

# Urban Dirt

Integrated Pest Management

Gardening Events and Information for Texans

## Integrated Pest Management

by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

**Definition:** According to the EPA, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is an effective and environmentally sensitive approach to pest management that relies on a combination of common-sense practices. IPM programs use current, comprehensive information on the life cycles of pests and their interaction with the environment. This information, in combination with available pest control methods, is used to manage pest damage by the most economical means, and with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment.

The IPM method can be used for commercial and non-commercial gardening and farming. Organic gardening falls within the scope of IPM, but it requires the use of pesticides from natural sources.

IPM uses a four stage approach:

- Determine when to take action. At what point do the pests threaten your crops?
- Properly identify harmful pests. Don't use pesticides unless warranted. Remember, some insects are beneficial or harmless. Some pesticides can knock out both beneficial and damaging pests.
- Problem deterrence is essential. Stop pests before they threaten your crop. The use of pest-free rootstock, choosing to grow



Scale

Photo courtesy Simon Shi

pest-resistant plants or even something as simple as crop rotation can nip problems before they begin.

- Manage or control problems once they have been identified. Determine which method “gives you the most bang for the least bucks (or damage).” Select products or methods that can take care of the problem but do the least damage. Weeding, setting insect traps or other approaches may take care of the problem. When you implement your method, monitor it. Is it working? Do you need to take a different approach? Spraying your plants with a broad spectrum pesticide should be a last recourse.

cont'd on pg. 4



Upcoming Events .....	2	Ask a Master Gardener .....	13
Herb of the Month .....	3	Master Gardeners in the City .....	14
Plant of the Month .....	5	Master Gardener of the Month .....	15
Home Grown Lecture Series .....	6	MG Garden Workdays at GFG .....	16
Growing with Plants and Nature...	7	Master Gardener Birthdays.....	17
Getting Down to Earth .....	8	Gardening Tools .....	18
All About Basil .....	11	MG In-Person Gardening	
Green Thumb Lectures .....	12	Opportunities .....	19



Have Garden Questions? Submit your questions to: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/>

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## MAY 2021

### Green Thumb Gardening Series

We have collaborated with the Harris County Public Library and Houston Community College. Join us for one or both!

#### Integrated Pest Management

**May 10**, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. For the HCC program, register in advance to receive the link:

[hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops](https://hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops)

**May 18**, 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Simply visit the Harris County Public Library System

No reservation required. Watch on Facebook – [facebook.com/harriscountyp/live](https://facebook.com/harriscountyp/live)

### Educational Programs

**Home Grown Lecture Series** - This webinar is provided by our Harris County Ag/Natural Resources Department. Registration is required for these free events. Please visit: please visit: [homegrown2021Q2.eventbrite.com/](https://homegrown2021Q2.eventbrite.com/)

**May 6**, 10:00 a.m. - *Benefits of Bats* by Brandi Keller, Harris County Master Gardener Program Coordinator

**May 20**, 10:00 a.m. - *Growing Fabulous Houseplants* by Paul Winski, Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent - Horticulture

### Youth Activities

#### Growing with Plants & Nature

Please visit us on our Growing with Plants and Nature Virtual Group found at the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/GPNVG/>.

**May 18**, 10:00 a.m. - *Birds, Butterflies and Bees* by Master Gardeners, Jerri Grimland and Cindy Barger. *How to Make a Butterfly Puddler*, by Master Gardener Julee Jackson. 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 Family Zoom Event.

.....  
Please visit us at the social media pages below:

- [Harris County Extension Horticulture Facebook Page](#)
- [Harris County Master Gardeners Facebook Page](#)
- [Harris County Family and Community Health Facebook Page](#)

For more information on COVID-19, please visit the following website:



**Texas AgriLife Extension Service  
Horticulture Program in Harris County**  
13105 Northwest Freeway, Suite 1000  
Houston, TX 77040  
713.274.0950

*Master Gardener Program Coordinator*  
**Brandi Keller** - 713-274-0950  
*CEA – Horticulture*  
**Paul Winski** - 713-274-0981



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## HERB OF THE MONTH

# Red Perilla (*Perilla frutescens*)

by Karen McGowan, Master Gardener

This month's featured herb, red perilla, is also known by the fun monikers "beefsteak plant" and "shiso", and what's possibly even more fun is to say its Latin name (pronounced per-IL-lah froo-TESS-enz). Somehow it rolls off the tongue musically, the lyrical notes of a lush plant melody.

