

# Urban Dirt

Planting Natives  
in your landscape!

Gardening Events and Information for Texans

## Texas Tough Gardening

By Terri Simon, Master Gardener

We admire them while driving on Texas highways, but few of us are aware of the catalyst responsible for the beautiful wildflowers seen growing in the medians and right-of-ways of our highways. Protecting the natural landscape became her passion as First Lady. She will always be known for the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, even though it was her husband, President Lyndon B. Johnson, who signed the bill. The act limited billboards along the interstates, required junkyards along the interstate and major highways to be screened and most importantly, provided funds for landscaping along the right-of-way.



Photo courtesy of Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

She passed away on July 11, 2004 at the age of 94, but the impact she left on Texas cannot be forgotten. Lady Bird (Claudia) Johnson, born in Karnack, Texas, was the wife of President Lyndon Baines Johnson. She had a great love of nature and guarding the natural landscape was her calling. Protecting native plants became her goal. She and actress Helen Hayes began by planting those plants in Texas and started the National Wildflower Research Center. She raised funds for the center and in 1998 it was renamed the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

Located in Austin, the center has a wealth of information and is committed to conserving native plants. It has gardens featuring Texas native plants and is known for its online guide of native plants. It has 284 acres of savannas, woodlands and gardens and has the only 100 percent native plant garden in Texas at this time. Its outreach and education programs continue to keep the public informed about native and adapted plants in Texas. To access its native plants database for all of North America go to <https://www.wildflower.org/plants/>. It is an excellent guide for plants that grow well in Texas.

Another valuable resource for plants that grow well in Texas' tough conditions is the Texas Superstar® Plants website.

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Henry Duelberg salvia is listed as a Texas Superstar®

## Upcoming Events

*We regret to inform you that the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension on Bear Creek Drive has experienced a devastating flood, yet again. We do not know when or if we will return to that location since it will be flooded for some time. The Harris County Master Gardeners Association will look to alternative locations for regular events, but it may take some time to organize. In the meantime, keep informed of our status with this Urban Dirt Newsletter or on Facebook.*

*The Bear Creek Fall sale has been cancelled. We may relocate the Bear Creek Open Garden Day for October. We hope to have more information in the October issue of Urban Dirt. The Master Garden Hotline is down, temporarily, but we hope to have it back up and running soon. You may still email [phonehcmga@gmail.com](mailto:phonehcmga@gmail.com) for gardening questions.*

*Please be aware that our satellite location near Pasadena was not impacted greatly by the hurricane and the Demonstration Gardens are still open at 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. 77034.*

## September 2017

### Green Thumb Gardening Series

#### **Gardening with Children & Grandchildren**

**Sept. 16,** Maude Smith Marks Library, 10:00 - noon

**Sept. 19,** Spring Branch Memorial Library, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m

**Sept. 21,** Freeman Branch Library, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

#### **Educational Program**

**Sept. 4,** 10:00 - 11:30 a.m., *Fall Gardening*, Guy Lazrus, Harris County Master Gardener.

Genoa Friendship Garden Education Building, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd.

#### **Open Garden Day: Meet the Master Gardeners!**

**Sept. 18,** 8:30-11:00 a.m., Genoa Friendship Garden, Plants for sale in the Greenhouse. 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. 77034

## October 2017

#### **Open Garden Day: Meet the Master Gardeners!**

**Oct. 16,** 8:30 -11a.m., Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston, 77034

**Oct. 24,** Workshops & children's activities, *Fall Vegetables*, 10:00 - 10:45 a.m. TBA

#### **Educational Program**

**Oct. 12,** 10:00 - 11:30 a.m., *Indoor Plant Purifiers*, Linda Gay, former director of Mercer Botanic Gardens.

Genoa Friendship Garden Education Building, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. 77034

#### **Plant Sale**

**Cancelled due to Hurricane Harvey**

**Have Garden Questions?**  
Email your questions to: [phonehcmga@gmail.com](mailto:phonehcmga@gmail.com)

# Plant of the Month - Tea Tree (*Melaleuca alternifolia*)

By Beth Braun, Master Gardener

According to my hairdresser, it's the men and boys who like the tea tree oil shampoo. Something about the tingling sensation on the scalp, he speculates. Make of that what you will.

