



# Grimes County Master Gardeners



## Useful Garden Tools For 2024

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Hula Hoe for Weeds



Long and Short Cobra



Moisture Meter



Soil Knife



Garden Gloves with Claws



Pruning Shears



Garden Tool Caddy



Thumb Knife



Plant Labels



## *No thank you, I am not interested— I Have a Brown Thumb*

You don't know how often we hear people say that when they see a Master Gardener table at an event. It makes me sad and yet, at the same time, I can totally relate.



*Typical German small garden Photo: iStock.com/RachelDewis*

When I was a child, we always had a garden. My mom was a single mother and was able to do it all: working, raising kids and cultivating a garden. My dad lived in an apartment in the city and would only go to his garden on the weekends, which is very common in big German cities, but he was also able to grow a lot of vegetables in his always green garden. I remember the days helping out: being sent outside to pick fresh herbs for dinner, picking strawberries, and having to weed between the rows.

When I was older, I thought I had inherited the green thumb from both my parents and didn't worry about anything—until I actually started a garden. Or well, I tried to. But by then I had

moved from Germany to South Texas and the Texas heat can destroy everything: your plants, your dreams, your hopes. Okay, maybe this is a little over the top. But everything I planted died. Sometimes within days, sometimes within weeks. I was ready to give up.



*Plants scorched by the summer sun (Texas A&M AgriLife photo by Adam)*



*Container with pepper- and spearmint*

Then something green started to appear in my backyard. Where did that come from? I was so used to seeing only brown dirt with dead plants! My husband's cousin had given us a few **chile pequin pepper** seeds because she had a big bush in her garden and my husband likes spicy food. I had planted the seeds in containers and had set them out on the patio, watered them for a few days then the dogs knocked over the pots, everything spilled out. I didn't see it in time and then I didn't care anymore. Why even try if everything works against you? But at least one of the little seeds was a survivor. It had made its way out of the pot into a small patch of soil. Right there. Next to the concrete patio and unknown to me it sprouted and it started to grow. And grow, and without a lot of help, it turned from a light green seedling into a beautiful green bush. And it made me think: maybe I had seen the whole gardening thing from the wrong angle. Maybe it was impossible to copy my parents' luscious European gardens. Maybe I had to adjust to where I was living. And that's what I did. While I would want everything to go my way, and still yearn for freshly picked currants, cherries and gooseberries, I was learning to relax and go with what works

locally.

Plants that are able to survive in my garden without a lot of my help—they are my new best friends. Say "hello" to **Lilies, Mexican Petunias, Sage, Purple Queen, Ivy** and containers bursting with **Mint**. They are giving me hope that I will eventually think that I have a green thumb. Do I still have to buy my produce at the store? Yes. Almost all of it. Will I be winning "Yard of the Month" anytime soon? Probably not. Because I still have plants dying on me. But at least I have something green around me that is surviving and that's my advise to anyone who is scared of gardening: start small. Plant plants that thrive even if you don't take care of them daily. Don't think you need to copy your parents' or your neighbors' impressive garden, a garden you see on YouTube, or on Pinterest. Start small. Start with native plants. And ask for support: people who love plants are some of the nicest people you can find. And thinking back I am almost certain that my parents' gardens also started small—with local plants.

*Submitted by Anja Pena, Master Gardener Intern*



*Mexican Petunia*



## *Garden and Kitchen Allrounders*

# *Native Texas Herbs*

Are you looking for some all-rounder-plants? Here are two native Texas herbs that bring some color into your garden, attract pollinators like bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds, thrive in the Texas heat and can be used in the kitchen: Mexican Mint Marigold and Mexican Oregano.



**Mexican Mint Marigold** (*Tagetes lucida*) is a hardy perennial that is native to Mexico and Southwest US. It is drought and heat tolerant and thrives in the hot humid Texas climate.

Mexican Mint seeds are fairly easy to establish. It is recommended to start the herb seeds indoors 6 to 8 weeks before the last expected frost date. This herb plant prefers full sun and well-draining soil, even sandy soils. Give it full sun to part sun and water regularly until it's established. In summer, give it a weekly deep watering. Prune back in late fall after the blooms fade. It goes dormant for a short time in the winter. Propagate in spring by division or seed.

Its stems reach 2-3 feet and are topped in late fall with tight clusters of bright golden-yellow marigold-like flowers. Migrating butterflies and hummingbirds are attracted by them.

While it doesn't mind growing in containers, don't be afraid to sow Mexican Mint Marigold into the ground in the garden, because in spite of its name, this beautiful bloomer is not a true mint — thus not an invasive grower. Instead, it forms a clump that expands outward from its center.

