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Happy 4th of July

Harvesting from the Garden



You put in all kinds of work to finally harvest, but how do you know when the time is right to pick? Some of us get impatient and pick too soon or get sidetracked and pick too late. All of these things matter when harvesting a garden.

- **Check your garden daily.** Two reasons to do this... one is that vegetables left too long will quickly invite pests and disease. And two, if you pick your vegetables when they first ripen, it encourages the plants to produce more.
- **Pick small.** Don't wait until your vegetables get too big. It's best to pick produce when they are small because they are at their most tender and flavorful.
- **Be gentle.** Vegetables can be easily bruised. It's important to pick and place them gently in a basket. Bruised skin leads to rot.
- **Use large enough baskets.** This again helps against bruising.
- **Watch where you step.** Gardens can become very tight with vegetables. You might accidentally step on plants and damage them. Damaged plants invite disease and pests.
- **Keep Track.** If you know what variety you planted and how long it takes to reach harvest, you will know when to begin looking for ripe harvest from your plants.
- **Check for disease.** Check the leaves and undersides for spots and discoloration, which can be a symptom of a disease or pests moving in.
- **Don't be unrealistic.** Realize that your produce is not going to look like what you buy in a grocery store. Homegrown broccoli usually has smaller heads than in a store. Having unrealistic expectations may cause you to delay harvesting while you wait for that perfect fruit.
- **Harvest stems quickly.** There are certain vegetables and herbs we eat that don't produce fruit. Think of some herbs and lettuces. These need to be picked early when they are at their most tender and flavorful.
- **Let the fruit hang.** There are some plants like tomatoes, peppers, and peaches where the fruit hang down. Leaving them on the vine to ripen fully will add to a better flavor.

Different Ways to Preserve Vegetables



Most people think canning is the only process for preserving vegetables but there are several other methods for preserving vegetables. The right storage methods increase the shelf life of your favorite produce, allowing you to buy in abundance if you don't grow them yourself. Here are nine different methods:

Dehydrator: Using a dehydrator to preserve your fruits and vegetables works by removing all the water; this prevents any bacteria from surviving. Drying alters both the flavor and texture of the food, but it is one of the easiest preservation methods.

Pickling: Pickling is a great way to preserve produce. Pickle any vegetable type, including carrots, cherry tomatoes, asparagus, or cauliflower. To preserve color, blanch for three minutes and then shock in an ice water bath to stop the cooking process.

Fermenting: Fermenting not only preserves your fresh vegetables, but it also improves the nutritional content. Use fermenting as a preservation method for all your favorite ones. Use either a dedicated starter culture, whey or salt to ferment veggies; what you use depends on what you are fermenting.

Salting: Salting works as a preservation method thanks to salt's unique hypertonic properties. Salt doesn't allow bacteria to survive, as it causes organisms to die due to dehydration.

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Freezing: Freezing vegetables and fruits is easy and quick. Freezing and then thawing softer vegetables or fruits, such as blueberries or tomatoes, damages them and changes their texture. If possible, use those while still frozen. To preserve vegetables by freezing, like preserving carrots, prepare them as desired. Use metal baking sheets and add vegetables in a single layer. Place them inside the freezer until hardened. Remove frozen vegetables from the baking sheet and place inside freezer bags. For extra flavor, add fresh herbs, garlic, chilies, lemon zest, etc.

Oil Packing: Oil packing preserves both fruit and veggies as the oil makes it nearly impossible for bacteria to develop. If opting for oil packing, be aware it does alter the flavor. Oil packing is best for olives, onions, beets, eggplants, tomatoes, and herbs.

Water Bath Canning: Wash and prepare your vegetables according to the recipe you are using. Fill jars with vegetables and solution, secure lids, and rings—place jars inside a water bath canner. Ensure the water covers the jars by two inches. Place the top on the canner and bring water to a rolling boil. Processing time begins once the water reaches a full boil. Determine processing time based on individual recipes. Turn off heat and remove canner lid. Allow jars to stand in water for five minutes before removing. The jars should sit for up to 24 hours before testing for a seal.