The demonstration gardens at Bear Creek and Genoa Friendship Garden both have a Tea tree, shown here in its full blooming glory at GFG. The photo was taken by Master Gardener Terri Simon, no doubt awe-struck by the cloud of fluffy white flowers covering the canopy. The structures and people in the background give you a sense of the size and form of this tree.

At both locations the specimens are identified by their common name. It gets complicated after that. The botanical name *Melaleuca alternifolia* is the first to be listed in an online search of Tea Tree, but not having done the requisite careful inspection of the leaves, flowers and bark, I can't say for certain that we're growing the *alternifolia*. After all, *Melaleuca* is a genus of nearly 300 plants in the myrtle family, Myrtaceae. Among taxonomists, there is heated debate—based on DNA studies—as to whether all species currently included in the *Melaleuca* umbrella belong there, and whether others not currently classified as *Melaleucas* do in fact belong there. Ah, taxonomists.

To muddy things further, the common name Tea Tree is also applied to species in several other genera. Captain James Cook's 1770 voyage to Australia figures into this tale. It's safe to say, though, that what we have are *Melaleucas*, whose name originates from ancient Greek words meaning dark/black (*melas*), and white (*leukos*). The tale there is that the whitish bark of the first species described was charred by fire.

So let's start with what we know about the genus *Melaleuca*. Most appear naturally only on the Australian mainland, but a few species occur naturally as far north as Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

*Melaleucas* range in size from shrubs of only a few feet tall to trees reaching up to 100 feet, and all are evergreen with aromatic leaves. They're found in a wide variety of habitats, from swamps and boggy places to poor, sandy soil. The familiar Bottlebrush tree also belongs to the myrtle family in the genus *Callistemon*, and its red flowers resemble those of *Melaleuca lateritia*, *M. hypericifolia* and others.



Tea Tree in bloom at Genoa Friendship Gardens

*Melaleuca alternifolia* is best known for its commercial tea tree oil (TTO), extracted mainly from the leaves. TTO has both antimicrobial (i.e., antibiotic, antiviral, antiprotozoal, antifungal) and anti-inflammatory properties. Its potential to treat antibiotic resistant bacteria is being researched.

In low concentrations, TTO is used in skin and hair care products to treat dandruff, acne, lice, herpes and other infections. One product containing TTO claims that it has been “proven in the world of contact sports to efficiently remove dirt, grime, gym crud, sweat, smog, allergens, grunge and built up oils.” Intriguing.

Of interest to gardeners is a natural insect repellent made by mixing a few drops of TTO with coconut oil, with the added benefit of making us smell nice while we toil in the heat. To rule out skin sensitivity, test a small amount of this—and any other concoction using essential oils—on the inside of the elbow. Note that there is a long list of dangerous side effects when TTO is ingested, including hallucinations, vomiting, and severe rashes. It's especially toxic for children and pets. Any topical use of a product

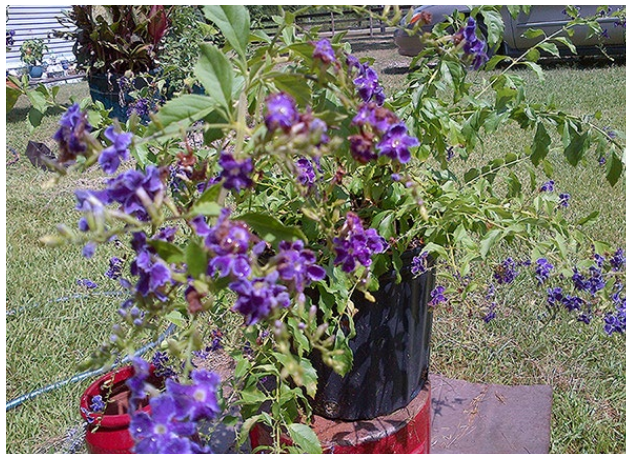
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## Texas Tough Gardening, *cont'd from pg. 1*

