



It's a New Year!

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Happy New Year to everyone,

I do hope you all had a joyful holiday.

2020 is here! It is amazing how fast time flies!

Please join us in gearing up for a productive year. We will be releasing the calendar soon for the new year. Events will be entered in various media with tentative dates so that our community and members can be better involved. Be on the look out for seminars, field trips, bake sales and scheduled speakers.

This coming year, let's remember we all want to enjoy the volunteer work we do. Let's find an area we have a passion for whatever our capabilities. If we no longer enjoy the work, we can change the area we work in. Remember, there are numerous opportunities for all of our members and we will work with you so that you get the most out of being a Texas Master Gardener.

Let's be creative. Let's find new ways to educate our constituents and ourselves. Let's find new places to visit for field trips. Be ready to share your new ideas in the months ahead.

Once again thank you for all of your hard work for last year. Every member is appreciated. Every job is acknowledged.

Let's make 2020 our best year yet!

Cathey Hardeman
President, Grimes County Master Gardeners



Rent a Goat!

As I pass our pond at Camp Allen, I sometimes see our lawn crew at riding their lawnmowers sideways along the steep embankment, and I hold my breath until they're safely on a level surface. I have to remind myself that they do this regularly, and that they know what they're doing, but personally, I wouldn't want to be on that lawnmower.

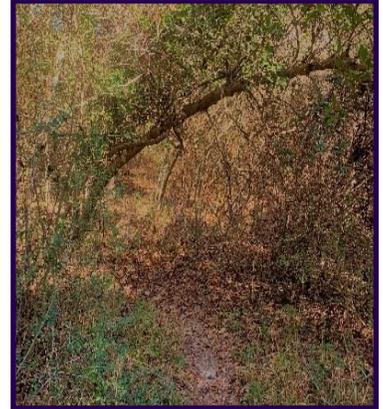
Our campus also has several hiking trails that we simply can't take riding machinery down. Too narrow, too steep, too many roots... hand trimming with clippers and weed whackers is the only option... isn't it?

Maybe not. As those of you with livestock already know, most animals are more sure-footed than we humans, and things that bother us, like poison ivy, thorns, fire ants, etc., are of little concern to animals with fur and hooves.

Enter the concept of landscaping goats for rent!



All too often these days, we get caught up in the latest technologies and gadgets, but some areas are returning to a historically successful and ecologically friendly practice that eliminates the needs for heavy machinery. Goats can safely travel areas that would be hazardous to humans and large equipment, have no need for gas for fuel, and produce no harmful emissions. (Go ahead. I'll wait for the jokes.) In fact, the seeds of the plants they eat will be sterilized by the trip through the goat's digestive tract, whereas weed whacking and mowing will redistribute the seeds and allow future growth. And should you wish to plant a new crop later, the droppings will help enrich the soil.



Additionally, their hooves cause aeration of the soil, rather than the erosion often caused by heavy equipment.

They will eat just about anything, including blackberries, poison ivy, nettles, Scotch broom, thistle, and other noxious plants that make it difficult for humans to clear an area. With their help, you won't have to apply toxic herbicides, which is another bonus.

So, what do you think? Grimes County is a largely rural area, and I imagine at least a few of you have goats. Will you gather your herding dogs and start your own business? If so, let the rest of us know, and we'll likely be your first clients!

In the meantime, there are several companies already in existence throughout the country, such as Rent-a-Ruminant, whose website was very enlightening, and entertaining.

<http://www.rentaruminant.com/texas-2.html>

And who knows: maybe the acronym GOAT (Greatest of All Time) will prove appropriate for herbivorous land clearing, as well!



Submitted by Kelley Pritchard

Mistletoe Myths and Mystique

Even though the Christmas holidays are over, learn about the true nature of mistletoe.

People spend good money buying mistletoe for their holiday decorations, but for tree people who have it in their large shade trees, it's not a welcome guest. It spells utter frustration.