Pressure Canning: Fill and prepare your jars as instructed in the recipe. Always leave the recommended amount of headspace and secure rings on jars until they are hand tight only. Place jars inside the pressure canner and fill with water to cover jars about three inches. Secure canner lid in place and leave the vent pipe open. Use medium-high heat and allow steam to pass through the vent pipe until there is a constant flow of steam. Close your vent pipe following your manufacturer's instructions. Adjust heat as necessary to achieve the desired pressure and then maintain pressure for the recommended time. Once processed, turn off the heat and leave the canner alone until the pressure drops to zero. After ten minutes, remove the weight and open lid and allow the jars to cool for another ten minutes. Remove the jars and let them sit for up to 24 hours and then check for a proper seal.

Deadheading Flowers



Why is a good idea to deadhead your flowers? When flowers are past their prime, they turn their attention to producing fruits and seeds. Producing fruits and developing seeds wastes energy that might otherwise be used to make more flowers, foliage, or roots. Many gardeners ask what is deadheading flowers? The act of deadheading flowers is removing spent flower blossoms so that the plant doesn't spend energy producing seeds and fruit. Instead, the plant's energy is redirected to growing more foliage, roots, and a second bloom of flowers. And, more flowers are often just what we gardeners want!

Most annuals and some perennials will produce more flowers if the older, faded ones are cut off than they would have if the blossoms had been left in place. Deadheading plants also prevents seed formation and unwanted self-seeding. Removing unsightly faded blossoms improves the appearance of the flower garden. As a bonus, the continuous flowers that follow deadheading are often longer lasting than the ones that got the pinch.

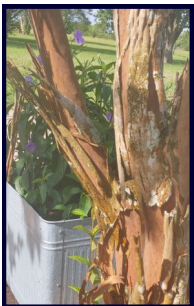
The proper way to deadhead is to go down the stem below the dead flower head and make your cut just above where the first healthy leaves come off the flower stem. Use pruning shears to cut the stem

For plants with multiple flowers on a spike, wait until most are finished blooming and cut off the whole spike just above the first set of healthy leaves. Repeat flowering will begin again.

For plants with a great many flower stalks, it can be easier to simply shear off enough of the top few inches to remove most of the spent blossoms. (Watch for unopened flower buds hiding among the faded blooms.)

As a general rule of thumb with most plants, you can simply pinch off the spent blossom with your fingers. Plants with tougher stem will call for pruning shears.

Q & A



Question: My crepe myrtle trees are shedding their bark. Is this normal?

Answer: Yes. Once a crepe myrtle reaches maturity, it will shed last year's bark around June each year. There is nothing wrong with the tree and it is not infested with pests. The coloration that shows up once the bark has shed is a beautiful mottled red which makes it a stunning addition to your landscape.



Question: We had 21 swallowtail caterpillars on our bronze fennel. The next day we had 13 and after that, none. What happened?

Answer: Several things could have made them disappear. If not protected, they become lunch for lizards and birds. Also, if they don't have enough host plant to eat during this phase of development, they might crawl off to find a better food source. Don't try to pick up and move by hand a caterpillar as they are extremely delicate at this stage. You can purchase netting to put over the host plant and caterpillars or gently put the whole plant in an aquarium where you can feed them each day and protect from predators. Research first before doing this so has to get the maximum protection for these precious insects.

Growing Lavender in Grimes County



Provence

Who doesn't want fragrant bunches of lavender growing in their yard? Not only is lavender a beautiful plant, but it has several medicinal properties along with being an excellent insect repellent. However, growing large masses of lavender can be a challenge in Grimes County.

Lavender originated in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and India where the climate is dry and arid which is best suited for cultivating them. Grimes County summers are extremely hot and humid, so successfully growing lavender takes some special work. But, if you select the correct type of lavender and care for it properly, you too can have those bunches of beautiful spikey flowers.

Lavender Types: The best type of lavender for our county is **Sweet Lavender, Provence, Goodwin Creek, and Phenomenal.**



Sweet Lavender

Sun: Lavender likes full sun. An hour or two a day of shade is okay, but too much will make the plants too leggy and bloom poorly.

Planting: Lavender grows very well in containers or in the ground as long as certain conditions are met. First of all, you will need well-draining soil such as a mixture of topsoil, sand, and gravel. If planting in a bed, make sure it's raised as lavender does not like to have wet feet. In containers, you can place small rocks on top of the soil to keep water from splashing up onto the stems.

