

MAY — JUNE 2023
Volume 15, Issue III



Texas Master Gardeners



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Here Comes Summer



Here's a timeless gardening truth – after spring planting are completed and mulch is refreshed in the gardens, most homeowners do not do any more to support or prepare for the long hot days of summer.

The reason is simple. We have escaped the winter doldrums and spring is such a gift that we accept it gratefully and simply sit back and enjoy it. Leaves spring out, the grass grows, and the plants are flowering. We are lulled into thinking that we don't need to do anything more. But sooner than you think, the blooms are

gone, the weeds explode, and you stand there, stunned, saying "what the heck happened?"

The answer to that question is simple, too. Seasons change and when they do, plant behavior changes as well. Fortunately, there are a few simple tasks you can do to stay ahead of Mother Nature and work with her to ensure that your gardens thrive throughout the summer. It is this type of partnership that will enable you to get the most out of your gardening in every season.

Nature Doesn't Take Time Off

Summer is characteristically the hardest season to manage with respect to landscape, gardens and plants. Why? Because summer heat and dryness can create significant stress in some plants while encouraging vigorous growth in others - mostly those we don't want – the weeds! These extreme conditions can come abruptly. One day everything is lush and moist and happy and then overnight the real heat of summer hits, drying out everything.

As we move into May and the coming summer heat, look at the following pages for ways to prepare for the summer season. When done, it will make those summer gardening chores more manageable during our long growing season.



Article from *The Garden Continuum*, Monique Allen

Prepping for Summer

The soil has been amended, the plants have been planted, and spring is in full swing. In our part of Texas, we have been enjoying a nice long spring with cooler temperatures and consistent rain. Spring is the most exciting time for gardeners as new plantings, gardens and trees take shape. But summer is just around the corner and any day now we will be hit with high heat and humidity, which makes gardening much more difficult. What steps can you take now to help make your job easier when the temperature reaches 100?



Mulch, mulch, mulch. Once plants are in the ground, spreading a 2" layer of mulch over your soil is one of the best things you can do for your garden. The mulch blankets the ground, shielding the soil from the sun, keeping it cooler. It also suppresses weeds, helps with moisture control, and in the future will add organic matter to your soil. There is not a best type of mulch but typically anything organic such as shredded wood, pine straw or shredded leaves will do. Even though they are offered at garden stores, it's better to not buy mulch that has been dyed as the color can leach into your soil eventually.

- **Weeds.** Between the high heat and humidity or the possible lack of consistent rain, the number one problem gardeners encounter is uncontrollable weeds. Weeds thrive in summer heat and can quickly go from tiny to gigantic. It's important to remove them from your garden as soon as possible because weeds steal moisture and nutrients from your plants. Also, when they mature they produce seeds which makes weed control even more difficult. See page three on how to deal with unwanted grasses in your gardens.

- **Setting up an easy and effective watering system.** While you may enjoy hand watering in the evenings, it's not the most effective way to get water to your plants. Eventually it will also become a burden. If you already have an irrigation system set up, then good for you. If you don't, you should at least invest in drip hoses and timers. Most common garden plants prefer an average of one inch (1") of water each week. Most plants prefer drip watering compared to overhead watering because the latter can lead to fungus and damaged leaves. There are several systems available at your local stores. I have found that cheap drip hoses only last about one to two seasons before they stop working effectively. It's better to start with a more expensive and developed system so you won't be replacing equipment often. A timer will eliminate overwatering and assist with proper zone watering. See Page Nine under Continuing Education—Montgomery County Master Gardeners will have a class on "**New Trends in Water Wise Landscaping**".



- **Pests & Diseases.** Keep a sharp watch on your plants for destroying bugs and diseases which can really take off in the summer heat. The most common types of summer problems are Grasshoppers, Tomato Hornworms, Aphids, Powdery Mildew, and Black Spot. You can research at Aggie Horticulture and A&M Agrilife on safe ways to control these pests and diseases as they appear. Remember not all bugs are bad, so refresh your identification of good insects as listed on Page Four and how to attract them on Page Five. In June, Urban Harvest will have a class on **Insectary Gardens, Nature's Pest Control** (See Page Nine under Continuing Education).

I've Got Grass in my.....



Bermuda Grass

Grass and weeds are a gardener's persistent enemies; especially Bermuda Grass (*Cynodon dactylon*). Bermuda grass, which actually comes from Africa, is an introduced species that can be an excellent pasture grass but a gardener's nightmare once it gets into flowerbeds and vegetable garden plots. It is extremely difficult to kill even with multiple applications of strong herbicides but understanding how it reproduces can help in the control and eradication of it.



Bermuda grass reproduces in three ways – by seeds, by above ground shoots (stolons) and by below ground shoots (rhizomes). As any experienced gardener will tell you, just removing the top visible grass does nothing to eradicate it if you also don't remove the stolons and rhizomes. However, that can be a challenge considering the Bermuda grass rhizomes can grow 6 inches or deeper and if any is left behind then they tenaciously grow again!