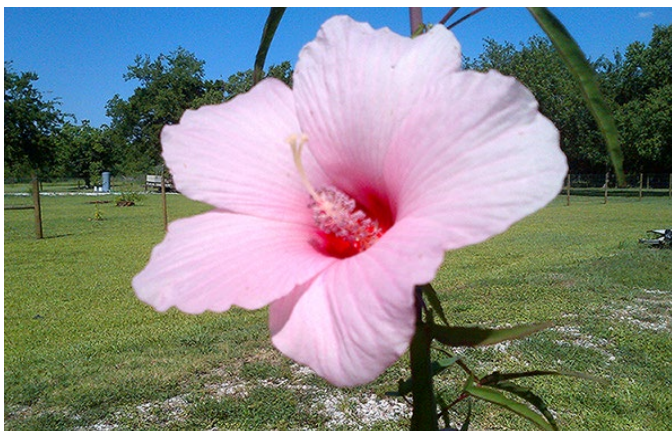
Initiated by AgriLife Research under the Texas A&M University System, its goal is to inform consumers about exceptional plants which demonstrate good performance in most of Texas. Criteria for the designation of a Texas Superstar include: ornamental and unique characteristics (such as being able to tolerate Texas summer heat), eye-catching and useful to gardeners, should perform well for all levels of gardeners, must be impervious to pests (as much as possible) and is easily propagated to meet consumer demands. Finally, the plant should be so striking that it sells itself. An executive board decides which plants should have the Texas Superstar designation after the plant has been tested in demonstration trials throughout the state. The website for the listing of all Texas Superstars is <http://texassuperstar.com/plants/index.html>.

Now that you know which websites to visit, why choose natives or Texas Superstars for your landscaping needs? To begin with, there has been a trend across the U.S. of planting a limited selection of



*Duranta, Brazilian Sky Flower is a Texas Superstar®*

non-native plants. Not only are these plants prone to diseases and pests but they can also use an increased amount of herbicides, fertilizers and water. Some may also be invasive and over run native plants. As our available water resources decrease, plants that are drought tolerant will become necessary. Landscaping with natives can provide an environment for wildlife and invite native insects and microorganisms as well. Choose varieties that will do well in your growing zone and fit well in your landscaping. Select native plants that will co-exist with other natives. The most critical time is two-three weeks after planting. Plants that are drought-tolerant need time to become established. Remember that your county extension office also has a wealth of information available to you. Master gardener plant sales will usually carry some native or adapted plants in addition to offering some Texas Superstars. Once your natives become established, your gardening duties should be reduced and/or easier. Sit back and enjoy the benefits.



*Pink Texas Star Hibiscus- while not native to Texas, this hibiscus has adapted and is listed in the plant database of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*

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## Plant of the Month, *cont'd from pg. 3*

containing the oil should be kept away from the eyes, nose and mouth.

Melaleuca cajuputi also produces an oil (cajuput/cajeput) used for its medicinal properties to treat colds, headaches, toothaches, skin infections and as an inhaled expectorant. You may be familiar with ointments—such as Tiger Balm—which contain this oil and are said to provide relief for joint and muscle pain. Cajuput oil acts as a *counterirritant*, in that its hot & cold sensation on the skin distracts the brain from the underlying source of pain.

Cajuput oil is also used as a fragrance in soaps and other personal care products and as a flavoring in foods.

Back to the trees at Bear Creek and Genoa Friendship Gardens. Besides its spectacular spring flowering, the rough textured swirling bark provides visual interest year 'round. Both trees are quite large, and if any of you readers know what sort of Melaleuca they are, by all means let me know at [txbraun@yahoo.com](mailto:txbraun@yahoo.com).

