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Grimes County Master Gardeners



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Trees —Fall Color in Texas

As we transition into fall, many of us wistfully look around and dream of rich fall colors that our friends in New England get to enjoy this time of year. However, there are several trees that grow well in our area that will provide amazing colors in your landscape. Since this is tree planting season, now is a good time to look to the future and think of fall next year. Below are only a few trees that can provide your landscape with those vibrant fall colors but there are many more. Check local resources for more information.



Japanese Maples (*Acer palmatum*): Though this tree is not originally from Texas, it has adapted quite well to most Texas gardens. It's a small, deciduous tree that grows from 6 – 20 feet and spreads from 10 – 20 feet. It prefers to grow in moist conditions and should not dry out. It prefers filtered light, especially morning sun with afternoon shade. Fall colors can range from yellows and gold to deep reds and maroons.

Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*): Another non-native that is one of the oldest species of trees found on earth. It grows from 50 – 80 feet tall and spreads 30 – 40 feet wide. It prefers full sun to partial shade in sandy, well-drained soil. It is considered a medicinal tree with various healing properties. The leaves are an unusual fan shape that provide bright yellow colors in the fall.



Shantung Maple (*Acer truncatum*): This tree is on the list of Texas Superstars because it can withstand the hot Texas sun, drought, and high winds. It is a mid-sized tree growing to 25 feet and spreading 20 feet. It also has a non-aggressive root system and works exceptionally well in urban settings. The fall colors tend towards a brilliant red depending on soil pH.



Chinese Pistache (*Pistacia chinensis*): Another Texas Superstar that is highly regarded by horticulturists for being not only beautiful but pest-free and easy to maintain. At maturity, it is 40 – 50 feet tall with a 30-foot wide canopy. With good management, it can grow up 2 – 3 feet a year with high tolerance to drought, heat, and wind. Fall colors range from orange, red-orange, and crimson.

Shumard Red Oak (*Quercus shumardii*): A large, deciduous oak tree that can reach heights of 120 feet. It is a fast, growing tree that does well in moist, well-drained soils. It prefers full sun with high heat tolerance. Fall colors are yellowish-brown to deep maroon.

Caring for Potted Mums



Ah, mums. Those gorgeous fall staples that end up looking both beautiful and horrific the next spring if you don't take care of them.

When my boss showed up with another nine pots of mums for a patio that is comprised of solid clay, my reaction was not overwhelming joy. Fortunately, it turned out that they were to be merely decorative, and could be planted elsewhere after the big event.

At this point, I have a love-hate relationship with mums, as they've always looked very leggy the next season, and regardless of age, have to be frequently deadheaded. When you have multiple beds to take care of, this can become an issue. In the picture on the right, the beautiful yellow



mums had been planted at least a year ago, and a week after the picture was taken, they had fallen over with the weight of the blooms, leaving an awkward gap in the center of the plant. I ended up cutting them back and putting a ceramic bird temporarily in their place.

I figured that many other people must surely have had this dilemma, and had probably written articles about it, so in my frustration, I asked Siri "how to maintain mums to keep them from being a pain in the..." Ahem, "tail." Unfortunately, my phone autocorrected from "mums" to "Mom's," and my search returned something radically different from what I had sought. Oops. Once I was able to communicate my search more efficiently, here's what I found. I hope this helps you, as well.

Mums do best when planted in the spring, but if you get them in the fall, here you go.

What to do:	What not to do, apparently:
Plant mums in the fall to allow roots to establish before the winter. Make sure the area has good drainage to prevent soggy roots from freezing.	So far, so good.
Plant them in full sun, with at least 6 hours of exposure per day.	Stick them wherever there's a gap, and wonder why they grew leggy the next season.
When winter sets in, as it sometimes does here in Texas, mulch up to 4" inches around the mum, and deadhead it, but leave the branches intact.	Say, "I need something visually pleasing in this spot right now," cut it to the ground, plant something else nearby, and let whatever happens, happen in the spring.
In the spring, pull away the mulch to expose new shoots and allow them to grow.	"Hey, look, they're back."
Prune old growth from the previous year.	Oops. Did that a few months ago.
Give new shoots a slow-release granular flower fertilizer.	Ok, there's some of that in the shed.
When shoots are about 6" tall, pinch back the tops of each stem by about 1-2". This will encourage compact, bushy growth later.	Yeah. I should have figured that out sooner. I regularly do that with my herbs.
When you start to see several buds, start pinching, and remove about half of the new growth, some with buds, and some without.	Makes sense.
Repeat the process about every 3-5" of growth, or 2-4 weeks, until early July. This will promote good growth through the fall.	Why did I wait so long to research this?!

