



Inside this issue:

<i>Eat Your Blooms</i>	2
<i>Flower Cookies</i>	3
<i>Raised Beds</i>	4
<i>Pillbugs—Good or Bad?</i>	5
<i>Bastard Cabbage</i>	5
<i>Event Calendar</i>	6
<i>Become a Master Gardener</i>	7
<i>Grimes County Master Gardeners</i>	8

Growing a Cutflower Garden

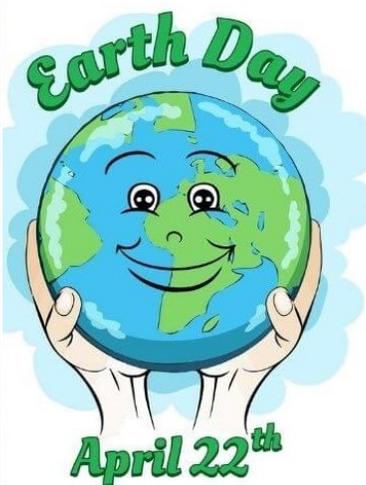


If you are a flower lover like me, then you can never have enough blooms surrounding you. What about dedicating an area only to flowers that can be cut and scattered around your home as well as your yard? Think of the savings, when you have a steady supply of flowers instead of purchasing them from a store. There are many types of flowers in Texas that work well in a cutflower garden but you need to follow a few simple rules.

1. Select an out of the way area that can't be seen because as the flowers grow, bloom and are cut there might be a time that the area will be unsightly. If you don't have the space then plant a few rows of flowers in your vegetable garden? This can be a win-win for both the vegetables getting extra pollination and an area that will have easy access for cutting your flowers.
2. Layout an area that will provide easy access with wide rows.
3. Research and plant like type flowers whose needs are similar. You don't want to plant one flower that needs a lot of water next to a plant that needs very little.
4. Once you have your plants grouped by their resource needs, then select plants by mature height so that the shorter plants don't get engulfed by the taller ones.
5. Also, consider the sequence of blooming by selecting plants that bloom early spring, early summer, mid-summer, and fall.

Annuals: Try planting marigolds, zinnias, poppies, sweet peas, bells of Ireland, celosia, nasturtium, globe amaranth and larkspur for annual color.

Perennials: Shasta daisies, phlox, chrysanthemums, coreopsis, crinum, coneflower, salvia and penstemon are great for a cutflower garden.



GOT A GARDENING QUESTION?

Got a gardening problem or question?

Contact our Master Gardeners to get help:

grimescountymastergardeners@gmail.com or call us at 936-873-3917.

A photo along with your question will help us find an answer.

Eat Your Blooms

It's so fun to grow edible flowers, not only are they beautiful many have great health benefits! Below you will find some fun recipes for your flowers!

The first one is one I make for all my showers and summer parties! I found it years ago in Better Homes and Garden. The dipping sauce is to die for!

Rose Spring Rolls



Credit: Victoria Pearson

Ingredients:

- 6 ounces dried rice vermicelli noodles
- 1 1/4 cup paper-thin radish and/or English cucumber
- 1/2 cup fresh culinary rose petals
- 1/4 cup fresh mint leaves
- 12 round rice papers
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro leaves

Directions:

Step 1: In a large saucepan cook noodles in boiling, lightly salted water 2 to 3 minutes or until just tender; drain. Rinse under cold water; drain well. In a large bowl cut cooled noodles into short lengths. Toss with 1/4 cup rose petals.

Step 2: To assemble rolls: Pour warm water into a shallow bowl or pie plate. Working with one rice paper at a time, dip in water until pliable. Lay 1/4 cup rice noodles about a third of the way up from the bottom toward center of rice paper. Fold bottom edge up over filling; roll over once tightly. Place some of the vegetables, herbs, and remaining rose petals on paper above the rolled portion. Tuck in sides. Continue rolling to seal rice paper to itself. Repeat with remaining rice papers.

Serve with Rose Dipping Sauce: In a small bowl combine 1/4 cup soy sauce and 1/4 cup Rose Vinegar. Sprinkle with coarsely ground black pepper.

Flower Ice Cubes



A fun and beautiful party treat or home treat during the summer is ice cubes with flowers. I've used everything from zinnias, rose petals, pansies, to rosemary sprigs and hibiscus. My mom would always use lavender, honeysuckle and mint. It was bold in flavor! Get creative - its fun!