The leaves can be used as a substitute for French tarragon, that is why some people refer to it as "Texas tarragon." They have a fragrance similar to anise or licorice and are a great seasoning for fish or chicken.



**Mexican Oregano** (*Polioanthus longiflorus*) is another native perennial that requires very little care. Plant this shrub, that is native to Mexico and Central America, in a sunny to partly shaded location with good drainage. It blooms from late summer through fall with tubular white, pink, and lavender flowers. Young plants need regular water - water it weekly for the first growing season. Once they are established, they will be drought tolerant.

In early spring, Mexican oregano begins sending up vertical shoots that grow to three feet in ideal conditions. By Memorial Day inch long tubular flowers begin to appear, starting out white but gradually changing from white to pink to lavender. The flowers are a nectar source for butterflies and hummingbirds.

In the kitchen, Mexican oregano can be used as a substitute for regular oregano (*Origanum vulgare*), although it does not contain the same concentration of flavor as *Origanum vulgare*. Since it also has a spicier flavor, reduce the amount in your recipe by about one-third to half the true oregano called for. Oregano is a great seasoning for chicken marinades, tomato-based sauces and spice rub mixes. The leaves can be used fresh or dried and the flowers are also edible and can add a colorful touch to stir fries and salads.

## *Anyone Can Grow Roses*



Are you afraid to tackle growing roses because you have heard they are difficult? Many gardeners have steered away from roses because they believe they are plagued with pests, fungus, and other problems, but that is actually a myth. Anyone can grow roses if they adhere to some common practices. Roses have been around for thousand of years, many times growing without any aid from humans. If you are interested in trying your hand at growing roses, here are some simple rules to go by.

Select roses that grow well in your area. Then choose a site that gets at least six hours of sunlight a day, preferably morning sun. Amend your soil with organic matter and compost. Provide enough spacing, so the roses are not crowded and allow for good air flow. They don't need a lot of water or fertilizer if you have rich soil and keep mulched. They don't have to be babied when pruning. You can even take a chainsaw to one, and it will survive. If you dead-head old blooms, then you will be rewarded with new ones soon. Even though it is recommended to prune most roses in **February**, you can prune them all year long. It won't hurt them. Just be aware that deer love roses, thorns, and all. If that becomes a problem, spray with deer repellent every seven days or plant onions and/or garlic around them.

### *Organic Rose Fertilizer*

Use this recipe for one standard rose bush:

- 1 cup alfalfa meal
- 1 cup fish meal
- ½ cup blood meal
- 1 cup cottonseed meal
- ½ cup bone meal
- ½ cup Epsom Salt

Mix all ingredients together. Rake the mulch away from the plant and pour the mix in a ring at the drip line of the plant. Do not scratch or dig it into the soil. Cover the mix with mulch and water the plant as you normally would. This feeds the plant and the soil for about 6 months. Apply in early spring and early fall for continuous feeding throughout the year.

## *Taking Care of our Winter Birds*



What can we do to help our feathery friends in the winter-time? While you may look out and see a lot of greenery and think there are many food sources for birds, that's not necessarily true. All those insects, berries, and foliage that were plentiful in spring and summer are gone. Birds need extra fuel to combat the cold, so supplying them with a steady diet of sunflower seeds, millet seed, and peanuts are excellent choices for filling up a bird feeder. Also, providing a reliable water source is just as important. The most important word here is **consistency**. Once you start feeding winter birds, you

have to keep a steady supply handy until spring. Why? Because birds become acclimated to a food source and end up depending on it during lean times. If you don't know what kind of birdseed to purchase, the best overall is **black oil sunflower seeds** which provides high powered nutrition that almost all types of birds will eat. A huge bag can be purchased for under \$20 at almost any major hardware store but you can even find it at your local grocery store. Throw a few on the ground for the ground feeders. Fill up a bird feeder placed outside your window and watch who comes to eat. This winter, we have been pleased to see many species taking advantage of our feeders, including some birds that normally don't come to a feeder.

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](mailto:grimescountymastergardeners@gmail.com)





# BECOME A TEXAS MASTER GARDNER

*Grimes County Master Gardeners (GCMG) will offer a Master Gardener weekly training course beginning in January 2024 through April 2024. The Trainings are conducted online by instructors from Texas A&M University and Texas AgriLife Extension Specialists around the state.*

*Upon completion of the training and volunteer service, Master Gardeners provide ongoing service & educational programs to the local community through the AgriLife Extension Service.*

## WHAT WE OFFER & MORE!

- ✓ Courses over plant growth & Development
- ✓ Fruit and Vegetable Gardening
- ✓ Plant pathology & Entomology
- ✓ Soil health & Water Conservation

## START TODAY!

*Visit the website - <https://evs.tamu.edu> to start your volunteer application process!*

## MORE INFORMATION:

*Contact Herb Abraham via phone or email  
703-801-3273  
[herbabraham@gmail.com](mailto: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.