I fully intend to learn from my mistakes, and hope that this has helped you, as well. Happy gardening!

Submitted by Kelley Pritchard

Source: <https://www.bhg.com/gardening/flowers/perennials/all-about-mums/>

It's Not Too Late—Fall Herbs



Herbs well suited for growing in cool weather are cilantro, chervil, chives, dill, and parsley. Unlike warm-weather summer-grown herbs, cool-weather herbs can be sown directly in the garden a month or more before the last frost in spring for late spring harvest and again in late summer for fall harvest.

Cool-season herbs grow best in soil rich in aged compost. Compost-rich soil retains moisture, is well-drained, and contains the important nutrients necessary for cool-season herbs to thrive. (Many warm-weather herbs such as rosemary are native to the Mediterranean and will grow well in less-fertile conditions.)

Cool-season herbs prefer cool temperatures to grow to maturity, but germinate most quickly in warm soil. To speed the germination of cool-season herbs soak them overnight in water before sowing then cover the seed bed with clear plastic to help warm the soil.

By sowing or setting cool-season herbs in the garden up to a month before the last expected frost in spring, you are most likely to have harvest these herbs at the peak of flavor. When temperatures rise in late spring or early summer cool-weather herbs will bolt—that is their stalks will elongate, develop flowers, bloom, and go to seed. Bolting turns herbs bitter.

- **Cilantro** is a cold-hardy annual herb. Cilantro seeds can be sown a week or two before the last frost in spring and again in late summer. It can also be grown from fall to spring where winter temperatures are mild. For best germination, soak seeds in water overnight before sowing. Cilantro leaves have a parsley-sage-citrus flavor. Cilantro seeds are known as coriander and have a citrus and spice flavor.
- **Chervil** is a half-hardy annual. It can be sown three to four weeks before the last frost in spring and again in late summer. Chervil grow best in light shade but seeds require light to germinate. Soak seeds for up to 24 hours before sowing to speed germination. Thin seedlings to 6 to 9 inches apart. Chervil resembles parsley and has a delicate anise-like flavor.
- **Chives** are a cold-hardy perennial herb. Chives can be grown from seeds, transplants, or divisions. Sow seeds or set out six-week-old transplants about four weeks before the last frost in spring. Divide clumps every two to four years in spring or fall. Chives have a delicate onions flavor. Garlic chives have a mild garlic flavor.
- **Dill** is a cold-hardy annual herb. Sow dill in the garden four to five weeks before the last frost in spring. Seeds require light to germinate. Dill can also be sown in fall where winter temperatures are mild.
- **Parsley** is a hardy biennial herb commonly grown as an annual. Direct sow seeds or set out six- to eight-week old transplants about a week before the last frost in spring. Where winters are mild parsley can be sown in late winter. Parsley seeds are slow to germinate; soak them or freeze them overnight before sowing. Parsley can be grown in full sun or partial shade. Italian parsley with its celery and cilantro like leaves is more flavorful than curly parsley. Harvest the outer leaves or cut the whole plant down to a couple of inches above the soil and it will regrow.

Source: *Harvest to Table “Herbs for Cool Season Growing”*, by Steve Albert

Camellias in Texas



Camellias are a beautiful evergreen plant reminiscent of old southern gardens but grow just about in our part of Texas with some special requirements. There are two species of camellias available in the U.S.: Japanese and sasanqua. While the Japanese (*Camellia japonica*) and sasanqua (*Camellia sasanqua*) camellias look very similar, the main difference between the two species is their bloom time. Japanese camellias usually bloom between fall and spring, whereas the sasanquas begin blooming anytime between summer through winter, but usually between September and December. Though sasanquas tolerate more sun than the Japanese camellias, they are less cold hardy, preferring USDA zones 7 through 9. What the two have in common is a planting location away from high wind in a dappled location, preferably with morning sun and afternoon shade. Once successfully established, camellias

are very easy to maintain.

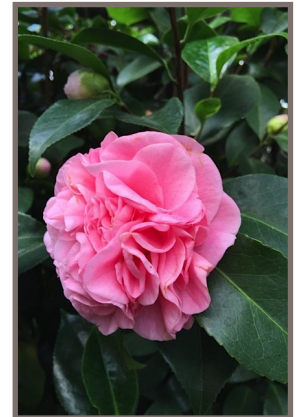
The history of camellias goes back to its cultivation in China and Japan originally as a tea producing plant. (*Camellia sinensis*). The leaves, not the flowers, were highly prized for making tea. Early settlers originally tried to grow this plant species in the south as a start to the tea-growing business, but the plant variety did not thrive in southern climates. Eventually, interest on the east coast took hold when other varieties were introduced, such as the Japonica and Sasanqua. Rootstocks were purchased before the civil war and successfully grown in Charleston and other southern states. Soon it became evident that these varieties were much better suited to southern climates, and the beautiful evergreen started gracing most southern plantations all the way to Texas.