Directions:

The main trick is to get the flower to freeze in the center of the cube, because it tends to float to the top. For clear ice cubes, use distilled water that has been boiled then cooled.

- Use a silicone ice cube mold with large square compartments.
- Add a little bit of water to cover the bottom of each cube and set a flower or petal into each cube.
- Freeze solid.
- Pull the tray out and fill with more water and freeze again until solid.
- Top off the cube with water and freeze one last time.

Now, you're ready to show off your fancy cubes!

Submitted by Kady Hackenberg

Flower Cookies



These cookies are some of my family's favorite summer treats. Not only are they delish, but beautiful as well!

Ingredients:

Dough

- 1 ¾ cups (218 g) All Purpose Flour
- ⅔ cup (165 g) Granulated Sugar
- ⅛ tsp Kosher Salt
- ¾ cup (190 g) Unsalted Butter cold and cut into cubes
- 2 Tbsp Chopped Fresh Mint Leaves
- 1-2 tsp Vanilla Extract
- 2 Tbsp Orange Zest
- 2 Tbsp Lime Zest

Flower Topping:

- Fresh pansy blossoms of desired color.
- Mint Leaves

Egg Wash: 1 egg white

Directions:

- In a large mixing bowl, whisk together sifted flour, sugar, and salt.
- Drop in the small cubes of butter and begin mixing together with your hands. Squeeze the butter and flower mixture, working until it resembles cornmeal.
- Next, take your chopped mint, lime zest, and orange zest and mix in gently with hands.
- Pour in 1 tsp of Vanilla Extract and start to work dough into a ball with your hands. If you find the dough to be too dry and not coming together, add a second tsp of vanilla.
- Dough should be moist but firm. (if you feel it is dry add a tablespoon of water...dough should NOT be sticky)
- Form dough into a ball and wrap in plastic wrap.
- Place dough in the fridge to chill for 30 minutes.

Dough can be made the day before and kept in the fridge overnight. When you're ready to bake place dough on counter for 30-45 min to slightly thaw. Work in your hands to help the dough become more pliable, since the butter will have hardened.

- Preheat oven to 325 F (163 C) and line two cookie sheets with parchment paper.
- Remove dough from the fridge and slice in half.
- Place one half on a gently floured surface and roll out to ⅛ inch -¼ inch thickness.
- Use your cookie cutter to cut out as many cookies as you can.
- Transfer cookies to baking trays. *cookies will not spread much, so you can place them a half inch apart*
- Gently coat a thin layer of egg white onto the center of each cookies, then press flower blossom slightly onto surface. The back of the blossom may need to sink into dough for petals to lay flat.
- Place the entire tray into the fridge for 10-15 minutes to make sure cookie dough is cold before baking.
- Bake for 12-14 minutes or until edges start to golden in color. Bake time may differ between ovens, so keep an eye on the first batch.
- Repeat with remaining half of dough.
- Set cookies on cooling rack for 10-15 minutes before serving.

Submitted by Kady Hackenberg

How to Build Low-Maintenance Raised Beds



Many successful gardeners have raised beds for their vegetable and herb gardens. It's a smart way to eliminate some of the hassles with gardening by elevating a work area. Here are some advantages to having raised garden beds:

- Easier access to your vegetables, herbs and even trees.
- Assists with weed control.
- Better maintenance of poor soil. You can amend and add in a raised bed to keep nutrient soil at a premium for your plants.
- Easy on your back and joints as you don't have to bend over so far.
- It's an attractive way to contain a garden and add height to a small area.
- Each bed can be customized for irrigation based on the plant's watering needs.

Here are some basic materials that can be used to build raised garden beds:

Wood: An experienced carpenter can build raised bed frames in a matter of hours. Be sure to use weather- and rot-resistant types such as redwood, cedar, cypress, composite, or some pressure-treated lumber that has been approved or rated for ground contact. Stay away from wood that has been treated with creosote (like railroad ties) or pentachlorophenol, because these are chemicals that can leach into the soil—especially harmful if you are growing vegetables or herbs.



Bricks or Cinder Blocks: These materials can be harder to work with, especially bricks, as they will need a concrete foundation to keep it sturdy and not fall over. But these materials can be an attractive tie-in to a home.

Stones or broken concrete: For a rustic or natural look, raised beds made of flagstone, dry-stacked rocks or pieces of broken concrete are an informal and sometimes economical alternative. If a bed is low in height (2 feet or so), mortar won't need to be used to adhere pieces together.