## *December 18th Christmas Social*

Grimes County Master Gardeners held their annual Christmas Social on Monday, December 18th. Along with a wonderful pot luck dinner, Intern Teri Thompson recieved her Master Gardener Certification and Herb Abraham was recognized as 2023 Master Gardener of the Year.



## Events

Grimes County Master Gardeners will have their **January Business Meeting on Tuesday, January 9th—9:00 a.m., at the Navasota Center.**

New Classes for Master Gardener Certification starts February 1st with **Orientation on January 25th, 9:00 a.m., Navasota Center.**

# January 2024

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

- Jan 1: Urban Harvest; On Demand Webinar—**"Plant Propagation"**, 30 minute video; free. Available all year.
- Jan 6: Urban Harvest: **"Fruit Tree Training & Pruning"**; 3 Class Series, First Class by Zoom, the Rest will be In-Person; \$90.
- Jan 8/16: Harris County Green Thumb Series; **"Intro to Aquaponics"**, 10:00 a.m.—11:30 a.m.
- Jan 11: Urban Harvest; **"Growing Organic Vegetables"**; 10-Class Series thru 5/16/24; \$240.
- Jan 25th: Grimes County Master Gardeners—**Orientation for 2024 Master Gardener Training Class**, 9:00 a.m., Navasota Center.

## AREA TREE SALES

- Jan 27: Montgomery County Master Gardeners: **Fruit and Nut Tree Sale**; 9:00 a.m.—noon; 9020 Airport Road, Conroe, Texas



## Events

Grimes County Master Gardeners will have their **February Business Meeting on Tuesday, January 13th—9:00 a.m., at the Navasota Center.**

# February 2024

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	26	28	29 ★		

## Continuing Education and Events

- Feb 1: First Class— Grimes County Master Gardeners—**2024 Master Gardener Training Classes** , 9:00 a.m. Navasota Center. Classes will be every Thursday through April 2024.
- Feb 12 / 20: Harris County AgriLife, **“Success with Spring Vegetables”**, 10 a.m.—11:30 am.
- Feb 25: Arbor Day in Conroe: **900 Bare Root Trees Free to the Public**; Location: Founders Plaza Park, 205 Metcalf, Conroe, Texas.

## AREA TREE SALES

- Feb 17 & 18: Friends of Mercer Botanic Gardens; **“Virtual Tomato & Fruit Tree Sale”**.

## Texas Master Gardeners

203 Veterans Memorial Drive  
Navasota, Texas 77868

Website: [txmg.org/grimes](http://txmg.org/grimes)

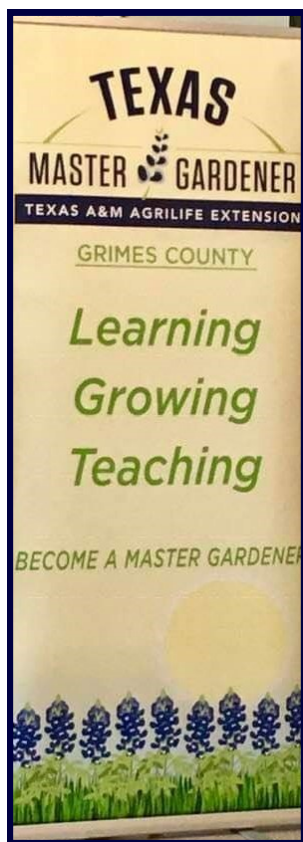
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/GrimesCountyMasterGardeners](http://www.facebook.com/GrimesCountyMasterGardeners)

GrimesCountyMasterGardeners



## Grimes County Master Gardeners

Please send submissions and photos by the  
20th of each month to: [pwparmley@gmail.com](mailto:pwparmley@gmail.com)



## 2024 Board of Directors

President.....Sparky Hardeman

Vice President .....Cathey Hardeman

Secretary .....Nancy Vidotto

Treasurer .....Layne Payant

## 2024 Committees/ Chairs

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Community Garden.....Kady Hackenberg

Co-op.....Jena Jackson / Ron Jackson

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Nominating.....Carol Garnet

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Speakers Bureau.....Georgia Abraham / Paula Parmley

Timekeeping.....Martha Brogdon