsville, TX
- Jan 26: **Brazos MG** “Vegetable Gardening”, 7:00 p.m., The Brazos Center, Bryan TX

*A Big Thanks to our Committed Members*



Alice Bonds-Kocian  
“The Biggest Heart in the World”



Martha Brogdon  
“Because We Count on You to Count our Hours”

# Texas Master Gardeners

203 Veterans Memorial Drive  
Navasota, Texas 77868

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



*Belinda's Dream*

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Timekeeping .....Martha Brogdon