

# Urban Dirt

Spring Vegetable  
Gardening

Gardening Events and Information for Texans

## Preparing for Spring

by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

One by one my lovelies have been arriving for at least a month now and I am ready. The seed catalogs are here. Part of my spring fever is because it's an annual occurrence for me at this time of the year, but this recent weather has me itching to see seedlings breaking through the earth. On January 15th and 16th of this year we had unusual weather. I have lived within this area for my entire life and not once do I recall turning on my air conditioning in January, but I did. Depending on your weather source on those two days our high ranged from 79-81°. No wonder our plants are so confused. I had amaryllis bloom out of season, my neighbor's peach trees started flowering in December and her bewildered grapevine tried to put forth tiny tendrils with grapes. What a dilemma.

My security blanket is seedlings. I am still new to seed propagation. How I wish I could channel Louis Mickler, our Genoa Friendship Garden's seedling pro. Louis fears no seed or cutting and he loves plant propagation. My mind is racing

*Terri's favorite seed catalogs*

*Photo by Terri Simon*



back and forth trying to decide what to plant. My first true love is herbs, primarily basil, but I am also branching out into other areas. My garlic has been in the ground since the end of September and the temperature fluctuations do not seem to have affected it. In my refrigerator I have *Aralia spinosa* seeds nestled into egg cartons and today I will drag out my heat mat and begin planting my pepper seeds. Soon to follow will be other seeds I have ordered. The leaf or cutting celery, the lemon grass seeds and the burdock root seeds are patiently waiting their turn. Special growing boxes are recommended for the burdock root so that's another project. I feel as though I am being pulled in so many directions but I love it.

With this intemperate weather, seeds or transplants are the best way to go with vegetable gardens. Most of us do that way anyway since the majority of vegetables are annuals. Make your beds! Remember when your mom told you that growing up? Did you realize back then you would grow up and continually do that inside

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TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
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Have Garden Questions?

Email your questions and photos to: phone [hcmga@gmail.com](mailto:hcmga@gmail.com) or  
Call us Monday – Friday 9:00 am to Noon at 713-274-0950

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## FEBRUARY 2020

### Green Thumb Gardening Series

#### Spring Vegetable Gardening

**Feb. 13,** Barbara Bush Library, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

**Feb. 15,** Maude Smith Marks Library, 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

**Feb. 18,** Spring Branch Memorial Library, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

**Feb. 20,** Freeman Branch Library, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

### Educational Programs

**Feb. 4, First Tuesday** 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. Program: *Master Gardener Program in Harris County* by Brandi Keller, MG Program Coordinator, and Paul Winski, CEA – Horticulture. Arrive as early as 10:30 a.m. and bring a sack lunch. Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Rd, Houston, 77055

**Feb. 13, Second Thursday** 10:00-11:30 a.m., Program: *Purple Martins* by Matt Fendley, Professor, University of Houston Clear Lake. Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. *Plants for sale in the greenhouse.*

### Youth Activities – DATE CHANGE!

**Feb. 12, Growing with Plants & Nature** (Formerly Open Garden Day at Weekley Center). Free for children ages three to twelve. 10:00 to 11:15 a.m. Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Road, Houston, 77055. REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED by Monday, February 10. To register or for more information: [ogd.harrishort@gmail.com](mailto:ogd.harrishort@gmail.com).

## MARCH 2020

### Green Thumb Gardening Series

#### Herbs

**Mar. 12,** Barbara Bush Library, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

**Mar. 17,** Spring Branch Memorial Library, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

**Mar 19,** Freeman Branch Library, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

**Mar. 21,** Maude Smith Marks Library, 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

### Educational Programs

**Mar. 12, Second Thursday** 10:00-11:30 a.m. Program: *Natural Habitats* by Tim Pylate, Armand Bayou Nature Center. Tim will be speaking about beneficial and poisonous snakes in our area. This will be the time of year when they begin to resurface. Tim plans to educate the public by bringing some snakes to observe too! Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. *Plants for sale in the greenhouse.*

### Youth Activities

**Mar. 24, Growing with Plants & Nature** (Formerly Open Garden Day at Weekley Center). Free for children ages three to twelve. 10:00 to 11:15 a.m. Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Rd., Cypress, TX. REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED by Sunday, March 22nd. To register or for more information: [ogd.harrishort@gmail.com](mailto:ogd.harrishort@gmail.com).

### Master Gardener Awards Luncheon

**Mar. 11,** 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion, Hermann Park, 1500 Hermann Drive, Houston 77004. Register by 12 p.m. Noon Wednesday, March 4th. Registration forms are available at February's First Tuesday meeting, in the Weekly Update emails and on page 9 of this newsletter.

Visit [txmg.org](http://txmg.org) or contact the Harris County Extension Office, 713-274-0950, [coordinator.harrishort@gmail.com](mailto:coordinator.harrishort@gmail.com) for information.

## TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

Texas AgriLife Extension Service  
Horticulture Program in Harris County  
9449 Grant Rd.  
713.274.0950  
Houston, TX 77070

*Master Gardener Program Coordinator*  
Brandi Keller - 713.274.0950

CEA – Horticulture  
Paul Winski - 713.274.0950

CEA – Horticulture  
Vacant



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[hcmgapresident@gmail.com](mailto:hcmgapresident@gmail.com)

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[hcmga1vp@gmail.com](mailto:hcmga1vp@gmail.com)

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[hcmga2vp@gmail.com](mailto:hcmga2vp@gmail.com)

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Terri Simon



## PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

"It's the most wonderful time of the year." So begins a holiday song made famous by Andy Williams. As a gardener, *my* favorite time of the year is early spring. The harbingers of spring draw me out to the garden, and the dreaming and planning begin.

I'm convinced that a common thread runs through our love of Before and Afters: The Biggest Loser; The Biggest Little Farm (a beautiful documentary about farming novices turning a fallow farm into a productive organic farm); all the renovation programs on HGTV, PBS and online platforms; makeup, hairstyle and clothing makeovers in magazines, YouTube, and other websites; and the list goes on. The essence of all is **hope**.

Sometimes, a bad situation calls for walking away toward a better tomorrow, while sometimes the situation calls for a makeover. Harris County Master Gardeners suffered a major setback when two calamitous floods claimed our Bear Creek demonstration and trial gardens plus office and meeting spaces. Hurricane Harvey sealed the decision to walk away from that hub of activity and community. The Extension staff managed in tight temporary quarters, while the Master Gardener Association's finances and morale took a big hit. Many of you faced parallel experiences with your own flooded homes and businesses.

I'm happy to report that HCMGA is on better financial footing now, thanks to the leadership of previous Boards and to the work of so many volunteers engaged in fundraising activities. We operated on a lean budget, and will continue to do so this year. You carried on the work of our organization, attended meetings, completed your volunteer and education hours, and even built up public outreach programs during challenging times. That is a powerful manifestation of hope and grit. Thank you.

While we had to walk away from our Bear Creek facilities, the Genoa Friendship Gardens took on new opportunities like



*An array of Beth's many garden gloves*

the trial gardens lead by our Extension Agents. In support of that work, funds were approved last year to begin renovations of the greenhouse, starting with the roof. The first action of this year's Board was to approve additional funds to complete the exterior repairs. More needs to be done to restore the interior to full working order, and the Board will consider those projects after the spring plant sales.

Speaking of spring plant sales, what better way to celebrate a new season, interact with the public and fellow Master Gardeners, promote plants suitable to our climate(s), earn volunteer hours, and head home with a few plants ourselves, all the while supporting the financial welfare of your Master Gardener Association? Look for plant sale locations, dates, and volunteer opportunities on our website or in the Weekly Update emails.

It's the most wonderful time of the year.

**Beth Braun**  
*HCMGA Board President, 2020*

## HERB OF THE MONTH

# Horseradish (*Armoracia rusticana*)

by Karen McGowan, Master Gardener

A three-thousand-year-old plant that has been tapped for many uses, including an aphrodisiac, a treatment for arthritis, a bitter herb for Passover, and a snappy sidekick for beef, chicken, and seafood, horseradish is this month's herb focus.

While the history of horseradish is somewhat obscure, we do know that the Egyptians were aware of horseradish as far back as 1500 B.C. Early Greeks prized horseradish's use as a rub for low back pain and as an aphrodisiac. Modern-day seders still include horseradish as a bitter herb. Horseradish has been lauded over the years as a certain cure for everything from arthritis to tuberculosis. According to legend, the Delphic oracle told Apollo, "*The radish is worth its weight in lead, the beet its weight in silver, the horseradish its weight in gold.*"

Over the years there has been some disagreement over horseradish's origin; most recent agreement is that the herb is believed to have originated in Central



Horseradish roots

Europe. This is also the area linked to the most widely held theory of how horseradish was named. Horseradish in German is called "meerrettich" (sea radish) because it grows by the sea. The migratory transition to "horseradish" for *Armoracia rusticana* is believed to have followed the English mispronouncement of the German word "meer," which became eventually known as "mare-radish." The word "horse" as applied to "horseradish" is thought to denote its large size and coarseness. "Radish" is taken from the Latin radix meaning root.

Horseradish made its way through the Renaissance, consumed throughout Central Europe northward to Scandinavia and west to England. In 1640 is the first documentation of British consuming

horseradish, and then it was only partaken of by country folk and laborers. By the late 1600s, however, horseradish was a standard accompaniment for beef and oysters for all English people; in fact, the root was grown



Grated horseradish

at inns and coach stations to be used in cordials for weary travelers. Horseradish then made its way to the New World via early settlers, who cultivated it in the colonies; the herb became common in the northeast by the early 1800s and began growing wild near Boston by 1840.