Masonry beds: Another bedding choice is a modular masonry system, usually available in different styles, sizes, and weights. These are a good choice for smaller, freestanding beds. Most feature interlocking concrete pieces to hold them together.

Location: Most plants and warm-season vegetables will need at least **six hours of sunlight** per day, so keep this in mind when you are in the planning stages of building a raised bed. Rectangular beds should be oriented with their long sides running north and south to capture the maximum amount of daily rays. An advantage to finding a sunny location: organically rich soil warms up quickly, produces a more bountiful crop of veggies and herbs, and provides better drainage.



Size Matters: Unless you plan on climbing into the bed to pull weeds and dig in the soil, design a raised bed so that it is about an arm's length in depth (or width), which would be about 4 feet. Since the point is to elevate the gardening space off the ground, plan on a minimum of 10 inches in height. If the edge of the bed will also serve as an outdoor bench, plan on building it 18 inches from the ground. The length will be determined by the amount of

space in your yard or on your patio, but 8 to 10 feet is ideal. For multiple beds, design paths between them to measure at least 2 feet wide.

Soil: One of the advantages of building a raised bed is to create an environment with great soil—something that is not often found in the ground where we live. It's kind of like starting out fresh, with new, clean soil and amendments to grow an abundance of vegetables and flowers. You can use a planting mix or topsoil, and some places will deliver it. Add in compost to get the best growing environment for your plants.

Pillbugs—Good or Bad?



If you are cleaning out your flowerbeds right now, you might encounter a lot of pill bugs or roly-polies. I found a vast amount of them in the leaf debris in the yard. Are pillbugs good or bad bugs for your garden? Well, it depends on the amount and where they are eating.

Pillbugs, *Armadillium vulgare*, are a type of woodlice. They are the only crustacean that lives outside of water; however, they do require large amounts of moisture to survive. They are sometimes called roly-polies, doodlebugs, or pillbugs because of their ability to roll up into a ball when touched or threatened. If you look closely at a pillbug, you will see they have interconnected armor plating, much like an armadillo. They consume mostly decayed plant material, so they can be an added bonus to your compost pile – speeding up decomposition. But, if there is not enough decaying material around, they will attack plants, and that’s where they become a big nuisance for the gardener.

Pillbugs in Texas have a healthy and relatively long life cycle. They can live up to three years or more and produce several broods of young in a season, up to three generations per year. The young stay with the mother for up to four months as miniatures of their adult parents.

If you want to get rid of pill bugs, you can first eliminate debris in your garden. They prefer dark and sheltered spots in the garden. They also shelter because they are a favorite food for spiders, frogs, ants, and birds. If there is not enough debris, then pillbugs will attack your garden vegetables, especially any kind that has contact with the soil like strawberries and melons. If they get in your house, they only remain alive for a couple of days without moisture but if you get a massive infestation, you need to treat your home to eliminate them.

To organically rid your garden of pillbugs, you can use food-grade diatomaceous earth. Sprinkle it around the base of the plant you want to protect. The fine powder is made of shells of diatoms and will shred up the tender underside of a pill bug. It is harmless to plants and humans.

Another organic method is to use neem oil. It is a mild poison for pillbugs but safe for humans.

Finally, if you would like to capture pillbugs and add them to your compost pile or leaf mold, you can set out an old melon or some decaying debris to attract them. Once you have collected several, move them to your compost pile to speed up your composting.

Remember, pillbugs are mostly harmless unless found in huge numbers or are attacking your plants.

Texas Invasive—Bastard Cabbage



Bastard cabbage, an invasive flowering weed native to the Eurasian steppe, threatens to choke out Texas’s bluebonnets. The weed “is bullying its way along roadsides and filling fields with its dainty yellow blooms. The taller-than-waist-high flowers prompt oohs and aahs, until the admirer learns the plant is up to no good,” Kathy Huber wrote in the *San Antonio Express-News*. Bastard cabbage, which grow waist-high, rob wildflowers of “sun and soil nutrients.”

A member of the mustard family, bastard cabbage is classified as a “noxious weed” by both the federal and state governments. But that doesn’t mean it can’t also be delicious. TPWD’s Nasti offered the following tips on how to prepare the plant: “You need to pick the young leaves and do a really simple saute with a little garlic, sea salt and lemon,” she said, while recommending foragers stay away from the plant’s older leaves, which tend to be bitter. “Feral hog with a side of bastard cabbage—now that sounds like a tasty meal, doesn’t it?” Nasti said.