# Herb of the Month - Giant Spiderwort

*(Tradescantia gigantean)*

By Karen McGowan, Master Gardener

*Urban Dirt's* focus this month is on Texas natives, and our September's herb spotlight is shining on **giant spiderwort** (*Tradescantia gigantean*).

It seems probable that those responsible for the common name of this edible herb were not particularly influenced by marketing it as such: If neither "spider" nor "wort" sounds especially appetizing, supersize these by adding "giant" and that's the magical menu feature! Welcome to the pre-Halloween version of Herb of the Month.

Giant spiderwort's somewhat ghoulish name is a bit of a misnomer. An herbaceous beauty blooming during March and April in stunning pops of white, pink, blue, purple, and violet, this striking herb's habitat is prairie, plains, meadows, pastures, savannahs, and woodlands' edge. According to The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, giant spiderwort is native throughout the United States, and found liberally in both Texas and Louisiana; adaptable, but preferring moist soil with full sun or light shade exposure. Giant spiderwort grows anywhere from one to three feet in height and is a perennial, deciduous herb. This versatile, edible plant will thrive in nearly any type of soil – clay, clay loam, medium loam, sandy loam, or sandy – with the proper water and light conditions. The



Photo by Carl Fabre, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center



Photo by Lee Page, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

#### Citations:

[https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=trgi](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=trgi)

<http://homeguides.sfgate.com/spiderwort-plant-care-38163.html>

<http://www.ashmolean.org/ash/amulets/tradescant/tradescant02.html>

native, bountiful bloomer is also valuable to bees, serving as a nectar source. It should be noted that deer consider giant spiderwort among the many delectable items on their menu, as well.

Its nomenclature attributable to John Tradescant, Jr., gardener to Charles I of England, giant spiderwort along with many other plants were introduced to royal gardens by Tradescant and his father, both of whom were noted botanists and gardeners. Giant spiderwort is considered "native to the New World," and its exact origin locale, prior to Tradescant's bringing it into the royal gardens of England, is a mystery. According to various online sources, giant spiderwort is propagated through seed collection, division and cuttings. Instructions indicate to divide the root clump anytime during the growing season to thin the plant or produce more plants for the landscape. Mature seeds are harvested once the blooms have faded. The plant reseeds readily unless the flowers are deadheaded; seeds are planted in late fall or very early spring for new plants the following season.

Use giant spiderwort's showy, typically abundant, flowers chopped into a fresh green salad, interspersed throughout cake or cookie batter (reserving some for garnish), or just use your imagination!

Enjoy!



# “Wildscapes” and More: All About Native Plants in the Garden

By Becky Lowicki, Master Gardener

With this issue’s focus on native plants, the timing couldn’t be better to reach out to the local chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas — Houston and their expert in all things native—Katy Emde. Below are great tips, resources and ways to learn more about how to best incorporate natives into your landscape.

**Q.** What do you think are some of the biggest misperceptions about natives?

**K**aty Emde: Some people might think that growing native plants means less work, but all gardens require maintenance, including ones with natives. Also, sometimes you might hear that natives require less water. That might be true on a prairie or at the edge of woodlands, but because garden soil rarely matches the native habitats and soil where the plants are naturally found, gardeners should be aware that native plants may need almost as much watering, particularly until they get really established, then eventually they may need less watering than non-natives.

**Q.** What are some key benefits that “backyard” (and front-yard!) gardeners may not be aware of?

**K**aty Emde: Native plants bring life to a garden since they are used by more insects than many cultivars and non-native plants. With insects come lizards, birds and other wildlife. It’s fun and interesting to watch that activity.

**Q.** Which natives are most prolific for the Houston region in terms of hardiness and aesthetics?

**K**aty Emde: There are lots of natives that are prolific and lend interesting aesthetics. Many natives reseed readily or spread by runners since on a prairie they have to compete against other plants and they have to sustain their species to overcome floods and droughts.