Horseradish is a root crop of the crucifer family. There are two types of horseradish: common, which features broad, crinkled leaves, and Bohemian, proffering narrower, smooth leaves. Horseradish in Texas can become somewhat invasive once established, so this should be kept in mind when planting. Fresh horseradish can be obtained year-round in Texas, although currently it is not grown commercially within the state. If you do desire to plant the herb in your garden, do so in well-drained soil, in either full sun or partial shade, and it should be planted now, in February. Expect a mature height of up to three feet; new plants regenerate from root bits that are left in the soil. Horseradish's leaves have no culinary value and contain a slightly poisonous compound. To harvest, selecting the roots best for consumption, look for roots that are free of blemishes and bruises, and that are creamy white in color. The roots should be turgid and firm upon harvesting, then washed and peeled before preparation for culinary usage. Harvested horseradish should be used shortly after harvesting. A microplane tool is excellent for grating horseradish into an edible size and texture.

In the interest of health, horseradish is acknowledged by both Chinese medicine and Ayurvedic medicine as a tonic healer, promoting circulation and addressing certain imbalances in the body. Many would agree that horseradish has a rightful place in a healthy garden, alongside other herbs and vegetables. Here's to your garden and health in 2020!

### Citations:

[www.horseradish.org](http://www.horseradish.org)  
[www.extension.psu.edu](http://www.extension.psu.edu)  
[www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu](http://www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu)

# PLANT OF THE MONTH

## Kale

by Don Tyler, Master Gardener

A quick glance at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's *Vegetable Garden Planting Dates for Harris County*<sup>1</sup> calendar, the month of February is the heart of planting the early spring vegetables such as beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale and swiss chard, just to mention a few. I use the term early spring veg-

etables but many, if not most of these, were fall vegetables as well. Seeing we have relatively mild winters in Harris County, many of these early spring vegetables are, from my perspective, carry-overs from the fall garden. For me, kale falls in this carry-over category. The picture is my kale patch in January



Kale patch

Photo by Don Tyler

but planted in the fall. I just keep on harvesting til early summer.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's *Recommended Vegetable Varieties for Harris County*<sup>2</sup> shows the following varieties of kale – Dwarf Blue Curled Scotch, Dwarf Blue Curled Vates and Green Curled – perform well in our area. The picture above is the Dwarf Blue Curled Vates variety.

Another item to keep in mind is the planting dates calendar emphasizes if you plant in the February timeframe, you need to be using transplants. The reasoning is to get a good harvest prior to the dog days of summer when kale takes on a stronger bitter taste and leaves get tough.

I sow seeds directly in my garden beds with good success, but there are advantages to using transplants. Like many leafy green vegetables' seeds, the seeds are very small and so there are obvious challenges in placing those seeds.

Because of the variability of seeding, one has to over-seed and then thin out as the seedlings emerge. Thinning is a common practice in home gardening but it can be avoided if one uses transplants. One additional challenge to sowing small seeds is the heavy downpours

we often experience in the Houston area. These seeds are typically no deeper than a 1/4" to 1/2" which is a tedious exercise. These seeds can be easily dislodged if these heavy rains occur shortly after sowing. I had that very experience this past fall and had to re-seed part of my beds to fill in for seeds dislodged due to a heavy rainstorm. I also had kale coming up in areas where I did not plant kale!

Using transplants eliminates the problem outlined above with sowing but adds challenges of a different sort. First, purchasing transplants are far more costly than individual seeds. A packet of kale seed is roughly \$5.00 for 2,000 seeds, whereas kale transplants cost around \$2.00 to \$3.00 per plant. Secondly, you can only plant the kale available at your nursery instead of trying the many varieties available from seed suppliers. Growing your own seedlings takes some extra supplies and requires a suitable location for germination not to mention a little patience, but can also be very rewarding. Or, you can roll the dice as I do and sow the seeds directly.

Most resources state kale will grow well in full sun to semi-shade. You can find a wide variation in planting recommendations online but, generally plants are spaced one to two feet apart with rows two to three feet apart. Glancing back at my kale patch, one might argue I have them packed in pretty tight.

My experience is kale is a low maintenance plant. I typically start to see problems with insects once we get into early summer, when every insect known to mankind seems to find its way into my garden. *The Old Farmer's Almanac* and other resources



Kale seeds

Photo by Don Tyler

<sup>1</sup> <http://counties.agrilife.org/harris/files/2019/03/Vegetable-Planting-Chart-2019.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://counties.agrilife.org/harris/files/2018/07/2017-Vegetable-Varieties.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Growing Kale", *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, <https://www.almanac.com/plant/kale>

<sup>4</sup> Gunnars, Kris. "10 Health Benefits of Kale". *Healthline*. June 29, 2018. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/10-proven-benefits-of-kale>

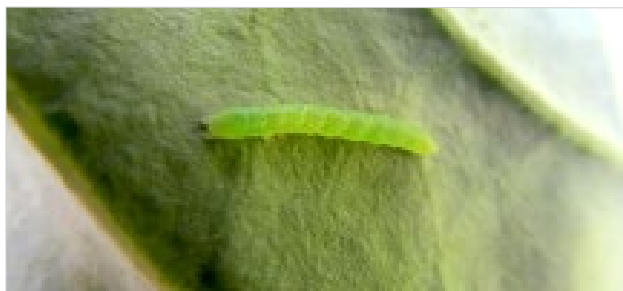
cont'd on pg. 6

## Kale, *cont'd from pg. 5*

mention three primary pests, “cabbage worms, flea beetles and aphids”<sup>3</sup>. As with many insects in my garden, I see the results more than I see the culprit. In my case, the leaves were being chewed and upon very close inspection, I found cabbage worms.