Camellias have dark, glossy leaves and can grow between 10 and 25 feet tall. Both varieties have blossoms in white, yellow, red, rose, pink, and even red/white combo. They need a moist, well-draining acidic soil with a pH from 5.0 – 5.5 but can tolerate up to 7.0. Soil testing is a **must** to help the gardener adjust or amend their soil to ensure optimum growth. If your site soil is too alkaline, then you can lower the pH by using elemental sulfur such as ferrous sulfate or aluminum sulfate. Some gardeners swear that decomposed pine needles will do the trick, but since it takes a long time for needles to decompose, it might be better to amend with elemental sulfur. If your site soil is too acidic, then you can raise the pH by incorporating crushed agricultural limestone or dolomite.

Now is a good time to plant camellias and the nurseries are full of them this time of year.

How to Plant:

- Select a site that will get partial shade, won't compete with other trees, and away from high north wind.
- Dig an area 18 - 24 inches deep – spaced 5 feet apart.
- Thoroughly mix 2 parts pine bark mulch, 1 part clean sand, and 1 part aged cow manure or compost to fill the hole. Fill the hole to at least 3" above the soil surface.
- Rinse the roots with water and set the root ball in the planting hole mounding the tops of the roots are about 1 – 2 inches above soil level.
- Spread 3 inches of organic mulch around the base but keep at least 6 inches away from the plant base. Many people like to use pine needles instead of bark mulch.
- Water camellias deeply to a depth of 15 inches every 7 – 14 days.
- Fertilize with an acid-loving plant fertilizer **AFTER** the blooms fade.
- Prune as needed after blooming to remove dead or damaged branches. Thin out center branches if the shrub is crowded and light is not getting through.
- Watch for petal blight where the flowers will turn brown. Remove immediately.
- Check for leaf scale or insect pests if the leaves start to turn brown or yellow. Treat accordingly.



Don't Throw Away That Pumpkin!

Before you decide to throw out your fall pumpkins, there are numerous ways that you can continue to use your pumpkins or recycle them to get the most out of them.



Pumpkin Puree: Take smaller pumpkins and make puree out of the inner flesh. Fresh pumpkin puree makes the best tasting pumpkin pies. But don't stop there. You can also make soups, breads, muffins or put the puree into freezer bags for future use.



Roast the Seeds: Keep the seeds in a bag to roast later. Pumpkin seeds are loaded with potassium, packed with fiber and protein and make a great snack.



Use as Bowls: Nothing looks more festive than small pumpkin soup bowls. Choose small 6" pumpkins to make individual bowls.



Make into Planters: Want to dress up your fall decorations? Then why not plant some fall annuals and make your Thanksgiving centerpiece. Just cut the top off of your pumpkin, fill with soil and plant.



Pumpkin Facial: Pumpkin is packed with fruit enzymes and alpha hydroxy acids with increase cell turnover, to brighten and smooth the skin. There are several facial recipes that will help soften and sooth skin.



Make Christmas Decorations: I've done this for several years. Spray paint your pumpkins gold, silver or whatever color you can find in a spray can. The result makes a terrific Christmas decoration.

Compost: When you are completely done with your pumpkin then re-purpose it to fertilize your garden next year? Simply cut pumpkin into small pieces, add to your compost pile and use with your garden soil in the spring!

Beware of the Asp



Flannel Moth Caterpillar

There have been several sightings of stinging caterpillars in Texas recently. You are probably more familiar with the term 'asp', which applies to all flannel moths. The most prevalent flannel moth in our area is the southern flannel moth or puss moth caterpillar (*Megalopyge opercularis*). In their immature stage as a caterpillar, they are clothed with fine hairs and venomous spines. They are often found in shade trees or shrubs where they do little harm to the plant, but if touched, they will cause a severe burning sensation and rash.

Identification: Adults are moths that lay eggs that hatch into a dangerous larva. They are worms with pretty hairdos but will sting severely. The sting comes from hollow spines hidden by the soft fur, which can range in color from white, blond to dark brown.

Life Cycle: One generation per year. Winter finds them in cocoons attached to

twigs. The moth emerges from an overwintering cocoon in late spring or early summer to deposit its eggs on trees and shrubs. Southern flannel caterpillars tend to be more common in the fall. In a few days, the eggs hatch into tiny, fuzzy whitish larvae that look like small tufts of cotton. Puss caterpillars become darker as they mature and complete metamorphosis.