Not quite as nice is its reputation: Red perilla is listed as a highly invasive plant throughout the United States. Like most if not all in the mint family, this is a vigorous grower and spreader, and will quickly leap out of hand in many environments. Native to the Himalayas and Southeast Asia, "shiso" or "beefsteak plant" self-seeds prolifically and often becomes weedy. Used as a decorative plant, salad herb, and flavoring in many south and East Asian cuisines, red perilla is best planted (like mint) in a pot on a sunny patio where its rowdy nature can be controlled. Again, akin to its mint relative's habit, red perilla is so vigorous that its roots will break through pots set directly onto soil in the garden and proceed to aggressively set up shop.



Red Perilla

With ovate leaves showing serrate edges, red perilla resembles at first glance both basil and coleus. According to the Texas Invasives website, red perilla is often planted as a showy ornamental, but then readily escapes cultivation, "spreading to disturbed areas where (it disrupts) native ecosystems. The species has toxic characteristics and very few predators. It is ordinarily avoided by cattle and has been implicated in cattle poisoning. Plants are most toxic

#### Citations:

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/perilla-frutescens/>

[https://www.texasinvasives.org/plant\\_database/detail.php?symbol=PEFR4](https://www.texasinvasives.org/plant_database/detail.php?symbol=PEFR4)

<https://www.nytimes.com/1995/05/17/style/whats-that-mysterious-taste-shiso-captivates-chefs.html>

if cut and dried for hay late in the summer, during seed production. One reason for beefsteak plants' survival in pastures is that cattle avoid it. Sold as a salad plant for its dark purple foliage, this member of the mint family is extremely invasive by wind-borne seeds." Yikes!



Now that you've read what its detractors think about this herb, let's see what its fans say. Around 25 years ago, shiso began to show up in trendy Japanese restaurants on the East Coast. According to some celebrated Asian and Asian fusion chefs, the herb plays similarly to cilantro; very distinctive, and tending to likewise polarize – shiso is one that you either love...or you don't. Also like cilantro, shiso almost always appears in dishes raw, not cooked.

For those who love cooking with shiso and eating it, there is simply nothing like it. They assert that shiso can be used quite successfully in almost any dish calling for fresh mint, basil, cilantro or tarragon; however, the quantity should be pared to account for shiso's relative strength. Even within its fans, though, the herb has sharply differing opinions; some prefer green shiso ("It has better flavor; the purple is tasteless") and some purple ("It's much more subtle; the green is too harsh"). The best course to find your preference, they say, is to try both.

Red perilla as an herb seems to set up two heartily opposing camps. Being a fan, myself, of Asian cuisine, and having dined at some of Houston's most lauded outlets of it, I can't say as I recall having tried it. I'll end the article with a description found in a New York Times article on shiso that practically demands exploration of it: "It has a mysterious, bright taste that reminds people of mint, basil, tarragon, cilantro, cinnamon, anise or the smell of a mountain meadow after a rainstorm."

I mean, how can one resist? What does a "mountain meadow after a rainstorm" taste like? Who even thinks this stuff up? Gotta try it.



*Integrated Pest Management, cont'd from pg. 1*

Monitor your plants daily! This cannot be done from a distance. For large areas, scouting is necessary. For an example of scouting, reference the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkixPfTTXyA>. In small gardens, you can walk down each row and thoroughly check for problems. Look at the base of the plants, the stalks and under the canopy. It is easier to deal with a mild infestation than a severe one. Check for low spots in the garden as well as areas that drain too quickly. Do some plants look less vigorous than others? Are some leaves brown or blotchy compared to others? I have been known to rip a plant out to try and prevent bugs and/or diseases from spreading to other plants. There are small, portable handheld plant microscopes available at reasonable prices. You may need to get “up close and personal” to detect some bugs. If you dispose of a plant, seal it up in a plastic



*Cutworm*

*Photo courtesy of Pinterest*

bag, tie it tightly and take it to the curb for garbage day. If you buy a potted plant, set it in a separate area away from other plants. This will help prevent any diseases or pests from spreading to others in your garden. Newly acquired plants will remain in my “plant ICU” (under the carport) for about 4-5 days so I can monitor them and to allow them to acclimate. By closely monitoring your plants and quickly addressing problems you can avoid total infestations and save time, effort and money.



