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Mistakes New Gardeners Make



◆ Experienced gardeners know that a big garden equals a big commitment, one that's too much for most new gardeners. Start small and become comfortable with your first yield before expanding. Many new gardeners get excited and want to plant everything. Don't fall for this trap unless you have a lot of experience growing vegetables.

◆ Ignoring soil health is a big no-no. Soil is the foundation for your vegetables, and just any old soil won't do for most. To know precisely what is in your soil, have it tested, which can quickly be done with a testing kit from your Ex-

tension Office. Then amend accordingly.

- ◆ Planting too soon or too late will have consequences. Check the online vegetable growing chart for your area before planning and planting. If you are anxious to get started and the weather isn't quite right, start in-door seeds for transplanting.
- ◆ Not enough sunlight will underproduce vegetables, especially those that take anywhere from 6 to 8 hours. Before planting, check how much sunlight your chosen vegetable patch gets daily. If you don't have a garden space that gets adequate sunlight, try planting in containers that can be moved around.
- ◆ Be aware that overcrowding can affect yield. Remember, small plants grow into large plants, and they need adequate space for air circulation, water, and nutrients.
- ◆ Not using an adequate or nearby water source. One of the best ways to water a vegetable garden is to lay down drip irrigation hoses that can be easily controlled from a nearby faucet. Attaching a timer makes the job that much easier, especially during the hottest months. You don't have to remember when you last watered and when it needs to be done again.
- ◆ Forgetting to regularly fertilize or feed your vegetables will result in a poor yield as well. Even amended soil will eventually run out of nutrients.
- ◆ Forgetting to harvest in a timely manner can result in bitter or bad-tasting vegetables. If you aren't exactly sure when to pick your fruit, then find a picture of what a particular vegetable looks like at full maturity and be on the lookout for ripeness.



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 get the answer.

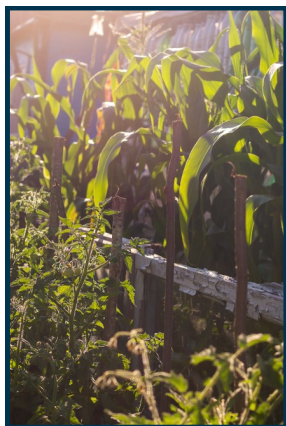
Going Organic in the Garden



What does organic gardening mean? In its simplest form, organic gardening means gardening without man-made chemicals. Instead of synthetic ingredients, organic gardeners rely on ingredients that occur naturally and that work in harmony with the natural goodness that comes from healthy, productive soil. But for the beginner, where do you start?

- **Soil:** Good soil is the foundation for any garden and the first step in organic gardening. If possible, have your soil tested and then amend it according to the test results. You can pick up test kits at the **Grimes County Extension Office, 203 Veterans Memorial Drive, Navasota.**
- **Amendments:** Amendments, other than synthetic ingredients, means adding rich organic material such as compost and manure to enrich poor soil like sandy loam. If you have clay soil with a low pH, you can add lime which helps make those nutrients more readily available for plants. Adding organic matter in the form of leaves, hay, bark mulch, peat moss, and untreated grass clippings all help to make clay soil more workable.
- **Best Plants for Your Area:** While we are not in Brazos County, our growing conditions are similar. A good place to start with plant varieties that grow well in our area is the “**Vegetable Varieties for Brazos County**” by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. You can find the pdf file at [Vegetable Variety Selector \(tamu.edu\)](http://VegetableVarietySelector.tamu.edu). Sometimes the big box stores do not always carry the correct plants for our area so beware.
- **Plant Flowers:** There are two reasons to plant companion flowers in your vegetable garden: one, to attract the pollinators, which are key to a successful garden; and two, to attract the right kind of bugs that can attack the bad bugs (see article in this issue).
- **Plant Companion Plants:** Companion planting means that a combination of plants works well together, increasing your yield, deterring insects, minimizing disease, and improving flavor. Here is a guide to companion planting: [Texas Master Gardener Association; Companion Planting Guide](#). Read in this issue which plants NOT to plant with tomatoes.
- **Organic Fertilizers:** If you see that your vegetables need a little boost, then don't turn to synthetic fertilizers but instead look for organic ingredients such as blood meal, bone meal, cottonseed meal, fish meal, seaweed, worm castings, Epsom salts. But, before adding these ingredients, make sure you read up on their properties and how and what they deliver to which vegetables.
- **Organic Pesticides:** This is probably the most significant part of organic gardening – not relying on synthetic and possibly toxic chemicals to control insects. See our article on which insects are good to have in your garden to help attack and keep down the bad bugs. However, here are some DIY pesticides you can try if you have a problem: vegetable oil, soap spray, neem oil spray, diatomaceous earth, beer in a saucer, garlic spray, chili pepper spray, and tomato leaf spray.
- **Organic Herbicides:** The best organic weed control is plain old manual weed pulling. To prevent weeds from growing in your garden, try putting down newspapers or cardboard, then top with mulch. Some gardeners put down commercial barrier cloth and punch holes in it for the vegetables. If you don't put any mulch over the barrier cloth, then weeds will be suppressed. I've had my vegetable garden this way for two years now and still don't have any weeds growing through.
- **Raised Beds:** Raised beds extend the growing season; controls water and soil; warms up earlier in the spring than ground level beds; and controls weeds. Just don't use chemically treated wood such as pressure treated as they will leech into the soil.
- **Rotate Crops:** Farmers have used this technique for a long time, but gardeners sometimes forget the importance of rotating their crops. If you plant the same plants in the same area year after year, you end up depleting the soil of certain nutrients and might increase pest and disease problems.

