

MARCH 2021
Volume 13, Issue III



Texas Master Gardeners



Grimes County Master Gardeners



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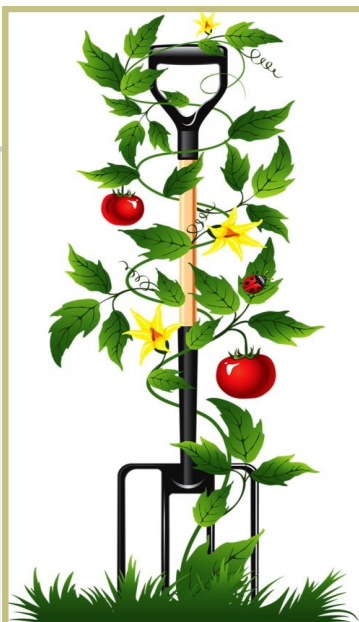
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To Prune or Not To Prune

The recent arctic blast really did significant damage to plants, gardens, and landscaping. As more time passes, the devastation is becoming more apparent. Rose bushes that looked sort of burned now look dead. And that goes for many plants. So, where to start? If your plants are mushy and melted down to the ground, it's okay to prune them now. But, if you have woody plants with burned leaves, it's better to wait another two weeks before doing a "whack job" on them. Many plants will surprise us by recovering in the spring, so hold off a bit longer to see what starts to emerge. Another test of woody plants is to scratch the stem with your fingernail and see if any green appears below the surface. If so, that means the plant is still alive up to that point. Most perennials usually can take freezes, but it will be hit and miss this year which ones really made it. Since we don't know if another hard freeze is going to happen before spring, it's best to hold off pruning until late March.

Daylight Saving Time is Sunday, March 14th



Benefits of Daylight Saving Time:

- Decreases residential electricity usage
- Decreases the number of traffic accidents
- Reduces crime
- Increases recreational time like gardening

Area On-Line Plant Sales

- March 7/8: Walker County Master Gardeners. On-Line Plant Sale. Browse Plants on the *Walker County Master Gardeners Facebook Page*. Pick up for plants will be Saturday, March 13th.
- Now to March 12: Washington County Horticulture Committee. Large Selection of Tomatoes, Peppers & Herbs. Order Forms are available at [https://Washington.agrilife.org/plant sale](https://Washington.agrilife.org/plant%20sale). Pick up will be Tuesday, March 23rd.
- March 16/17: Montgomery County Master Gardeners. On-Line Vegetable/Herb Plant Sale. Pick up on Saturday, March 20th. For orders go to the MCMG website or call 936-539-7824

March Gardening To-Do List

Soil Prep: As spring days get warmer the urge to start planting increases but first make sure your foundation (your soil) is as rich as possible with added organic matter such as compost and worm casings. The mushroom compost from Madisonville is a prime place to get good rich compost. Now is also a good time to get your soil tested. You can get soil testing bags at your local Extension Office.

Pruning: As mentioned on page one, plant damage from the arctic blast will become more apparent as time passes. It's almost too late to prune large trees and especially don't prune back live oaks or red oaks. Try to prune only sprouts or small limbs of crape myrtles instead of them topping off.

Divide: Divide and move perennials, rose bushes and small trees but don't wait too long. Remember, you don't amend soil for planting trees. They need to be planted in native soil

Plant Herbs: Plant chives, catnip, comfrey, fennel, horseradish, oregano, thyme, rosemary, peppermint, and lemongrass after last freeze.

Garden Design: With the arctic blast now past, now is the time to assess damage to your landscaping. If some plants don't seem to be emerging again then now is the time to start designing replacements. Do a layout this year for a cut flower garden. See class offering on page 5.

Fertilize: Citrus trees with high nitrogen fertilizer—fertilize every two weeks throughout the growing season.

Rotate Vegetable Areas: If you have not done so in a few years, it's important to rotate your vegetables around in your garden plot so that last year's tomato soil will get a rest. Refer to our article on crop rotation in our **September 2020** issue. You can find past newsletters on our website.