*Aphids*

*Photo courtesy of Radu Bercan*

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

# Wisteria

Article and photos by Don Tyler, Master Gardener

I suppose everyone is still assessing the winter storm apocalypse. Of course, I do not mean to trivialize the impact to friends' and neighbors' homes, but this storm really impacted our gardens and landscape. I wrote last month on my attempts to propagate a gardenia and so far, so good! This month as I continued to assess the loss of various trees and shrubs, my mood was somewhat lifted when I noticed our wisteria in full bloom last week!

Having a tendency to just plant it and walk away, I am enjoying the time spent learning a bit more about the various plants. For all you gardening junkies, wisteria is part of the legume family, Fabaceae. We regularly relate legumes to all the various beans and peas in our vegetable gardens. So, I was surprised to see how wisteria was classified. When the plant is blooming, it is rather challenging to see the connection. However later in the year, the wisteria will produce seed pods, "just like peas". ([gardeningknowhow.com/How to Grow Wisteria Seeds: Growing Wisteria From Seed Pods](http://gardeningknowhow.com/How to Grow Wisteria Seeds: Growing Wisteria From Seed Pods).) I found that interesting.

In any case, the wonderful blooms of the vine was a nice reprieve from the havoc left by the winter storm.

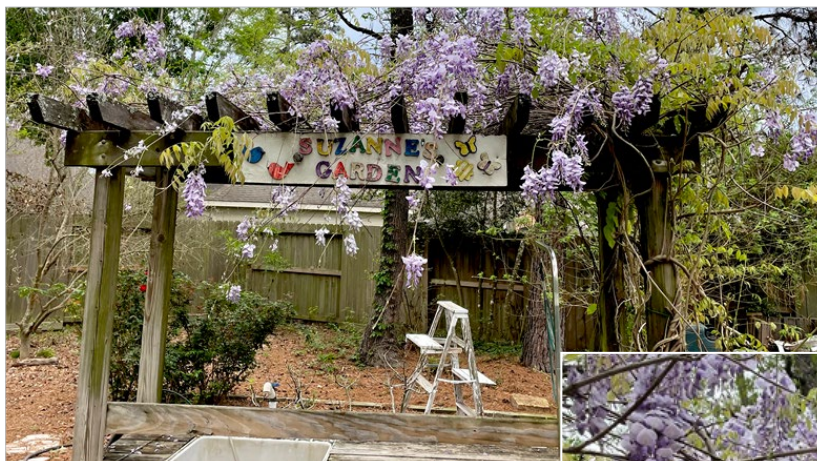
The wisteria vine shown in my picture was planted about five years ago and so I can attest to the fact the vine is "a fast and aggressive grower" (The Old Farmer's Almanac, [almanac.com/plant/wisteria](http://almanac.com/plant/wisteria)). You will notice my outdoor sink is a sturdy structure of 4x4s and rest assured if you want to grow this vine, you will need something quite stout to support it.

The Old Farmer's Almanac article also mentioned to be aware of the fact that "Chinese wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*) and Japanese wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda*) are not native to North America and are considered invasive species in some states. The native wisteria species, American wisteria (*Wisteria frutescens*)

and Kentucky wisteria (*Wisteria macrostachya*), are great alternatives to the Asian species, so if you're planning on adding a new wisteria to your garden, we suggest that you go with one of the North American species." One would presume our nurseries would lean toward the native species but it just so happens I still have my tag on the plant from five years ago. Disappointingly enough, my Blue Wisteria is *Wisteria sinensis*!