Six Plants Not to Grow with Tomatoes from the Tomato Bible



Companion planting is a great way to increase yield and diminish disease, but some plants don't grow well together because of different growing conditions and the potential to up the disease process. In the case of tomatoes, there are six plants that are not compatible with them:

Cabbage: Cabbage, and all relatives of cabbage in the brassica family (broccoli, kale, etc.), should never be planted next to tomatoes. In the gardening world, they are considered sworn enemies, because brassicas inhibit the growth of the tomato plants.

Corn: Pests that are attracted to corn are death to tomatoes such as corn earworm.

Fennel: While fennel is a great plant to attract good bugs, it should not be planted near tomatoes because the roots of the fennel are said to release a chemical that inhibits the growth of a lot of plants – your precious tomatoes included. In fact, if you want to have fennel in your vegetable garden, then have it in a container and not in the ground.

Dill: They aren't necessarily enemies, but tomatoes and dill have a more complicated relationship than some other plants on this list. In the early growing stages, dill acts as an ideal companion plant. It is said to improve tomato growth and repel certain pests, like aphids, that commonly affect tomato plants. However, once the dill plant matures, the relationship turns sour.

Eggplant: Although some gardeners suggest eggplant is a good companion for tomatoes, it can cause disease problems that are incredibly difficult to eradicate. Eggplant and tomatoes are both susceptible to early and late blight. As blight can remain in the soil, it is also recommended to avoid planting eggplants in the same soil after tomatoes, or vice versa, for at least two years.

Potatoes: Potatoes and eggplant are both members of the nightshade family. And, like eggplant, potatoes can cause problems with disease in your tomatoes. Potatoes and tomatoes are susceptible to the same diseases, many of which are spread through the soil.

Edible Texas Natives by Kady Hackenberg

As you may or may not know, many of the plants we see growing around our area are edible natives. Below I have listed some that you may have in your yard. One of my all-time favorites is the Pequine Chile (see picture below), which I did not have in my yard until I moved to Plantersville:

- **Echinacea** flowers are best used fresh for culinary applications but most often found dried as an herbal supplement. The petals may be scattered on savory or sweet dishes for added color, or steeped in vinegar or water or simple syrup.



- **Pequin chile** peppers are best suited for both raw and cooked applications such as stir-frying, sautéing, and simmering. When raw, the peppers are used in their green, immature state and can be minced into dressings, marinades, and sauces, or they can be diced into fresh salsas.
- **Meadow garlic**— the chopped green leaves can be used like chives and the bulbs are cooked as any other onions. Medicinal Use: Crushed bulbs applied to insect stings. Bulbs eaten raw for scurvy. Tea of bulbs to control coughs and vomiting.
- **American beautyberry** berries become edible upon reaching full ripeness which usually occurs in late summer to early fall. They should be a dark purple/magenta color but not turning wrinkled and dry. These berries can be eaten raw and have a mild, slight medicinal flavor.
- **Elderberry** the berries can be cooked and used to make juice, jams, chutneys, pies, and elderberry wine. The flowers are often boiled with sugar to make a sweet syrup or infused into tea.