Mistletoe is a green plant with chlorophyll, so to some very tiny degree it's able to manufacture its own sugars just like any normal plant would. But it's a parasite of shade trees such as pecans, oaks, bois d'arcs and especially cedar elms and hackberries. Birds eat the berries and in the process they also get the sticky pulp stuck on their beaks. As they wipe their beaks to clean them, the seeds are planted on the surfaces of the new host trees. Roots start to develop, and within months, the plants are established and growing. Their roots penetrate into the wood of the tree, taking moisture and nutrients that would have been utilized by the trees' leaves.

Birds normally perch on finger-sized tree branches that they can wrap their feet around. If you use a long-



Mistletoe fruit is eaten by birds who transfer the sticky seeds from their beaks to small twigs.

handled pole pruner to remove the mistletoe and the small twig entirely, you'll keep ahead of your problems. Let it continue to grow for a few years, however, and the branch will grow larger and larger. After a few years, you'll have a basketball-sized clump growing atop a limb the size of your leg, and trimming to remove the invader by pruning will be a lost opportunity.

Let's say, however, that you move into a house where mistletoe has been allowed to run rampant. Is there any way to address it once it's gotten a solid start on big branches?

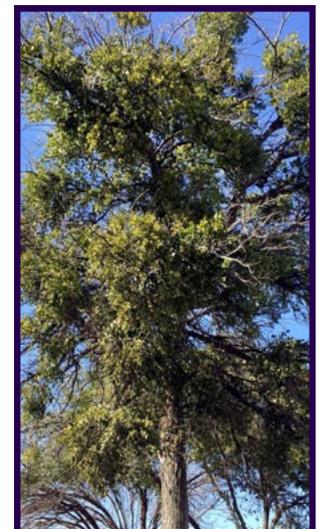
Have a certified arborist look at your tree. He or she will have access to a product or two that will help burn the mistletoe back. It probably won't be killed out entirely, but you may see enough progress to justify the expense. These products are not available to consumers.

Can you use conventional weed killer sprays to control your mistletoe problems? No. The mistletoe is actually rooted into the host tree. It becomes a grafted part of the tree, and the herbicide would assuredly be transported into the tree after the spraying.

Does mistletoe ever kill a tree? Rarely. However, it certainly weakens trees enough that their life expectancies may end up being shortened. Cedar elms and hackberries may appear to be almost evergreen trees. They have enough mistletoe in their branches that you can hardly tell when they've dropped all their leaves in the fall.

Finally, you'll hear reports of mistletoe being poisonous, but those are basically unfounded (fake

horticultural news). Nonetheless, you should teach the kids and grandkids not to be eating wild plants and their fruit unless they're put on the table before them.



Once mistletoe becomes this widespread it's difficult to turn it around. It's time to hire a certified arborist.

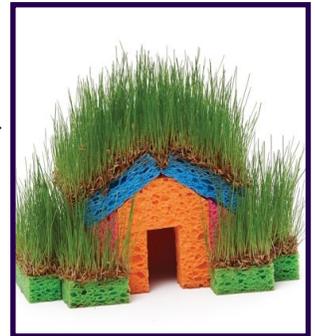
Gardening Activities for Kids

Are you looking for gardening activities to engage your kids to grow and appreciate plants? Want to get them away from electronic gadgets and start them on a path towards becoming a gardener? There are hundreds of gardening activities that kids will enjoy and learn. The challenge will be which ones to choose. Also, several books and websites are devoted to these activities. Here are just a few:



Re-purpose Colorful Plastic Bottles. Nothing makes better planters than a colored plastic bottle. Assemble bottles, glue, pom-poms, wooden spoons, etc. You can paint the bottles but try to find some that are naturally colored. Poke holes in the bottom for drainage, cut out handles or openings, fill with soil and insert plants.