A quick side note. My first experience with cabbage worms was at a semi-fancy local organic restaurant when my wife ordered a kale salad. It was definitely fresh kale with a cabbage-worm thrown in for good measure. We all had a good laugh....the little guy was clean! Of course, that is easy for me to say. I wasn't the one eating the kale salad.

The following pictures, taken from *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, are of a cabbageworm and a perfect example of the resulting damage. If I had a picture of my kale (late season), the picture below would be a perfect representation. For me, it is not a big deal as early summer is about the time I pull up all my plants anyway.



Cabbage worm

Photo courtesy Old Farmer's Almanac

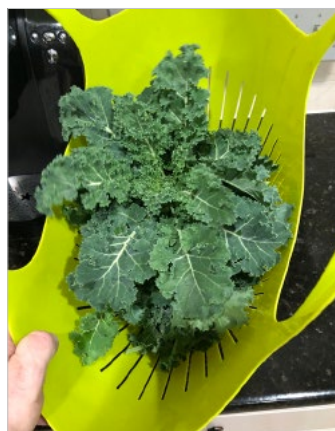


Cabbage worm damaged kale

Photo courtesy Old Farmer's Almanac

If you are like me and not really into precious little insects, there are several recommendations for control of cabbage worms with most recommending spraying with Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*). As with all pesticides, we should always follow the directions

provided on the label. The following shows an ample day's harvest, bagged and ready to share with neighbors.



Harvested kale



Photo by Don Tyler

The *Healthline* website lists kale as “among the most nutrient-dense foods on the plant”<sup>4</sup>. There are several kale salad recipes online and directions on how to make your own kale chips.



Favorite Tyler family kale salad recipe, *Garlicky Kale from Whole Foods*, <https://www.epicurious.com/recipes/member/views/garlicky-kale-from-whole-foods-52343451>.

Photo by Don Tyler

If you have not done so already, kale is a great crop to add to your early spring garden, not to mention your diet!

# 2020 HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PLANT SALES



## Save the Dates Harris County Plant Sales 2020

RICHARD & MEG WEEKLEY PARK (West Side)  
19110 LONGENBAUGH ROAD  
HOUSTON, TX 77090  
(Between Barker Cypress and Greenhouse Road)

GENOA FRIENDSHIP GARDENS  
CAMPBELL HALL, PASADENA FAIRGROUNDS  
7600 RED BLUFF ROAD, PASADENA, TX 77507

- Fruit Tree Sale January 25<sup>th</sup>
- Spring Tomato, Pepper, Vegetable & Perennial Sale March 7<sup>TH</sup>
- Cy-Fair Home & Garden Show March 21<sup>st</sup>



- Fruit Tree and Tomato Sale, February 22<sup>nd</sup>
- Peppers, Perennials and Herbs, March 21<sup>st</sup>

← Fruit Trees

← Veggies



← Herbs

← Perennials

Questions? Ask A Master Gardener 713-274-0950

## Genoa Friendship Gardens Sales

Campbell Hall, Pasadena Fairgrounds, 7601 Red Bluff Rd., Pasadena 77505

**Feb. 22**, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. **Fruit Tree, Tomato Sale** - Citrus, apples, peaches, pears, berries, figs, avocados and tomatoes suitable for our area.

**Mar. 21**, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. **Peppers, Perennials and Herbs Sale**

## West Side Sales

**Mar. 7**, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., **Spring Tomato, Pepper, Vegetable & Perennial Sale**

Richard and Meg Weekley Park, 19110 Longenbaugh Rd, Houston 77090  
(between Barker Cypress and Greenhouse Road)

**Mar. 21**, 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. **Cy-Fair Home & Garden Show**, The Berry Center, 8877 Barker Cypress Rd, Cypress, TX 77433

## Planning for Spring, *cont'd from pg. 1*

and outside? If you grew anything in that bed last year, your soil is tired and anemic! Get rid of all the weeds, break up that soil and amend it. Compost, worm castings, azomite, find a combination that works for you. Amending your soil is also necessary if you have had heavy rains that washed out your nutrients. If you have enough space, you can let one or more beds lie fallow and rotate but I know that is not always possible. The majority of my plants are in pots, so I definitely have to “revive” their soil also.

While poring through my catalogs and browsing on the internet, I have noticed several vegetable varieties that caught my eye. Some are new discoveries, some are new hybrids and some are new introductions which other gardeners have tried with great success and the word has spread.

