



Congratulations Grimes County Master Gardeners!

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At this year’s Texas Master Gardener Conference in Victoria, Texas, Grimes County Master Gardeners won three awards for work performed in 2018. A big “thank you” to all who participated on these projects!

- **First Place, Projects:** *Buckingham Apartments Project*. Committee Chairs: Michael Havens and Cathey Hardeman
- **Second Place, Education Program:** *Grimes County Fall Landscape Seminar*. Committee Chair: Ann DeWitt
- **Third Place, Association of the Year:** *2018 Texas Master Gardener Conference Registration*. Committee Chairs: Georgia Abraham and Herb Abraham



L to R: Mike Arden, Connie Arden, Herb Abraham, Georgia Abraham, Cathey Hardeman, TMGA President: Duddly Hargrove



L to R: Cathey Hardeman, Herb Abraham, TMGA President: Duddly Hargrove



Stress Relief



Gardening can help reduce the level of stress hormone Cortisol

Stress Relief

Immunity Booster



Direct exposure to dirt and plants can help boost your immune system

Immunity Booster

Work Out



3 hours of moderate gardening could equal a 1 hour gym session

Exercise

Bacteria Friends



Soil contains a natural antidepressant that can make us happier

Natural Antidepressant

The Health Benefits of Gardening

Most avid gardeners probably don't spend a great deal of time thinking about "why" they love to garden. Many will say it's the creative process of growing plants and harvesting vegetables or making their yard more beautiful. But there are many documented reasons why gardening also provides some surprising health benefits.

- **Decreases stress levels:** Gardening has shown to improve mood and decreased cortisol levels (a primary source of stress). It allows you to be more relaxed, boosts your immune system and enables you to be more productive.
- **Increases a steady supply of healthy food.** Each season provides vegetable gardens with a bounty of healthy foods that don't come from other sources. People who learn how to garden are not only far more likely to eat their five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, but also enjoy eating them more often.
- **Increases levels of Vitamin D:** Even though vegetables and fruit from the garden provide healthy food very little contain vitamin D (the sunshine vitamin). Gardening increases exposure to vitamin D which helps alleviate some chronic illnesses.
- **Builds hand strength and dexterity:** As you age, you lose hand strength and dexterity but gardening keeps your hands strong and allows a more full range of activities.
- **Provides exercise:** While many may argue that gardening is not the equivalent to gym exercise, any gardener will tell you that digging, raking, kneeling and lifting for hours at a time feels and is like a good gym workout. It increases blood flow and heart rate just like exercising.
- **Boosts your immune system:** It may sound counter-intuitive but the "friendly" soil bacteria *Mycobacterium vaccae*, common in garden dirt and absorbed by inhalation or ingestion of vegetables, has been found to alleviate symptoms of psoriasis, allergies, asthma and even decrease levels of anxiety.
- **Provides better mental health:** A study conducted in 1995 found that participating in leisure activities such as gardening can reduce the risk of dementia in the elderly. It also provides a decrease in depression and an increase in mental focus.
- **Fosters confidence and satisfaction:** Nothing is more satisfying than to look at a row of healthy vegetables that you grew from seeds or to look at your flowering plants in full bloom. Gardening creates a sense of pride, confidence and satisfaction.
- **Helps slow climate change:** Gardens provide vital green space to offset all that asphalt, reduce greenhouse gasses, lessens your need to buy things, and allows you to recycle kitchen waste.

Controlling Aphids



Aphids

When most people see any kind of bug they are usually quick to either kill it outright or reach for a can of insecticide. But the balanced and experienced gardener knows that along with the bad guys there are the good guys. Identification and knowledge goes a long way to help gardeners with insect problems and aids them when it's best to leave a bug alone and let nature take its course. Let's talk about aphids.