Sponge Grass House. You will need a bunch of ordinary household sponges (unused) and in various colors. Storage container, craft knife, ruler, and a magic marker. Cut and design a house but don't cut all the way through the sponges so you can insert them together. Place the house in a plastic container, spray with water to wet the sponges, sprinkle grass seeds all over and spray again with water. Place in a warm, sunny location. Keep moist and watch the grass grow.



Lego Bird Feeder: Have a kid with a love of Legos? Then set them loose to design and build their own bird feeder.

Grow a Magic Bean: This is a great science project for any kid. You will need a clear jar, cotton balls, a dry bean (lima beans work great), water, and a sunny window. Place the cotton balls in the bottom of the jar, wet thoroughly and place the dry bean so it can be observed. Moisten but do not saturate the cotton balls every few days. Watch the bean sprout.



Schedule of Events

January 2020

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	31	

- Jan 11: Brazos County Master Gardeners, “**Attracting Wild Birds to Your Backyard**”, 10:00—11:00 a.m., Clara B. Mounce Public Library, 201 E. 26th Street, Bryan, TX
- Jan 14: Grimes County Master Gardeners, “**Monthly Business Meeting**”, 9:00—11:00 a.m., Grimes County Court Annex Building, 205 Veterans Memorial Drive, Navasota
- Jan 15: Brazos County Master Gardeners, “**Start Tomatoes and Other Vegetables from Seed**”, 12:00—1:00 p.m., Demonstration Idea Garden at the Brazos County Extension Office, 2619 Highway 21 West, Bryan
- Jan 21: Brazos County Master Gardeners, “**Bluebirds: How to Help them and Grow Them**”, 6:00—7:00 p.m., Lick Creek Nature Center, 13600 Rock Prairie Rd., College Station
- Jan 21: Grimes County Master Gardeners, “**Garden Workday**”, Grimes County Extension Office, 203 Veterans Memorial Drive, Navasota



MONTGOMERY COUNTY
MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION





2020 Fruit and Nut Tree Sale
SATURDAY, JANUARY 25
PROGRAM STARTS AT 8 AM
SALE 9 - 12
9020 AIRPORT ROAD, CONROE, TX
936-539-7824
WWW.MCMGA.COM





Now is the time to plant fruit trees, blueberries, blackberries and grapes. You will enjoy our variety of Citrus, Figs, Avocados, Pecans, and many more. Our Master Gardeners are there to help and answer your questions

DON'T FORGET TO BRING YOUR WAGON!

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin. The Texas A & M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

December 10th Christmas Social

Grimes County Master Gardeners held their annual Christmas Social on Tuesday, December 10th, at Martha's Bloomers. Along with a wonderful pot luck dinner, several members were awarded Super Star awards for their contributions in 2019. Vice President **Sharon Murry** was awarded 2019 Master Gardener of the Year.



Extension Open House—December 18th

Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service- Grimes County held an open house on December 18th to highlight 2019 achievements of 4-H, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Community Health and **Grimes County Master Gardeners**. The audience was Grimes County Commissioners and other Extension Agents.



Texas Master Gardeners

203 Veterans Memorial Drive
Navasota, Texas 77868

Website: txmg.org/grimes



Grimes County Master Gardeners

Please send submissions and photos by the
20th of each month to: pwparmley@gmail.com



Sugar Snaps

2020 Board of Directors

- President.....Cathey Hardeman
- Vice PresidentJamie Bruns
- SecretaryPaula Parmley
- TreasurerHerb Abraham

2020 Committees/ Chairs

- Advertising/PublicityPeggy Sloan
- Auditing.....Jena Jackson
- Community Garden.....Cathey Hardeman, Jamie Bruns, Paula Parmley
- Co-op.....Fred Vesperman
- Facebook.....Jamie Bruns
- Fair Judging.....Marti Luedtke
- FundraisingCarol Garnet
- Historian.....Sharon Murry
- Master Gardener Class CoordinationJamie Bruns
- NewsletterPaula Parmley
- Nominating.....Carol Garnet
- TimekeepingMartha Brogdon
- TMGA AwardsAnn DeWitt/Connie Arden