“Seychelle” pole beans are a vegetable now offered in several seed catalogs. Selected as an AAS (All American Selections) winner, the beans produce well, taste great and are stringless with small beans inside the pod.

Grown in Utah but originally from Indiana, Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds offers “Astronomy Domine” corn, a beautiful sweet corn that is supposed to ripen mid-season. The kernels remind me of beautiful amethyst gems nestled within their shucks.



*All-American Selections Seychelle pole beans*

*Photo courtesy all-americanselections.org*

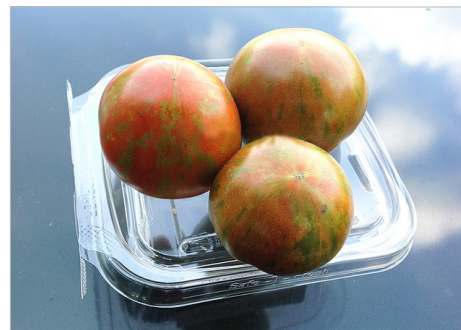
Several growers are offering “Sarandipity” tomato seeds. The dwarf tomato is chocolate with green stripes. It is a cross between a “Streaky” tomato in the Cheeky family and a Black Zebra. The plant is a heavy producer with fruits ranging from 2-4 ounces.

The last plant that caught my eye is technically a fruit, but cucumbers are a popular plant that are grown in many home gardens.

The “Dragon Suhyo” cross cucumber has thin skin that requires no peeling and has a crunchy bite. It came from China and has prominent ribbing.

These vegetables and fruit caught my eye because I like unique colorful plants. Feel free to try something new this year. Every year I try to expand my horizons and try a new plant variety. Of course, it’s usually a basil and a pepper, but that’s a given. I usually try something else as well. This year is no exception.

Whatever you decide to plant, whether it’s the usual plants or something new or a combination, enjoy your produce. It may be hit or miss with new varieties, but at least you have stepped outside your comfort zone. Happy gardening!



*Sarandipity Dwarf tomato*

*Photo courtesy renaissancefarms.org*

# *Harris County Master Gardener Association*

invites you to join us at our

## **Annual Awards Luncheon**



**Wednesday, March 11th, 2020**

**Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion, Hermann Park**

**1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004**

*Centennial Garden Parking lot is located on Hermann Drive  
(cross street is Crawford St.)*

- Check-in at 11:00 a.m.
- Catered Buffet at 11:30 a.m.
- Program begins at 12:00 p.m.
- Garden Tour following luncheon at 2:00 p.m.
- \$15 per person
- Register by 12 p.m. Noon Wednesday, March 4th

*Individuals with disabilities who require an auxillary aid, service or accomodation in order to participate in any Extension activities, are encouraged to contact the County Extension office for assistance eight days prios to the acitivity.*

## **2020 HCMGA Awards Luncheon Reservation Form**

Reservation and payment can be made to Membership at the February 4th First Tuesday meeting, or mail for receipt by Tuesday, March 4th to:

**Attention: Awards Event, HCMGA, 15719 Echo Canyon Dr, Houston, TX 77084**

Please email questions to Karen at [kmbrene@att.net](mailto:kmbrene@att.net)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Number attending \_\_\_\_\_ Vegetarian ☐

Amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

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Harris County

## Ask a Master Gardener

Ask a Master Gardener is a volunteer program offered by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Volunteers staff booths and tables to provide free, research-based horticulture education to the public throughout Harris County.

In February we are going to be in the following locations!

- Feb. 1**      **Urban Harvest** - *1st Saturday*, 7:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
3401 Westheimer Rd. (corner of Buffalo Spdwy. & Westheimer), Houston
- Garden Oaks/Heights** - *1st Saturday*, 8:30 a.m. - 11 a.m. at The Farmstand,  
938 Wakefield, Houston
- Feb. 8**      **Tomball** - *2nd Saturday*, 8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. at 205 W. Main Street, Tomball
- Feb. 20**     **Westchase** - *3rd Thursday*, 3 - 7 p.m. at 10503 Westheimer Rd., Houston
- Feb. 22**     **Memorial Villages** - *4th Saturday*, 8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. at 10840 Beinhorn Rd.,  
Houston
- Towne Lake** - *4th Saturday*, 2:30 - 7 p.m. at 9955 Barker Cypress Rd.,  
Cypress

*Visit the Harris County Master Gardeners  
Facebook page for event details!*

*[www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners](https://www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners)*



**Texas A&M AgriLife Extension**

in partnership with

**Hermann Park Conservancy**

are pleased to present

## **Master Gardeners in the City at McGovern Centennial Gardens**

**Saturday, February 8th & 22th**

**McGovern Centennial Gardens at Hermann Park**

**1500 Hermann Drive**

**Houston, Texas 77004**

Free tours and children's activity. Adult workshop at 10:30 a.m.

No registration required.

**These educational programs are FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.**

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.  
The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.