Of these plants, some have seeds that drop on the ground and some plants have seeds that are flung around the area. Slender Rosinweed, Tickseed Sunflower, False Mint, Carolina Elephanfoot, and Sharp Gayfeather all reseed readily. Obedient Plant, Indiangrass, Swamp Sunflower and some other asters spread by runners.

As far as aesthetics go, lots of natives are showy, such as the Coneflowers - the Rudbeckia and Echinacea genera. Our most common local native Echinacea, Sanguine Coneflower, is not as large as some from other areas or as cultivars, but it is the right one for our area. It is simple and lovely, and the fact that we can claim it as ours makes it beautiful. Beauty is in the eye of beholder and sometimes we need to adjust what we appreciate in a plant.



Indiangrass - photo by Sally and Andy Wasowski, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

**Q.** At the upcoming workshop, what can attendees expect to learn about natives?

**K**aty Emde: At the Wildscapes plant sale we are offering about 70 species of plants. Our hope is at everyone who attends will find a few plants, and maybe many plants, that will work in their gardens, whether they have sun or shade, dry or wet areas. There will be knowledgeable people available to help answer questions and there will be a presentation that will review the benefits and how to grow many of the plants for sale.

We try to cover many aspects of what a plant needs to grow. The list of plants and descriptions will be on the [Houston chapter website](#) about a week before Wildscapes and so even if someone cannot attend, they can use the information on our website as a resource. We also have speakers who will talk about our past prairies, fireflies and ponds, all which will tie in to the value of various natives and how they support different wildlife.

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Wildscapes, *cont'd from pg. 6*

**Q.** At the accompanying sale, are there certain natives that would be good for “first-time” native gardeners to integrate within their residential landscapes?

**K**aty Emde: Many members of the Aster family are pretty easy to grow so “new-to-natives” people might look to see if those plants would fit in their gardens. Rudbeckia grandiflora - Roughleaf Coneflower, and Silphium radula var. gracile - Slender Rosinweed are two members of the aster family that have lovely yellow flowers. Roughleaf Coneflowers do well in sun and part shade and have survived and bloomed in my yard despite being neglected.

For shade, a good plant is Carolina Elephantsfoot. One rarely hears about it, but it comes back every year and has delicate pink flowers that a variety of bees, butterflies and other insects frequently visit. Gulf Coast Penstemon, a good part shade perennial, is a favorite of many and it usually gets established.



*Rudbeckia grandiflora*

Frogfruit is a rambling plant that is good for covering bare areas. We are pretty confident that most people can grow most of the plants offered because they come from our area so they are suited to our local conditions.

Everyone needs to read about the requirements of each plant so that they get the plants that are right for their gardens, particularly when it comes to plants that require full sun. Those are the ones that may struggle the most if that condition is not met.



*Carolina Elephantsfoot - photo by Thomas Muller  
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*

**Q.** What are some top tips of how to properly care for most natives “after the sale,” i.e., good maintenance advice? Also, any key inadvertent mistakes to try to avoid?



*Frogfruit - photo by Thomas Muller,  
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*

**K**aty Emde: As with most plants, be sure not to over water them. Also, gardeners should not panic if their plants get damaged by insects, such as the plants getting chewed up, the leaves shriveling, or parts turning brown. That is the way nature works. The plants are used by insects that are in turn valuable to other animals as food.

Generally the plant will survive so don't get out the pesticides. Even insects that are considered pests should be left alone in order to see if over time the habitat will start to take care of itself and if the numbers of pests may go down. Try to prune and cut back in the winter when there are less apt to be caterpillars or eggs on the plants. One hates to hurt the very creatures we are trying to attract.