Another fascinating fact I learned from the Almanac article is how to know the difference between the varieties. "American and Kentucky wisteria's flowers appear after the plant has leafed out in late spring, whereas the Chinese wisteria's blooms appear before the foliage." I believe the picture of my vine is further evidence even if I did not have the tag!

▼ *Wisteria bloomed before foliage appeared!*



As with most gardening/landscaping recommendations, the best resource we have is Texas A&M. You will find a summary article at (<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamentals/nativeshrubs/wisteriafrutes.htm#:~:text=Texas%20wisteria%20grows%20in%20moist,rather%20than%20on%20bare%20stems.>)

If you have a good location and a strong sturdy structure, wisteria is a wonderful addition to your landscape. I have found it to be quite low maintenance even though wisteria can at times experience fungal leaf disease but an article from [gardeningknowhow.com](http://gardeningknowhow.com) suggests fungal leaf diseases are not a "major concern". As mentioned previously, I planted mine and walked away! The blooming wisteria was a nice reminder that our landscapes will rebound!



# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

APRIL  
MAY  
JUNE **2021**



## HOME GROWN LECTURE SERIES

- 04/01 **Southern Bulbs**  
Paul Winski - Texas A&M AgriLife County  
Extension Agent-Horticulture
- 04/15 **Sausage Making 101**  
Shannon Dietz - Texas A&M AgriLife County  
Extension Agent-Agriculture & Natural Resources
- 05/06 **Benefits of Bats**  
Brandi Keller - Harris County Master Gardener  
Program Coordinator
- 05/20 **Growing Fabulous Houseplants**  
Paul Winski - Texas A&M AgriLife County  
Extension Agent-Horticulture
- 06/03 **A Legen-Dairy Lecture**  
Shannon Dietz - Texas A&M AgriLife County  
Extension Agent-Agriculture & Natural Resources
- 06/17 **Art from the Garden**  
Brandi Keller - Harris County Master Gardener  
Program Coordinator



TO REGISTER FOR THIS FREE  
EVENT,  
PLEASE VISIT  
[HTTPS://HOMEGROWN2021Q2.  
EVENTBRITE.COM/](https://homegrown2021q2.eventbrite.com/)

THE MEMBERS OF TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE WILL PROVIDE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES, EDUCATION, AND EMPLOYMENT TO ALL PERSONS REGARDLESS OF RACE, COLOR, SEX, RELIGION, NATIONAL ORIGIN, AGE, DISABILITY, GENETIC INFORMATION, VETERAN STATUS, SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY AND WILL STRIVE TO ACHIEVE FULL AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY THROUGHOUT TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE.

# *Growing with Plants and Nature*

Growing with Plants and Nature offers children and their families opportunities for learning about gardening and nature.

Our Facebook Group is found at <http://www.facebook.com/groups/GPNVG>. It is filled with educational and fun information, games, puzzles and crafts. We also present a Family Zoom Event on a different topic each month. For more information about upcoming topics and dates, check out our Facebook Group.

Please register for our Family Zoom Events at [ogd.harrishort@gmail.com](mailto:ogd.harrishort@gmail.com). Use this email address for any questions, information or comments about all of our Growing with Plants and Nature activities.

Master Gardeners, Regina Gardner and Blanca Elder, presented our April programs on the Monarch butterfly, covering their life cycle, their amazing journey to Mexico each fall and Blanca's amazing account of her trip to the sanctuaries of Mexico.

We learned that during their migration to Mexico:

- Monarchs fly 50 - 100 miles a day and at 15 - 25mph
- They use the position of the sun and the magnetic pull of the earth to aid them in their navigation
- Monarchs represent the souls of their ancestors returning to visit them for the Day of the Dead



**How does your garden grow?** May 18th's program will feature the three B's - Birds, Butterflies and Bees, presented by Master Gardeners, Jerri Grimland and Cindy Barger. Master Gardener, Julee Jackson, will show us a video on how to make a butterfly puddler. The programs will cover:



- Ideas on how to create a bird-friendly habitat for our feathered friends, including plantings that attract them
- The importance of pollination
- Getting your garden spot ready for a pollinator friendly environment
- Beautiful flowers and plants to attract bees and butterflies into your yard, featuring the Texas Super Stars