# Growing with Plants & Nature

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Harris County Master Gardeners invite you to join us one day each month, January through November, 10:00 –11:15 a.m.

Free for children ages three to twelve. REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. To register or for more information: [ogd.harrishort@gmail.com](mailto:ogd.harrishort@gmail.com)

## February - DATE CHANGE!

Wednesday, February 12 - Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Rd.

REGISTRATION required by Monday, February 10.

## March

Tuesday, March 24 - Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Rd. Cypress, TX.

REGISTRATION required by Monday, March 22.

*(The Open Garden Day children's activities program name has changed to be more reflective of its mission.)*

Children and their parents looking for hands-on ways to learn, create, and have fun inspire our Growing with Plants & Nature volunteers to offer programs that do just that.

This FREE monthly children's event includes a variety of activities:

- Planting seeds, veggies or ornamentals into pots so children can continue to grow them at home.
- Creating a "nature theme" craft project with materials that are provided.
- 30-40 minute hands-on lesson that focuses on a single topic each month.

Previous lessons have included making a worm farm, putting together a compost bin, learning about the importance of butterflies, and making a feeder to attract pollinators.

## Past projects



Seed Pod mobile



Fantasy Garden



Recycled soda bottle

For information about upcoming topics, dates and registration, please email us at [ogd.harrishort@gmail.com](mailto:ogd.harrishort@gmail.com). Registration is required before each program.

# Landscaping with Vegetables

by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

What a bit of luck I had at the 2019 Texas Master Gardener Conference in Victoria, Texas. I picked up the perfect reference book for this month's vegetable issue. *Landscaping with Edible Plants in Texas* written by Cheryl Beesley in 2015, published by Texas A&M University Press (ISBN #978-1-62349-321-9). Cheryl is an Austin landscape designer specializing in edible landscapes, and her company is Adalante.

The book has a wealth of useful information, but I want to caution those of you who live in areas with Home Owners Associations (HOAs). Read their rules carefully before you decide to adopt an edible landscape for your yard.

Cheryl's book covers hardiness zones, agricultural regions, annual rainfall and chill hours among other topics. Plant size, accessibility, scale, and structural elements are mentioned. She thoroughly covers soil preparation and fertilization. Suggestions for types of irrigation are useful and her design elements discuss form, color, size and texture. One of my favorite sections was the color information for plants. She sorts the edible plants according to color to help you plan your landscape.



Photo by Terri Simon

Purple plants such as artichokes, eggplant and even a purple cauliflower variety are mentioned. Yes, I like purple.

Do you know the difference between a parterre and a potager? I didn't, but I do now. Both styles were popular in Renaissance times. Your garden or potager *can* be very close to the back door, as a "kitchen garden". The official French term for a kitchen garden is *potager*. According to Merriam-Webster, a parterre is "an ornamental garden with paths between the beds." And, a potager can be a parterre. Geometric styles may be used and parterre gardens can be elaborate. Famous parterre gardens include the ones at Versailles, the Palais des Tuileries and Vaux-le-Vicomte in France. The Ornamental Kitchen Garden at Chateau Villandry in France is a popular tourist site. Many of the beds have geometric shapes, some shaped in crosses. Forty



Latona's Parterre at the Gardens of Versailles in France

Photo courtesy of [en.chateauversailles.fr](http://en.chateauversailles.fr)



Vegetable beds at Villandry

Photo courtesy of [glackgold.bz](http://glackgold.bz)

vegetable varieties are used and there are two plantings each year. In the photo included, the vegetable beds are bordered in boxwood and have edibles with bright colors in the center. It is considered a potager parterre. Naturally, your garden doesn't have to be that complex.

Specific vegetable varieties suitable for Texas are mentioned in the book. It lists fruits as well. Appendix A has a list of hybrid varieties. Do you have more exotic tastes? There are recommendations for a Japanese tea garden. My very favorite garden that I think children would enjoy is a pizza garden.

If you are looking for a good reference book and are interested in planting an ornamental, edible garden, this book is a great addition to your library.

# The Rose Corner

by Christa Kaiser, Master Gardener

## *What to do in February-March*

There is still enough time to build a new rose bed. Remember to build beds above ground; the grass can be killed by laying down a layer of newspapers. Having a border is preferable, it keeps the lawn out. The site should have at least six hours or more of sun per day, and make sure there is a reliable watering system available. Add enough soil, as new soil can settle 4 inches in the first year.

To plant bare root roses, fill a bucket full with water and add SUPERthrive (follow label instructions). Place the roses so that the water covers the roots for at least one hour. Prune off damaged roots and carefully prune the top. Dig a hole in the shape of a large pot and build a hill in the middle. Set the bush on the hill, and backfill with soil and water. On grafted plants there will be a shank starting just above the roots leading upwards to the crown. Leave the crown elevated with the shank exposed. This way you will have enough room to add mulch for several years.