**Q.** Anything else you'd like to add that I haven't asked?

**K**ate Emde: As much as many of us want everyone to grow lots of natives, gardeners don't have to make big changes in their gardens at one time. It is okay to start slowly with a couple of native blooming plants, a shade plant, and a grass, for example. See what you like and what works in your garden, and add more as you learn more. Hopefully everyone will ultimately catch the “native” enthusiasm that is building around the state and will find that they are enjoying their gardens more by including natives.

*Due to the recent flooding, the Wildscapes 2017 Workshop was postponed. For more detail, pls. visit <http://npsot.org/wp/houston/wildscapes-workshop/>.*

# Blue Bird Basics

By Charlotte Gogola, Master Gardener Intern

On Thursday, August 10, the P2 Master Gardeners learned everything you could ever want to know about bluebirds from “Bluebird Basics,” a presentation by Montgomery County Master Gardener and Master Naturalist Linda Crum. The presentation was developed by the Texas Bluebird Society (TBS), a non-profit organization you’ll want to join if you’re serious about attracting and watching bluebirds. The website has the presentation along with many helpful handouts. Go to [www.texasbluebirdsociety.org](http://www.texasbluebirdsociety.org)

Bluebirds are in the thrush family like the American Robin and various thrushes and solitaires. There are Eastern bluebirds, which both breed and winter in Texas, and Western and Mountain Bluebirds, which travel through Texas to winter. Bluebirds are secondary cavity nesters who are reliant on woodpeckers to abandon their nests. With today’s decrease in natural habitat (e.g., from dead tree removal), it is necessary to provide additional habitat in the form of bluebird nestboxes. Linda had brought some TBS nestboxes for sale; you can locate the nestbox distributor nearest you by checking the TBS website.

A bluebird nestbox should be mounted in an open area, away from buildings but near trees, facing north or east, with afternoon shade. The box should be about five feet tall for easy observation. (Open the side of the box and use a flexible mirror to view down inside the nest. A flashlight may help.) TBS has handouts on how to assemble a bluebird nestbox pole, or Wild Birds Unlimited sells a great pole kit. (They opened a new store in Pearland earlier this year; go to [pearland.wbu.com](http://pearland.wbu.com).)



The pole will need a baffle to prevent predators like raccoons and squirrels from eating eggs and babies. The nestbox should be painted white or covered in white heat shield (e.g., material from an old political sign with a small space between it and the nestbox for insulation.) This keeps the nest from overheating and killing the baby birds. Painting a “fake hole” on the three intact sides of the nestbox can help pique the bluebirds’ interest in nesting there. (Eventually they find the real hole.)

The nestbox should be established in the fall to get ahead of male bluebirds scouting new locations as early as December. Female bluebirds select their nests from multiple male offerings and proceed to build nests using pine straw, pecan catkins, grasses, etc. (The female does the building but the male may bring materials.)

Male bluebirds attract mates with a wing-waving dance. Mating entails briefly touching cloacas, after which the female lays an egg a day (usually in the morning) for an average of 4-5 days. This typically occurs in late February. Eggs usually are blue but sometimes they are white.

The female incubates the eggs for approximately 14 days. (If the mother can’t hear the babies inside the eggs, because the eggs are unfertilized or dead, she may add nesting material on top of the eggs and start laying again.)

New hatchlings can’t control their body temperature, so the mother bird will continue to keep them warm for about 5 days.

Bluebirds rely on insects for food. The male and female take turns feeding the young until they can fly and for a few days after. Preferred foods are arthropods (grasshoppers, spiders, etc.) Sod webworms can be a source of food for bluebirds, so this is an example of why not to use pesticides. You can offer mealworms as a treat, but mealworms don’t contain adequate calcium for baby birds’ bone development. After feeding, you will see the mother bird remove fecal sacs deposited by the babies. She will carry them away from the nest so as not to attract predators.



*cont'd on pg. 8*



## Blue Bird Basics, *cont'd from pg. 8*

Bluebirds fledge about 18 days after hatching, usually early in the morning or late in the evening. Their feathers are spotted, offering some camouflage.