Events

Grimes County Master Gardeners will have their **Monthly Business Meeting on Tuesday, April 13—9:00 a.m.**

Monthly Garden Work Day: April 20th—9:00 a.m. at the Grimes County Extension Office.

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, no in-person continuing education classes are available. Below are some virtual learning and webinars for this month.

April 2021

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	23 	24	25
26	27	28	29	30 		

Continuing Education and Events

- April 10: Bluebonnet Master Gardeners **“Annual Plant Sale”**; 9:00—5:00, Sealy Texas at Levine Park
- April 12: Home Grown Lecture Series, Harris County AgriLife, **“Butterfly Gardening”**, 10:00 a.m.—10:30 a.m., *Free To Register: <https://www.hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops>*
- April 14: Urban Harvest, **“Fruit Tree Recovery after Winter Storm Uri”** 6:00 p.m.—7:30 p.m. \$20, *Zoom Live Class by Invitation.*
- April 14: Gardening on the Gulf Coast; **“Xeriscaping Gardening”**, 10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m. Free
- April 17: Urban Harvest, **“Edible Landscapes”**, 9:30 a.m.—11:30 a.m., \$20, *Zoom Live Class by Invitation*
- April 20: Home Grown Lecture Series, Harris County AgrLife, **“Butterfly Gardening”**, 11:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m. Free
- April 23: Texas A&M Garden Interest Group (GIG); **“Planting a Local Cutting Garden”**, 10:00 a.m.
Contact for Zoom Meeting Invitation: tamuqiq@gmail.com
- April 23: Texas A&M Garden Interest Group (GIG); **“Planting a Local Cutting Garden”**, 10 a.m. *Contact for Zoom Meeting Invitation: tamuqiq@gmail.com*
- April 28: Gardening on the Gulf Coast; **“Replace Those Water Hogs”**, 10:00 a.m. Free
- April 30: Master Gardener 2021 Advanced Training Class; **“Rainwater Harvesting”**, Registration deadline April 30. On-Line classes on 3 Fridays: May 7, May 14, May 21.



Become a Grimes County Master Gardener

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2021 Grimes County Master Gardener Class



Grimes County Master Gardeners will hold a Master Gardener Training Class in 2021 (August—November).

Classroom courses will be held in the Go Texan Building located at the Grimes County Fair Grounds, 5220 FM 3455, Navasota, Texas.

Specific courses and dates and times of training are still to be determined.

Grimes County Master Gardeners will be offering more than 60 hours of online and/or classroom courses taught by Texas A&M horticulture specialist, staff and area horticulture experts to meet the 50 hours required to become a certified Master Gardener. The class offers instruction in topics such as:

- ◆ Plant growth and development,
- ◆ Integrated pest management,
- ◆ Soils and water conservation,
- ◆ Fruits and vegetable gardening,
- ◆ Ornamental trees and shrubs,
- ◆ Earth-Kind Landscaping and,
- ◆ Lawn care.

Registration is \$200.00. Price includes the recently updated Master Gardener Handbook. Please contact Herb Abraham through the email or phone number listed below for more information on the class or to be added to the roster.

Learn, Grow, Share

Herbert Abraham, Grimes County Master Gardener
Phone: 703-801-3273 (voice or text)
Email: herbabraham@gmail.com

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Texas Master Gardeners

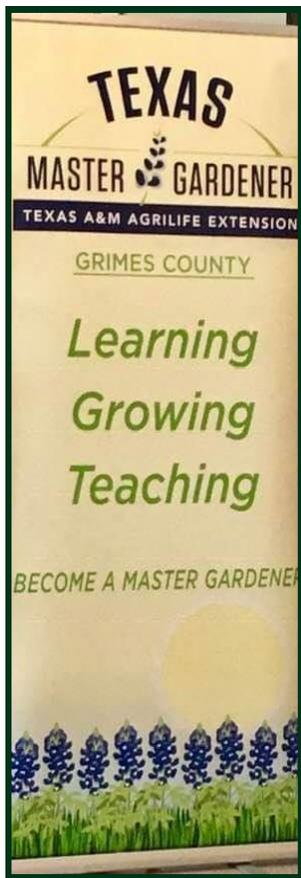
203 Veterans Memorial Drive
Navasota, Texas 77868

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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