Habitat: Oak and other tree trunks

Feeding Habits: Larvae feed mainly on deciduous trees and shrubs but usually do not cause much damage.

Natural Control: Predatory flies and wasps.

Organic Control: Bacillus thuringiensis (BT) or plant oil products.

Treating Stings: Contact on skin is extremely painful. Put scotch tape over the sting and then remove it to pull out the irritating spines; then wash the area well to remove any remaining poison. Juice from comfrey leaves may help to relieve the pain. Apply ice to reduce swelling and take an oral antihistamine to relieve itching and burning. If symptoms become severe, consult a physician. Some people have a high sensitivity to asp stings and may become ill.



Adult Southern Flannel Moth




Flannel Moth Eggs

Events

Grimes County Master Gardeners will have their **November Business Meeting on Tuesday, November 10th—9:00 a.m.** This will be a zoom and in-person meeting. We ask those members who plan to attend in-person to please wear a face mask.

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, no continuing education classes are available except for virtual learning and webinars.

November 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					

Continuing Education

For registration information on Gardening on the Gulf Coast you will need to register in advance through the link at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gardening-on-the-gulf-coast-tickets-106812198160>

- Nov 04: Gardening on the Gulf Coast Online Series, “**Gardening for Hummingbirds**”, 10—11 a.m.
- Nov 18: Gardening on the Gulf Coast Online Series, “**Homeowner Chemical and PPE Safety**”, 10—11 a.m.

Galveston County—3 Day Online Bulb Sale: Thursday, November 5 at 8:00 a.m.—Saturday, November 7 at 8:00 p.m. There will be 10 varieties of Amaryllis, as well as various Lilies, Paperwhites and Summer Snowflakes.

Visit the online store at: <https://galveston-county-master-gardener-assn.square.site/> to browse the plant selection and for additional information.

Fort Bend County: Grown Your Own On-line Class—Composting. November 14 from 9:00 a.m.—10:30 a.m. To Register go to fortbend.agrilife.org/grow-your-own/

IT'S A BOY!

Congratulations to our County Agent **Allen Homann** and his wife **Hailey** on the birth of their new baby boy:

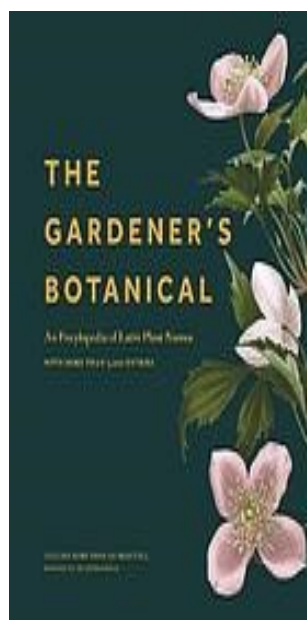


Hudson Ray Homann

Held by big sister June Bug

Born: October 15, 2020 Weight: 7.14 lbs.

Books



Do you ever struggle to remember the Latin names for your plants? Well a new book is out: **The Gardener's Botanical: An Encyclopedia of Latin Plant Names, by Ross Bayton.** This will make a great addition to your garden book library plus assist you with learning Latin botanical names. It can be purchased for about \$25 on various sites.

Garden Work Day

Grimes County Master Gardeners had a successful garden work day on Thursday, October 29th. The summer plants were cut down or removed to make way for the new cool season annuals plus two pear trees were planted next to the AgriLife Extension sign. It was a windy, blustery day but we had fun anyway!



Texas Master Gardeners

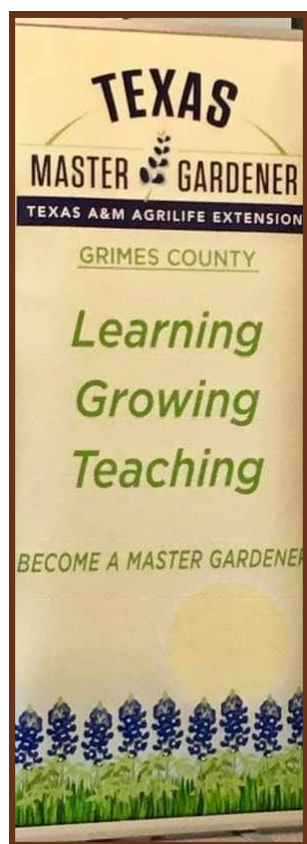
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Navasota, Texas 77868

Website: txmg.org/grimes
Facebook: www.facebook.com/GrimesCountyMasterGardeners



Grimes County Master Gardeners

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



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