After fledging, it's time for you to clean out the nest. Normally just emptying the contents is sufficient (toss the contents far away from the nest!), but if there's a concern such as mites, you can spray the inside with a 10% bleach solution, scrub it with a brush, and blot it dry. There is no need to wear a mask when cleaning the nestbox unless you have an immunosuppressive disorder.

Bluebirds usually nest three or four times a year. They're usually done by late August. Average lifespan in the wild is about two years.

The TBS site has a list of native plants that are beneficial to bluebirds, for nesting material or berries or both. Milkweed is always a good insect attractor. Bluebirds will also eat nuts and seeds that've been shelled (e.g., "No Mess" mixes) and they will eat hot pepper suet. Remember to have a shallow source of water for drinking and bathing.

Report bluebird nesting data to [nestwatch.org](http://nestwatch.org) (Cornell Lab of Ornithology). If you're a Master Naturalist, you can earn service hours this way. There's a Nestwatch app for your phone if you prefer that. And, yes, you high tech folks can put a small camera such as a GoPro in the nestbox to help you observe.

Avoid disturbing the nest during bad weather, during the first few days of incubation, and close to fledgling time. (Put out mealworms to see whether the parents are still feeding their young.) Check the nest in the mid-afternoon during the egg laying period, as the female will lay either early or late in the day. Don't lead predators to the nest by retracing your steps; keep walking in that direction for a bit before looping back. Remember that neither the birds nor their eggs can be handled without a special permit. This is true of all Texas songbirds.

To protect your nest box from being bothered by other people, you can order a Bluebird Habitat sign from [www.johnsoncitysignshop.net](http://www.johnsoncitysignshop.net). Unfortunately, while the sign may deter some human

interference, it doesn't protect the bluebird nestbox from animal invaders. Fire ants are one problem. A product called Tanglefoot can be purchased at a feed store and applied to the pole. (Wild Birds Unlimited has their own ant barrier product.) Wasps may build inside the nestbox; rubbing the ceiling interior with soap can prevent the wasps from attaching their nests.



The English "house sparrow," an invasive species that has become the most prolific songbird in the U.S., is the direst problem. It pecks bluebirds to death and destroys their eggs, building its own nest on the remains. Linda says that she traps and kills the English sparrows, figuring that it's either a dead sparrow or dead bluebirds. VanErt Traps ([www.vanerttraps.com](http://www.vanerttraps.com)) are what's used to trap the sparrows. If you don't want to kill the sparrows, you could consider offering them to a wildlife rehabilitator as food for raptors.

An alternative to trapping is the "Sparrow Spooker," a set of Mylar strips that scares the sparrows away. For instructions, visit [www.sialis.org](http://www.sialis.org), or buy a ready-made one at [www.sparrowtraps.net](http://www.sparrowtraps.net). These need to be replaced yearly because the Mylar loses its shine.

A third option is trapping the sparrows and clipping the first 4-5 feathers off on both wings. The feathers do grow back, so this is not a permanent solution. It does disrupt one breeding cycle so there are fewer sparrows overall.

All native (as opposed to English) songbirds are desirable, and some may move into your bluebird nestboxes. Ideally, put up enough boxes for everyone to have one (the "books say" a football field apart but the birds don't read those books!) If you're limited for space, you can apply hole reducers to your existing nest boxes. Go to [www.sialis.org](http://www.sialis.org) for more info on those. It's possible to let chickadees nest early in the year, then apply the hole reducer so that only the bluebirds can get in for their turn.

All in all, Linda's talk was a great education on Bluebirds, and we now know of several great sources for further info. Hopefully we can have Linda Crum back again to share more of her naturalist wisdom!

# Gardening Tools

This chart is a handy guide for knowing the best times to plant in Harris County.