Water: Lavender needs to be dry and watered as little as possible. It is a drought-tolerant plant that requires very little moisture. The best way to kill lavender is to overwater it. Also, when adding moisture, don't let the water splash up on the plant. Water at the base and only water enough to keep the planting alive. Don't use overhead sprinklers or irrigation, as this can cause the plant to open up to fungal disease.

Fertilizer: Little to no fertilizer is recommended unless the plant fails to bloom. Then you can use an organic fertilizer such as compost tea.

Pruning: Prune back your lavender in the fall by several inches. The best time to prune is at the end of October or Mid-November. This will encourage healthier growth and help the plant live longer.



Phenomenal

Medicinal, Therapeutic & Practical Uses: The oil of lavender is disinfectant, an antiseptic, an anti-inflammatory and for aromatherapy. Medicinally, it can be used soothe headaches, migraines and motion sickness when applied to the temples. It is frequently used as an aid to sleep and relaxation. Dried Lavender flowers are used extensively as fragrant herbal filler inside sachets.

Culinary Uses: Lavender delivers a floral, slightly sweet and elegant flavor to salads, soups, meat and seafood dishes, desserts, cheeses, baked goods and confectionery. For most cooking applications it is the dried flowers that are used although the leaves may also be used.



Goodwin Creek


Events

Grimes County Master Gardeners will have their **Monthly Business Meeting on Tuesday, July 13th, 9:00 a.m., at the Go-Texan Building, Navasota Fairgrounds.**

Monthly Garden Work Day: July 20th—8:00 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

July 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 ★	2	3
	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

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 with the answer.

Continuing Education and Events

- July 1: Home Grown Lecture Series, Harris County AgriLife, **"Latest & Greatest in Bedding Plants for 2022"**, 10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m., Free To Register: <https://www.hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops>
- July 7: Gardening on the Gulf Coast; **"Chocolate: Bean to Bar"**, 10:00 a.m. Free
- July 10: Urban Harvest, **"Low Volume Irrigation"** 9:30 a.m.—11:30 a.m. \$20, Zoom Live Class by Invitation
- July 14: Urban Harvest, **"Just in Thyme! Culinary Herbs for the Garden"**, 7:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m., \$20, Zoom Live Class by Invitation
- July 15: Home Grown Lecture Series, Harris County AgriLife, **"Garden Hummingbird Safety"**, 10:00 a.m.—11:00 p.m. Free
- July 21: Gardening on the Gulf Coast; **"Ornamental Grasses for the Landscape"**, 10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m. Free
- July 24: Urban Harvest, **"Fall Organic Gardening"**, 9:30 a.m.—12:00 p.m., \$20, Zoom Live Class by Invitation

Thank You Master Gardeners!



Grimes County Fair—Senior Day



Grimes County Fair—Horticulture Judging



Navasota Livestock Auction—Bake Sale



Become a Grimes County Master Gardener

TEXAS A&M
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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

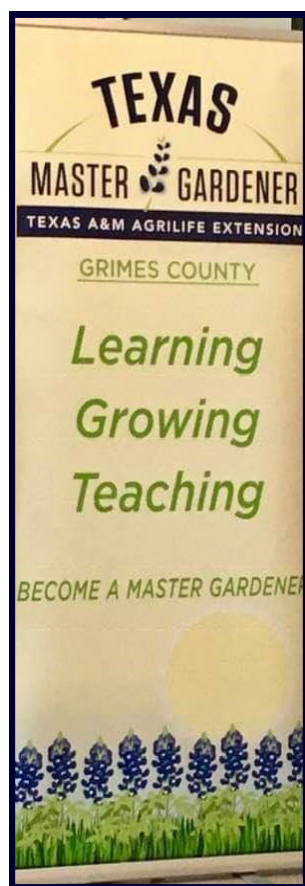
203 Veterans Memorial Drive
Navasota, Texas 77868

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



2021 Board of Directors

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Vice PresidentKimberly Herten
SecretaryRenee Harter
TreasurerHerb Abraham

2021 Committees/Chairs

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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