Aphids are very small sap-sucking insects that can come in a variety of colors but the key to identification is that they are usually seen in large groups feeding on a wide range of plants. As they feed, they secrete a sticky substance, called "honeydew", which quickly becomes infested with black sooty mold and is also a source of food for ants. In fact, ants and aphids have a unique symbiotic relationship where ants have even been observed stroking the bellies of aphids to produce more "food". They provide some protection for the aphids and will move them around to better sites on a plant so they will produce more honeydew. If you see both ants and aphids on a plant then you have a problem.



Aphids and Ants

The aphid life cycle is also unique and problematic. Wingless adult female aphids can produce 50 to 100 offspring. A newly born aphid becomes a reproducing adult within about a week and then can produce up to 5 offspring per day for up to 30 days. What's even more amazing is that reproduction during at least part of its life cycle can be accomplished without the help of male aphids.

Okay, enough about the lifecycle of aphids. Let's get to the nitty gritty on organically controlling aphids. First of all, using an insecticide is risky because a) you will probably kill off beneficial insects and b) aphids are hard to get to because a great deal of the time they are on the underside of a leaf. Here are some safe methods to use:

- Try spraying cold water on the leaves; sometimes all aphids need is a cool blast to dislodge them. Typically they are unable to find their way back to the same plant.
- If you have a large aphid invasion, dust plants with flour. It constipates the pests.
- Neem oil, insecticidal soaps, and horticultural oils are effective against aphids.
- You can often get rid of aphids by wiping or spraying the leaves of the plant with a mild solution of water and a few drops of dish soap. Soapy water should be reapplied every 2-3 days for 2 weeks.
- One variation of this soap-water mix includes cayenne pepper: Stir together 1 quart water, 1 tsp liquid dish soap, and a pinch of cayenne pepper. Do not dilute before spraying on plants.
- Beneficial insects, such as lady beetles, lacewings, and parasitic wasps, will feed on aphids. Supplemental populations of these insects can be ordered online and should help keep the aphid populations controlled from the start.
- Aphids are repelled by catnip.
- Garlic and chives repel aphids when planted near lettuce, peas, and rose bushes.

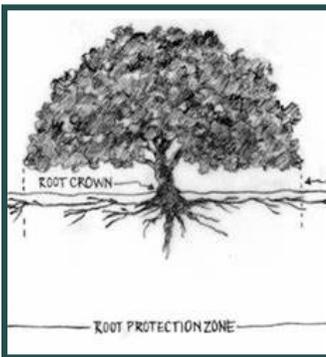


A blast of cold water

The Sensitive Post Oak



Grimes County is in the ecosystem called the Post Oak Savannah. It's pretty obvious what that means. We have a lot of native post oaks in our area versus live oaks that are prevalent in other parts of Central Texas. If you have lived in this region for a long time, then more than likely you will know the problems that are associated with post oaks. If you are new to the area and have post oaks growing in your yard, then here are a few facts that you need to know.



Post Oaks (*Quercus stellate*) are a deciduous tree that can grow up to 70 feet and is often seen with its companion tree the blackjack oak. The post oak is an indicator of poor soils when seen in native conditions. The leaves of a post oak resemble an iron cross and are sometimes called an iron oak or cross oak.

Post oaks are one of the most sensitive oak trees around especially when it comes to their root system. Because the topsoil in Grimes County is a sandy loam, the roots of a post oak can only go so far before hitting the hard clay pan below the sandy loam. This type of soil causes the roots to spread out laterally instead of down in order to get nutrients, moisture, and oxygen. This also makes the root system extremely shallow and vulnerable to change. While post oaks can take high temperatures and low moisture, they cannot take any kind of root disturbance. This could be construction, compaction, adding or removing soil, fertilizing, mulching and over-watering. If you are going to do any kind of construction in and around your post oaks and you do not want to lose them, it would be a good idea to invest in a certified arborist to assist you with the placement of construction and the marking off of the root systems. The root system of a post oak cannot take hard compaction of heavy equipment, the placement of sidewalks, and the addition of concrete or asphalt driveways. It has been discovered that the majority of post oak deaths in our area are centered mostly around new construction.