To plant rooted roses, remove the pot carefully and do not disturb the roots. Make a hole larger than the root ball; carefully set the plant in the middle, backfill with soil and water. Press down the soil around the plant, just a little, to avoid air pockets. Do not fertilize yet!

The time to prune your roses is around Valentine's Day for blooming time in late April.

Here are the basics:

- Clean your rose garden beds, pull all the weeds before they go to seed.
- Plant new roses or move them.
- Bare root roses should be planted in February.
- Transplant your rose bushes without pruning them, prune them later!
- Begin your spray program after pruning. Fertilize established roses.



*Belinda's Dream*

### ***Disinfect your pruning tools!***

Prune to remove dead, damaged, diseased, old and central crossing canes and suckers.

Remove about one third of the outer ends of the remaining healthy canes (Old Garden Roses). Flowers should be removed and cuts should be made just above an outward pointing eye. Prune climbing roses after the first flush of bloom. Some miniature shrubs can be pruned with garden shears. Pruning Hybrid Tea Roses is a little more complicated. There are great demonstrations on YouTube or you can contact one of the Houston Rose Society Consulting Rosarians, [www.houstonrose.org/hrsconsl.htm](http://www.houstonrose.org/hrsconsl.htm).

The Houston Rose Society has Demonstrations in February; please check their website for time and location, [www.houstonrose.org](http://www.houstonrose.org).

Have a wonderful 2020!

# Open Garden Days at Genoa Friendship Gardens



The Perennial Trial Garden



The Water Garden



The Greenhouse

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

## ***Open Garden Days***

on the 3rd Monday of the month, March through October, 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Admission to the Exhibit Gardens is free. 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

*To schedule a special event for your garden club, school or professional organization  
please email [brandi.keller@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:brandi.keller@ag.tamu.edu) 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 sale until September.

### ***2020 Monthly Open Garden Days & Special Events***

<b>February 22</b>	<b>Fruit Tree Sale</b>	June 15	Open Garden Day
March 16	Open Garden Day	July 20	Open Garden Day
<b>March 21</b>	<b>Spring Plant Sale</b>	August 17	Open Garden Day
April 20	Open Garden Day	September 21	Open Garden Day
May 18	Open Garden Day	October 19	Open Garden Day

***Second Chance Sale*** bargains can be found in the Greenhouse after our February and March plant sales.

# Genoa Friendship Gardens - Greenhouse update!

by Carolyn Boyd, Master Gardener

Thanks to generous donations by individual Master Gardeners and HCMGA budget approvals, the GFG greenhouse rehabbing is progressing nicely. The most dramatic improvement is the new top for the main greenhouse and a top shade cloth for the side

area. And now, the side panels can be rolled up by one person with a mechanical crank instead of needing a group of master gardeners to roll them up manually!



*Violas, freshly potted for the Perennial/Annual Trial Garden, are thriving in the improved greenhouse environment.*



# Scenes from the West Side Fruit Tree Sale!

by Carolyn Boyd, Master Gardener

An eager crowd of gardening enthusiasts descended on Weekley Park on January 25th to peruse and purchase plants from a wide variety of stock. We had 600+ citrus trees, 350+ non-citrus trees (including new varieties from the Texas A&M University Stone Fruit Breeding Program), 80 avocado trees, 120 fig trees, almost 200 berry plants, plus Arabica coffee

and Zingiber ginger. And, customers could also purchase MicroLife 6-2-4 and MicroLife Citrus & Fruit 6-2-4 Fertilizers, as well as Super Rich Soils. The *Growing With Plants And Nature* crew offered fun-filled gardening activities for kids.

A fun time was had by all!



## MG of the Month - *Jerri Grimland*

by Karen Breneman, Master Gardener

**C**ongratulations **Jerri Grimland!** Jerri worked in the Chemical/Oil & Gas Industry for 35 years in Accounting and Project Management for Projects and Systems. Now, she is almost retired, and is working hard to



Jerri Grimland

make it final! She and her husband have a happy, fun-loving family with five children, 14 grandchildren, and one great grandson. The family events are action packed with lots of love and laughter.

Jerri started gardening with her father when she was small and learned so

much from him, although her thumb will never be as green as his. The Harris County Master Gardener program has turned into a new love for her. Not only has she learned more about gardening in general, but is able to give back and share what she has learned. Currently an intern with the 2019 class, she has settled into three programs where she feels able to contribute based on her love of people and personality. Jerri is working with Growing with Plants and Nature, Reach, and Ask a Master Gardener at the moment, with plans to volunteer soon where she can get her hands in the dirt! "I have so far to go," she says.

Thank you Jerri for all your hard work and help!

Master Gardeners and Interns who celebrate a birthday during February include the following. Wish them a **HAPPY BIRTHDAY** when you see them!



Karen Avery, Beatrice Brown, Brenda de Alba, Taffy Dineen, Martha Gossett, Alexa Haass, Vicki Harbers, James Hobkirk, Melissa Kaye, Marsha Long, Anne O'Neil, Lois Patterson, Mariana Pena, Susan Visinsky-Bracken, Nora Wolff, Hallie Younker

*If your name is missing, please check that your online profile is complete.*

## Nominate a Master Gardener of the Month

Is there a fellow MG you think should be recognized for their hard work and commitment? If the answer is YES, you can submit their name for an MG of the Month nomination.