There are several recommended solutions depending on where your level of effort might be:



Stolons

- Herbicides: Use a strong herbicide repeatedly. If you don't mind using herbicides, then a repeated spraying campaign can bring Bermuda grass under control. However, you don't want to use these herbicides in your vegetable plots, and there is growing evidence that massive exposure might cause cancer.
- Vinegar and Dish Soap: Some people swear by this method, but others complain that the grass seems to come back even thicker and stronger after repeated spraying.
- Mechanical Removal: One of the more effective but labor-intensive methods is pulling out the grass by hand especially if you get all of the stolons and rhizomes. However, even breaking off some of a rhizome does not prevent the grass from continuing to grow.
- Preventing Photosynthesis: Preventing the grass from achieving photosynthesis by covering it with a barrier. While this method will not stop the grass from creeping back along driveways and flowerbeds, it will decrease a considerable amount in vegetable plots, and it's environmentally safe. Here are the steps:
 - Use a weed-eater to get cut the grass as low as possible or use a torch to burn off the surface grass.
 - Rake and dig up as much grass, stolons, rhizomes as possible.
 - Lay down flattened cardboard with overlapping edges and secure with sod staples.
 - Lay down a dense weed barrier cloth over the cardboard. Try to get at least 20 mils thick. This type of weed barrier will allow water to pass through but keep all sunlight out.
 - Top off the weed barrier with 4-5 inches of mulch.



Rhizomes

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

Master Gardeners and Interns

Cleaning up and planting at the demonstration garden.

Thank you Interns!



Lunch at the Hardeman's after touring Blackwood Land Institute



GRIMES COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

Speakers Bureau

Do You Need a Guest Speaker?



The Grimes County Master Gardener Association has a Speakers Bureau made up of friendly, knowledgeable Master Gardeners! We offer speakers on a variety of topics to garden clubs and other organizations upon request.

Please contact us 936-873-3907 or send an email to request a speaker at grimescountymastergardeners@gmail.com

Events

May 2023

Grimes County Master Gardeners will have their May Business Meeting on **May 9th, 9:00 a.m. —11:00 a.m., Bluebonnet Room, Navasota Center, 101 Stadium Drive, Navasota.**

Grimes County Master Gardeners will have their **Spring Bake Sale at the Navasota Auction Barn on May 20th.** Contact *Carol Garnet* at carolindar@aol.com for further information.

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 / Events

In Person Classes:

- May 20: Brazos County Master Gardeners, “**Bouquets for Every Day**”, 10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m., Clara Mounce Public Library, 201 E. 26th Street, Bryan, Texas.
- May 20: Montgomery County Master Gardeners, “**Home Greenhouse Design**”, 9:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m., Montgomery County Extension Office, 9020 Airport Road, Conroe, Texas. \$5 Fee
- May 23: Brazos County Master Gardeners: “**Floral Arrangements for Spring**”, 7:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m., Brazos County Extension Office, 4153 County Park Ct., Bryan, Texas.
- May 25: Montgomery County Master Gardeners, “**Critters in the Yard & Garden**”, 6:30 p.m.—8:00 p.m., Montgomery County Extension Office, 9020 Airport Road, Conroe, Texas. \$5 Fee

On-Line Classes:

- May 16: Urban Harvest, “**Easy to Grow Asian Vegetables**”, 6:00 p.m.—7:00 p.m., Zoom. Free
- May 20: Urban Harvest, “**Low Level Irrigation**” 9:30 a.m.—11:30 a.m., Zoom. \$20 Fee

Events

Grimes County Master Gardeners will have their June Business Meeting on **June 13th, 9:00 a.m. —11:00 a.m., Bluebonnet Room, Navasota Center, 101 Stadium Drive, Navasota.**

June 2023

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 / Events

In Person Classes:

- June 10: Montgomery County Master Gardeners, “**New Trends in Water Wise Landscaping**”, 9:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m., Montgomery County Extension Office, 9020 Airport Road, Conroe, Texas. \$5 Fee
- June 15: Montgomery County Master Gardeners, “**New Trends in Water Wise Landscaping**”, 6:30 p.m.—8:00 p.m., Montgomery County Extension Office, 9020 Airport Road, Conroe, Texas. \$5 Fee
- June 27: Brazos County Master Gardeners, “**Green-Roofed Structures**”, 7:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m., Brazos County Extension Office, 4153 County Park Ct., Bryan, Texas.

On-Line Classes:

- June 17: Urban Harvest, “**Insectary Gardens: Nature’s Pest Control**”, 9:30 a.m.—11:30 a.m., Zoom. \$20 Fee
- June 20: Urban Harvest, “**Creating a Pollinator Paradise**”, 6:00 p.m.—7:30 p.m., Zoom, \$20 Fee

Texas Master Gardeners

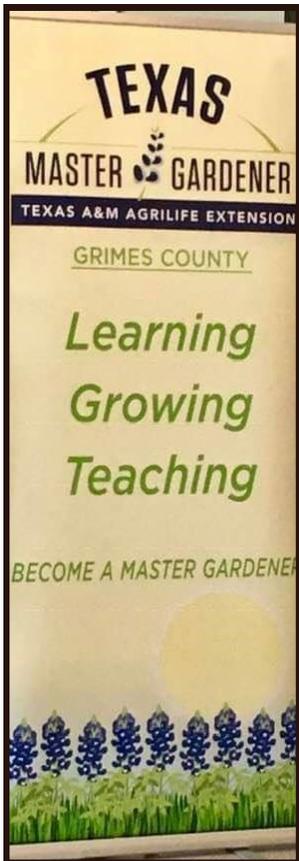
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Navasota, Texas 77868

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



2023 Board

- President.....Sparky Hardeman
- Vice PresidentCathey Hardeman
- SecretaryNancy Vidotto
- TreasurerKyle Braswell

2023 Committees/ Chairs

- Auditing.....Jena Jackson
- Community Garden.....Kady Hackenberg
- Co-op.....Jena Jackson / Ron Jackson
- FundraisingCarol Garnet
- Intern Class CoordinationHerb Abraham
- Junior Master Gardener.....Patti Sexton
- NewsletterPaula Parmley
- Nominating.....Carol Garnet
- Social Media.....Jamie Bruns
- TimekeepingMartha Brogdon