The Good Guys

Okay, they are icky and most of us would rather swat or kill an insect rather than look at it! However, if you are interested in true organic gardening then you need to get over being squeamish and learn to love these good guys. They are your first defense in a garden against the bad guys (bugs) without using pesticides! Below are the good guys that hunt down and kill the bad guys. Learn who they are and try not to squish them.



Assassin Bug



Damsel Bug



Damsel Fly



Giant Wheel Bug



Ground Beetle



Honey Bee



Lacewing



Lady Beetle



Praying Mantis



Predatory Fly



Spiders



Syrphid Fly

How to Attract the Good Guys

On the previous page we have identified the good guys that you want in your garden. But how do you attract them so that they can get to work and kill the bad guys? The best way is to plant flowers, herbs and other vegetables to attract the good guys so they will move in and stay. Below are the plants that each good insect is most attracted to. You can plant them between your vegetable rows or plant them in containers and move them around to see where you get the most benefit.

- Assassin Bug: Queen Anne's lace, daisies, and alfalfa. You could also try planting flowers like **marigolds, dandelions, goldenrod, and tansy**. Herbs like dill and fennel may also attract assassin bugs.
- Damsel Bug: Especially good choices include **caraway, cosmos, fennel, spearmint, golden rod and marigold**.
- Damsel Fly: Some good pollinator plants for ponds include **water lilies, buttercups, and irises**.
- Giant Wheel Bug: Be careful of this insect as it's bite can be very painful—however, it's a great insect hunter so plant cosmos, spearmint, alfalfa, and marigolds to attract them.
- Ground Beetle: Incorporate a few perennial vegetables (asparagus, rhubarb) or vigorous perennial flowers or herbs into your garden; they will provide year-round habitat for **ground beetles**. Composting sites also make fine habitat for these important beneficials.
- Honey Bee: Choose **blue, purple and yellow**. Bees find blue, purple and yellow flowers most appealing. Flat or shallow blossoms, such as daisies, **zinnias, asters and Queen Anne's lace**, will attract the largest variety of bees.
- Lacewing: The tiny flowers of umbelliferous plants like **fennel** are especially **attractive** to **lacewings**, but also to hover flies, parasitic wasps, and lady beetles.
- Lady Beetle: Flowers and herbs such as **cilantro, dill, fennel, caraway, yarrow, tansy, angelica, scented geraniums, coreopsis and cosmos** are good choices for luring the **ladybug**.
- Praying Mantis: Attractive plants include angelica, **cosmos, yarrow marigold**, and raspberry canes. Beneficial insects also enjoy culinary herbs, such as **dill, caraway and fennel**.
- Predatory Flies: Adult parasitic wasps eat nectar and pollen. To attract them, plant umbrella-shaped flowers and herbs, such as **yarrow, Queen Anne's lace, zinnias, fennel and dill**. These wasps also savor **alyssum, cosmos, allium, and thyme**. Pupae look like: Tiny rice grains attached to caterpillars.
- Spiders: Companion planting of flowers among your vegetables will help attract spiders to your garden. Weaving spiders like tall plants, **sunflowers, cornstalks, and the like**, on which to attach their webs. Seeing spider webs hung between stalks of corn or among bean poles is a good thing.
- Syrphid Fly: Many annual flowers attract hoverflies, including **sweet alyssum** and bachelor buttons. **Syrphid flies** also like the little blooms of buckwheat and most herbs, especially **catnip, oregano** and late-blooming **garlic chives**.



Marigolds



Fennel



Zinnias



Cosmos



Yarrow



Oregano



Garlic Chives



Events

Grimes County Master Gardeners will have their **Monthly Business Meeting on Tuesday, May 11—10:00 a.m.** This will be a field trip to Lavender Farm, Chapel Hill.

Monthly Garden Work Day: May 18th—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.