Submit your MG of the Month nominations to the Membership Committee by e-mailing the information to **kmbrene@att.net** (West) or **gclau@comcast.net** (Genoa Friendship Gardens).

# TMGA 2020 State Conference



Proudly hosted by the McLennan County Master Gardener Association in Waco, TX.

**May 12-14, 2020** at the Waco Convention Center

Keep up to date on our conference [Facebook](#) page.

**LODGING:** We have contracted with two great hotels for you! The host hotel, and its partner hotel directly across the street, are now accepting reservations. Our agenda will have Leadership Training on the afternoon of May 11th, with conference registration opening at 7:00 a.m. on May 12th. The conference will close at 5:00 p.m. on the 14th. Our special hotel rates are valid for three days before, and three days post-conference. Come, enjoy all that Waco has to offer!



**Hilton Waco:** This riverside hotel is connected by a covered walkway to the Waco Convention Center - \$149

Phone: 254-754-8484

<https://www.hilton.com/en/hi/groups/personalized/A/ACTWHHF-MGA20-20200510/index.jhtml>



**Courtyard Marriott:** This newly remodeled hotel is immediately adjacent to the Waco Convention Center - \$145

Phone: 254-752-8686


<https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1558020957260&key=GRP&app=resvlink>

**NOTE:** If you wish to stay longer, both hotels will honor the above rates three days BEFORE and three days AFTER our conference block, however, you must make these reservations by phoning the Reservations Desk directly at the hotel using the phone numbers provided above.

The presentation from the August 3rd Director's Meeting, with an overview of the Event site, Keynote Speakers, Tours, Workshops and Breakout Sessions, may be viewed [here](#).

# Gardening Tools

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

<div>  <div> <b>Vegetable Garden Planting Dates</b>                      for Harris County                 </div> <div>                     Texas AgriLIFE Extension Service                      Harris County Office                      713-274-0950  <a href="https://harris.agrilife.org/hort/">https://harris.agrilife.org/hort/</a> </div> </div>												
<div>                     Ideal Planting Time                     Marginal Planting Time                 </div>												
Planting times are for seeds unless otherwise noted	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Artichoke	Dormant Crowns								Transplants			
Asparagus (dormant crowns)												
Beans - Snap & Lima (Butterbean)			Snap&Lima					Snap				
Beets												
Broccoli (transplants)												
Brussels Sprouts (transplants)												
Cabbage (transplants)												
Cabbage - Chinese (transplants)												
Carrots												
Cauliflower (transplants)												
Chard, Swiss												
Collards (transplants)												
Corn												
Cucumbers												
Eggplant (transplants)												
Garlic												
Kale (transplants)												
Kohlrabi (transplants)												
Leeks	Transplants								Seeds			
Lettuce - also Arugula, Mache, Sorrel												
Melon - Cantaloupe, Honeydew												
Mustard												
Okra												
Onion - bulbing	Transplants								Seeds			
Onion - multiplying/bunching												
Peas - English & Snap												
Peas - Southern												
Pepper (transplants)												
Potato - Irish (cut pieces)												
Potato - Sweet (slips)												
Pumpkin												
Radish												
Spinach												
Squash - Summer												
Squash - Winter												
Tomato												
Turnips												
Summer Greens - Malabar, Amaranth												
Watermelon												

Average Last Freeze Dates (Hobby 2/8, Bush 3/1)

Average First Freeze Dates (Bush 11/30, Hobby 12/20)

Plants grown over winter may require protection during freezing weather.

Seeds and transplants started in the heat of summer will benefit from shading during establishment.

Download the  
Vegetable Garden  
Planting Guide here!

# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE

EXTENSION SERVICE

HOUSTON, TX

713-274-0950

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

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

## Follow Us On Facebook, Twitter & Instagram

The Harris County Master Gardeners as well as Texas A&M AgriLife Extension - Harris County Horticulture are actively participating on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram 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 to your account and easily share information with others. This is a definitely a timesaver for these busy garden days and helps promote our organization.



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



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

<https://twitter.com/pharrishort>



<https://www.instagram.com/harriscountymastergardeners>



## Green Thumb Gardening Series *Spring Vegetable Gardening*

**February 13**

**Barbara Bush Library**

**6:30 – 8:30 p.m.**

**February 15**

**Maude Smith Marks Library**

**10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

**February 18**

**Spring Branch Memorial Library**

**6:30 – 8:30 p.m.**

**February 20**

**Freeman Branch Library**

**6:30 – 8:30 p.m.**

**Would you like to contribute to the Urban Dirt?**

**Send all questions and/or submissions to: [UrbanDirt.harrishort@gmail.com](mailto:UrbanDirt.harrishort@gmail.com)**