Spring Planting Guide

	March	April	May	June
Bean, bush	3/10 - 5/5			
Bean, pole	3/10 - 4/10			
Corn, sweet	3/5 - 5/5			
Cucumber	3/20 - 6/15			
Eggplant	3/25 - 6/10			
Cilantro	3/1 - 3/31			
Dill	3/1 - 3/31			
Oregano	3/16 - 4/30			
Parsley	3/1 - 4/30			
Squash, summer	3/15 - 6/15			
Squash, winter	3/15 - 6/15			
Tomato	3/5 - 4/20			

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](tel:936-873-3917).

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

How to Get Rid of Snakes Naturally

As the weather starts warming up, more snakes will start to emerge. Most North American snakes are non-poisonous and are good for our gardens. In Grimes County we mostly have two venomous snakes: copperheads and coral snakes. Timber rattlers are here but seldom seen. If you are afraid of snakes or plainly don't want them around your family then try to get rid of them naturally. While killing snakes with a hoe will do the trick, you have to remember that they do help curb those pests that dig up your yard or damage your plants. Here are some things to do naturally that will help keep the snakes down.

Clean up your yard: Tall grass, brush piles, and stacks of junk are the perfect habitat for mice, rats and insects which makes them the perfect habitat for snakes, too. Eliminate these spots in your yard and the snakes most likely will go elsewhere as well. Areas to address:

- Wood Piles
- Rock Piles
- Overgrown Shrubs
- Fallen Trees
- Scrape Piles
- Piles of leaves
- Ivy

Target your Other Pest Problems: Snakes eat moles, voles, mice, rats, crickets, slugs and a whole range of insects. If you have a known problem with these pests, work to correct it so your yard is not an easy source of food.

Mulch with Sharp Materials: Spread holly leaves, pine cones, rock chips, eggshells, rose bush clippings and other uncomfortable-to-slighter-over materials in the areas where you want to keep snakes out.



Finally, familiar yourself with the venomous snakes such as copperheads and coral snakes (pictured on the left) so that you will know the difference between a dangerous snake and a valued asset in your garden.

Article: The Spruce, Erin Huffstetter, 2/18/21

Do Cats Really Keep Snakes Away?

How many times have you heard that an outdoor cat will keep snakes away? Is that truth or myth? Well, here are some facts. Cats are curious hunters and have a natural hunting instinct for anything that moves. If the movement of a slithering snake appears around a cat, then yes, a cat will go after it. Cats especially like to take out small snakes but if there is a large reptile around they might stay away or risk some serious damage. A venomous snake can take out a cat as easily as other prey. The biggest factor in snake control by a cat is that cats eat a lot of the same prey that snakes eat so an outdoor cat will target mice and rats which removes a food source for snakes therefore helping to keep more snakes away. Just be aware that snakes also eat eggs, birds, and insects so they might stick around for those other food sources. Snakes tend to be frightened by cats because of their size and will try to avoid them if possible. Also, cat urine may make a snake linger less because of the pungent odor. So, the final answer is most cats, if given the chance, will attack snakes and yes, they will even eat a snake if they are hungry.



All About Crinums



Crinums are tough, long-lived plants with strappy leaves and fragrant, funnel-shaped flowers. In areas where the bulbs are hardy (zones 7-10) the plants can grow quite large, reaching as much as 4 feet across. Crinums are often found growing in cemeteries and abandoned home sites. Similar to lilacs, they will flower for generations with little or no attention.

What to Know about Crinums

Crinums, or crinum lilies, are related to amaryllis. The bulbs have thick, fleshy roots and once planted, they do not like to be disturbed. Plan ahead and give your crinums a spot where they can stay for many years.

Over time, the bulbs will enlarge and multiply. On well established plants, bulbs can weigh as much as twenty pounds and it can be almost impossible to remove them from the soil.

Crinums may bloom in the spring, summer or winter. Individual flowers last for only a day, but a stalk contains many buds and will bloom for weeks. Don't expect any flowers the first summer after planting. It will take at least one full growing season for the new bulbs to establish roots and form buds for the second year.



How to Plant Crinums

An ideal planting location is sunny, warm and somewhat sheltered from wind. The soil should be well drained and never saturated as the bulbs will rot if the soil stays too wet. Crinums prefer moist, rich soil, high in organic matter, so it's good to add a little compost each season.