May 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

- May 4: Urban Harvest, **"Summer Vegetable Planting"**, 5:30 p.m.—7:00 p.m. \$20, Zoom Live Class by Invitation
- May 5, 7, 12, 14, 19, 21, 26, 28: Aggie Horticulture Facebook Live: 1:00—2:00
- May 6: Home Grown Lecture Series, Harris County AgriLife, **"Benefits of Bats"**, 10:00 a.m.—10:30 a.m., Free To Register: <https://www.hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops>
- May 8: Urban Harvest, **"Square Foot Gardening"** 9:30 a.m.—11:30 a.m. \$20, Zoom Live Class by Invitation.
- May 12: Gardening on the Gulf Coast; **"Pollinator Gardening"**, 10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m. Free
- May 12: Urban Harvest, **"Fruit Tree Care & Pruning"**, 6:00 p.m.—7:30 p.m., \$20, Zoom Live Class by Invitation
- May 15: Urban Harvest, **"Soil, Compost, & Mulch"**, 9:30 a.m.—11:30 a.m., \$20, Zoom Live Class by Invitation
- May 18-19: Texas Master Gardener Virtual Conference: **Deadline for registration ends May 2nd!**
- May 20: Home Grown Lecture Series, Harris County AgrLife, **"Growing Fabulous Houseplants"**, 10:00 a.m.—11:00 p.m. Free
- May 26: Gardening on the Gulf Coast; **"Herbs Revisited: Rosemary & Thyme"**, 10:00 a.m. Free



Become a Grimes County Master Gardener

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

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 A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION **COOKING WELL FOR HEALTHY BLOOD PRESSURE**

A cooking school designed to help those concerned about high blood pressure and anyone who prepares meals for them.

This series of 3 interactive classes is full of research-based information and healthy recipes.

Sessions include: DASHing Your Way to Improved Health, A Virtual Grocery Store Tour, and Cooking with Spices and Herbs.

When: May 10th, May 17th, and May 24th
Where: Grimes County fairgrounds
5220 FM 3455, Navasota TX. 77868
Schedule: 12:45 pm – Check in
1:00 pm – 3:00pm – Program Series Begins

Materials will be handed out upon arrival.

To Register for the Program please call Grimes County Extension Office 936-873-3907

Program Cost: \$15 per class or \$30 to attend all 3 classes
Registration deadline is May 5th.

For More information about this Program
contact the Grimes County Extension Office

Phone: 936-873-3907 • **Email:** kyla.gladson@ag.tamu.edu

Are you ready to explore the new flavors of heart-healthy meals? Sign up today!

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is an equal opportunity employer and program provider.



THE GRIMES COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

Senior Citizens Day at the Fair

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 9, 2021
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM
5220 FM 3455 Navasota TX 77868

- Visit Vendor Booths
- Health Screenings
- Play bingo
- Win Prizes

FREE
&
Open to the Public

A lunch, provided by Mid-South Electric CO-OP, will be served at 11:30 A.M.



Texas Master Gardeners

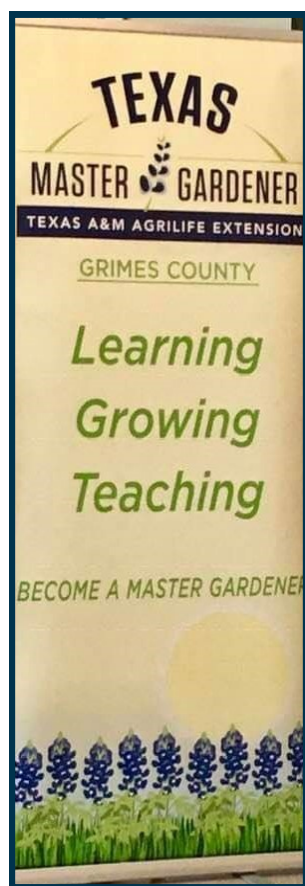
203 Veterans Memorial Drive
Navasota, Texas 77868

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



2021 Board of Directors

President.....Paula Parmley
Vice PresidentKimberly Herten
SecretaryRenee Harter
TreasurerHerb Abraham

2021 Committees/Chairs

Administrative.....Connie Arden
Advertising/Publicity.....Peggy Sloan
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Community Garden.....Cathey Hardeman
Co-op.....Fred Vesperman
Fair Judging.....Vicki Wood
Fundraising.....Carol Garnet
Historian.....Sharon Murry
Intern Class Coordination.....Herb Abraham
Junior Master Gardener.....Kay Douglas
Newsletter.....Paula Parmley
Nominating.....Carol Garnet
Social Media.....Jamie Bruns
Scholarship Program.....Kimberly Herten/Renee Harter
Timekeeping.....Martha Brogdon
TMGA Awards.....Sharon Murry