If you have existing post oaks in your yard, then it is a delicate balance between taking care of a lawn and flower beds versus your trees. This means keeping the moisture level of the trees to a minimum while watering your yard and flowers. Also, keeping the soil moist around the root system of post oak is inviting root rot. This also includes mulching around a post oak tree as it will help retain more moisture than it needs. If at all possible, try changing the flow of water away from the post oaks and even at the hottest time of the year don't water them. They rely almost exclusively on rainfall and don't need additional watering.



The drought of 2011 did not help any of our plants and vegetation, but it hit the post oaks hard. While they are drought-resistant that does not mean they can go year and after year without *any* water. The drought effect starting in 2011 eventually weakened many of the post oaks and then the subsequent heavy rainfall caused many of them to fall over. Nothing is more disturbing to a landowner than to find a 60-foot post oak lying on the ground.

Post oaks cannot be bought at a nursery, transplanted or started from seed, so it is vital that we take the best care of this native Texas tree. You can always contact your County Extension Agent if you have some concerns about your post oak trees.

May 2019

Schedule of Events

- **May 4: Grimes MG,** “Spring Bake Sale”, 9 a.m., Navasota Walmart, Navasota
- **May 11: The Arbor Gate,** “Yard Art—the Good, the Bad, & the Unbelievable”, 10 a.m.—11 a.m.
- **May 11: Producers Cooperative:** “Creating a Backyard Wild Bird Sanctuary”, 10 a.m., Bryan
- **May 14: Grimes MG,** “Monthly Business Meeting”, 9 a.m.—11 a.m., Court Annex Building, Navasota, TX
- **May 15: Brazos MG,** “Texas Superstars for your Garden”, 12 p.m. - 1 p.m., Demonstration Idea Garden, Brazos County Extension Office, Bryan
- **May 18: Producers Cooperative,** “Understanding and Making a Pesticide Application”, 10 a.m., Producers Conference Center, Bryan
- **May 21: Brazos MG,** “The Art of Sustainable Gardening”, 6 p.m.—7 p.m., Lick Creek Nature Center, College Station
- **May 28: Brazos MG,** “Preserving the Harvest”, 7 p.m.—8 p.m., Brazos Center Bryan

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
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| 26 | 27 | 28  | 29 | 30 | 28 | |

Volunteers Needed

Grimes County Master Gardeners will be presenting a seminar to the residents of 42 Place in Navasota on **Thursday, May 16th**, at 10:30 a.m. We need helpers to assist with the seminar. Contact either *Cathey Hardeman* or *Dia Copeland* if you want to volunteer.

Topics:

- A Study of the Monarch Butterfly—Presented by Connie and Mike Arden
- Container Gardening—Presented by Dianna Westmoreland

Grimes County Master Gardeners Spring Bake Sale

It’s that time again and we need your baking skills and volunteer assistance. Cakes, pies, cookies are needed to sale on **Saturday, May 4th**, at the Navasota Walmart located at 1712 East Washington. This is one of our major fund raisers so please pitch in and help. Contact *Carol Garnett* for further information.

Spring Social

Thank you to Cathey and Sparky Hardeman for hosting this year's spring social. Good food, good company, and good times!



Class of 2019

Our Trainees are now Interns! Pictures of the last classes are below.



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



Coreopsis

2019 Board of Directors

President.....Cathey Hardeman
Vice PresidentSharon Murry
SecretaryPaula Parmley
TreasurerDia Copeland

2019 Committees/Chairs

AdministrationHerb Abraham
Advertising/PublicityPeggy Sloan
Auditing.....Stephanie Cunningham/Jena Jackson
CommunicationsGeorgia Abraham
Community Garden.....Cathey Hardeman, Jamie Bruns, Paula Parmley
Co-opFred Vesperman
Facebook.....Jamie Bruns
Fair Judging.....Marti Luedtke
FundraisingCarol Garnet
Historian.....Sharon Murry
Master Gardener Class CoordinationHerb Abraham
NewsletterPaula Parmley
Nominating.....Carol Garnet
Social AwardsConnie Arden
TimekeepingMartha Brogdon