Plant the bulbs 12-24" apart. Dig a hole for each bulb that's about 10" deep. Bury the bulb up to the place where the stem emerges from the "neck" of the bulb (see the photo at left). The stem should be above the ground and the neck should be under the soil.

In areas where crinums are not hardy (zones 3-6), they may be grown in pots. You can display the pots outdoors in summer and bring them indoors for the winter. Choose a large container to minimize watering chores. The pot should also be strong enough to resist the pressure of the roots as they expand and press against the sides of the container.



How to Care for Crinums

In areas where crinums are hardy, the plants usually retain their foliage all year round. Newly planted bulbs and bulbs that are grown in pots, may go dormant during the winter months. If this happens, the leaves will yellow and die back in the fall. Simply let the bulbs rest, keeping the soil barely moist. New growth will appear again in the spring.

During the first summer, water as needed to keep the soil around the bulbs lightly moist. Once crinums are well established they are relatively drought tolerant, though the plants grow best with consistent moisture. Potted crinums need to be watered frequently to keep the soil consistently moist.

Crinums flower best when they are fed twice a year with a balanced fertilizer. If the foliage gets tattered looking, it can be pruned as needed. Just remember that removing lots of leaves may reduce the plant's vigor and flower production.

Events

Grimes County Master Gardeners will have their **March Business Meeting on Tuesday, March 9th—6:30 p.m.** This will be a **zoom only meeting**.

Monthly Garden Work Day: March 16th—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.

March 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	22	23 ★	24	25	26	27
28	29	30 ★	31 ★			

Continuing Education and Events

- Mar 3: Gardening on the Gulf Coast; **"Vegetable Gardening: More Bounty, Less Work"**, Skip Richter, 10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m. Free
- Mar 8: Home Grown Lecture Series, Harris County AgriLife, **"Green Thumb Gardening Series"**, 10:00 a.m.—11:30 a.m., Free To Register: <https://www.hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops>
- Mar 13: Urban Harvest, **"Basic Organic Vegetable Gardening"** 9:30 a.m.—12:00 p.m. \$20, Zoom Live Class by Invitation.
- Mar 17: Gardening on the Gulf Coast; **"Composting Done Right"**, 10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m. Free
- Mar 18: Home Grown Lecture Series, Harris County AgriLife, **"All About Basil"**, 10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m. Free
- Mar 23: Texas A&M Garden Interest Group (GIG); **"Planting a Local Cutting Garden"**, 10:00 a.m.
Contact for Zoom Meeting Invitation: tamugig@gmail.com
- Mar 23: Urban Harvest, **"Spring Vegetable Planting"**, 5:30 p.m.—7:00 p.m., \$20, Zoom Live Class by Invitation
- Mar 30: Urban Harvest, **"Basic Organic Gardening 101 Series"**, 5:30 p.m.—7:00 p.m. \$60, This is the first class of a four-part series. Zoom Live Class by Invitation
- Mar 31 Gardening on the Gulf Coast; **"Spring Lawn Care"**, 10:00 a.m. Free



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

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Texas Master Gardeners

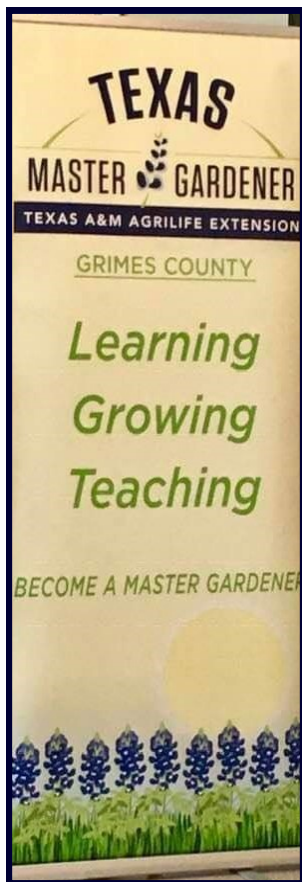
203 Veterans Memorial Drive
Navasota, Texas 77868

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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