	Vegetable Garden Planting Dates for Harris County												FACT SHEET
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Texas AgriLife Extension Service 3033 Bear Creek Dr, Houston, TX 77084 281.855.5600 • <a href="http://harris-tx.tamu.edu">http://harris-tx.tamu.edu</a>
ASPARAGUS, Crowns													
BEANS, Lima & Snap Bush													
BEANS, Lima & Snap Pole													
BEETS													
BROCCOLI, Plants													
CABBAGE, Plants													
CAULIFLOWER, Plants													
CARROTS													
CHARD, Swiss													
CHINESE CABBAGE													
COLLARDS													
CORN													
CUCUMBER													
EGGPLANTS, Plants													
KOHLRABI, Plants													
LETTUCE													
MUSKMELON, Cantalope													
MUSTARD													
OKRA													
ONION, Bulb-type setes													
ONION, Transplant for scallions													
ONION, Multipliers													
PARSLEY													
PEAS, English & Snap													
PEAS, Southern													
PEPPER, Plants													
POTATO, Irish													
POTATO, Sweet													
PUMPKIN													
RADISH													
SPINACH													
SQUASH, Summer													
SQUASH, Winter													
TOMATO, Plants													
TURNIP													
WATERMELON													



# Open Garden Days at Genoa Friendship Gardens



The Orchard



The Water Garden



The Greenhouse

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Harris County Master Gardeners invite you to join us

## *Open Garden Days*

on the 3rd Monday of every month, 8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m., January through December, and the 1st Monday of every month, June through August.

Admission to the Exhibit Gardens is free, and register at the Welcome Table to receive additional monthly notices for children and family events.

## **The Genoa Friendship Gardens**

is located at

1202 Genoa Red Bluff Road

Houston, Texas 77034

**Email:** phoneHCMGA@gmail.com **Phone:** 713.274.0950

*To schedule a special event for your garden club, school or professional organization please contact us to make your arrangements.*

- Tour the variety of exhibits to inspire you with vegetable, perennial, rose, tropical and native gardens.
- Meet and talk with a Master Gardener about planting citrus, fruit or berries for your home orchard.
- Contemplate the joy in the Serenity Garden and catch a view of the Water Garden.
- Don't leave the GFG until you have shopped the Greenhouse where seasonal herbs, vegetables and perennials are available for bargain prices until September.

### *2017 Monthly Open Garden Days & Special Events*

January 16	Open Garden Day	June 5 & 19	Open Garden Day
<b>February 18</b>	<b>Fruit Tree &amp; Tomato Sale</b>	July 3 & 17	Open Garden Day
February 20	Open Garden Day	August 7 & 21	Open Garden Day
<b>March 18</b>	<b>Perennial, Herb &amp; Pepper Sale</b>	September 18	Open Garden Day
March 20	Open Garden Day	October 16	Open Garden Day
April 17	Open Garden Day	<b>October TBD</b>	<b>Family Fun Day</b>
May 15	Open Garden Day	November 20	Open Garden Day

# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE  
3033 BEAR CREEK DR.  
HOUSTON, TX 77084

[harris.agrilife.org/program-areas/hort/](http://harris.agrilife.org/program-areas/hort/)

[hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

## Like Us On Facebook

The Harris County Master Gardeners as well as Texas A&M Agrilife Extension - Harris County Horticulture are actively participating on Facebook offering tips, lists, news and plant advice almost daily. The best part, instead of locating planting guides or insect documents, and sale dates for individuals, you can add the HCMG site



your account and easily share information with others. This is a definite timesaving device for these busy garden days and helps promote our organization.

[www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners](http://www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners)

[www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyHorticulture](http://www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyHorticulture)

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## September Green Thumb Gardening Series

### *Gardening with Children & Grandchildren*

**September 16**

**Maude Smith Marks Library**

**6:30-8:30 p.m.**

**September 19**

**Spring Branch Memorial Library**

**10 a.m. - Noon**

**September 21**

**Freeman Branch Library**

**6:30-8:30 p.m.**