# Getting Down to Earth

Article and photos by Pam Longley, Master Gardener

## News from Genoa Friendship Gardens

May MG Spotlight is on **Pat Daniels**, who is the Silo Manager for six areas at GFG, but her special domain is the three large tub containers of bulbs. Bulbs are her thing! After retiring from NASA, where she worked in budgeting for the Shuttle and Space Station Programs, Pat became a Master Gardener five years ago. She got interested in gardening as a child when she became her mother's plant watcher and chief waterer. One year, her mother planted tomatoes. They had such a huge crop that the family had tomatoes twice a day whether fried, stewed or sliced. Mom would not let one tomato go to waste. Such bad mouth sores ensued, that they all had to go to the doctor for treatment!



Pat Daniels in the bulb garden

Pat expressed to me how much she would like to share the gardens again with the public. Hopefully, Precinct 2 will allow Open Garden Days again at GFG, as the pandemic wanes. We all work very hard out there and it is such a learning laboratory to tour and learn from. HINT-HINT, Brandi and Paul.

This week, the trial team started a new Kitchen Minis™ edibles trial with propagated miniature tomato and pepper plants in 4-6 inch pots. Several volunteers took one plant each of the nine total varieties. What is really different about this trial is that



What are these crazy looking plants in Rick's veggie beds? \*See answer below.



Flashforward  
Lavender petunias  
now blooming  
in the GFG  
perennial trial  
beds

the plants will *not* be bumped up into larger containers. They will grow to maturity in the existing pots. We took them home and will report data at intervals to Paul Winski, our county agent, as to watering, fertilization, pest problems, growth and fruiting. I am excited about the prospect of success with this trial so we can share the results with small space gardeners. The application could run to condos, townhomes, apartments and childrens' gardens. I hope the information we gather will encourage more people to garden! Stay tuned.

\* Elephant Garlic

cont'd on pg. 9



*Getting Down to Earth, cont'd from pg. 8*

**Christ the Good Shepherd Garden**

Article and photos by Dale Hudson, Master Gardener

For a gardener this is the favorite time of year. Spring has sprung. Never mind the red itchy eyes, the runny nose, the yellow pine pollen covering everything; gardening fever conquers all. At Christ the Good Shepherd Garden we welcome back old faces and meet new enthusiastic ones. The over-winter crops still look good but sorry, they have to come out and go to the food pantries to make room for the spring plantings. The greenhouse is bursting with tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and warm-season herbs that are ready for transplanting.

Not to worry, we haven't forgotten about the kale and swiss chard trial just yet. We have just completed our fourth harvest and will continue to support it until we see bolting. We will carefully review trial data once complete, however we can report a couple of big picture observations already. Kale did much better than swiss chard in the depth of winter and most of the 50 pounds harvested came in January/February. Kale has recently become a bit "buggy" but the swiss chard kicked into overdrive after the freeze. Twenty five of the total 35 pounds harvested to date have come in just the last two weeks.



Master Gardeners Cheryl Gans and Lakshmi Koripalli harvest the swiss chard trial plot

Spring trials are all underway now. Seychelles pole beans are up already, Green Light cucumbers have germinated nicely, and the "big show" the nine varieties of peppers are transplanted and looking good.



The last trial, the summer trial of Candle Fire okra, will follow the

Master Gardener Cheryl Gans refreshes the leafy green herbs intended for the kitchen

kale and swiss chard when they come out. No rush on the okra; we know that Candle Fire loves the heat of July and August just fine.

**BREAKING NEWS FLASH!!!** Once the tomatoes and peppers and eggplants, etc., vacated the greenhouse, master gardener Cheryl Gans moved in. We saw her refreshing our two herb beds with the traditional green savory spices that we all enjoy, but what's this??? Cheryl has taken it to a new level...she has recently seeded flats



Future herbs???, known today only by a picture or a popsicle stick.

with flowering herbs, aromatic herbs, strange herbs that most of us can't even pronounce. All I can say at this point is "don't touch that dial". We will continue this story next month.

cont'd on pg. 10



## *Getting Down to Earth*, cont'd from pg. 9

### *Centennial Gardens*

*Photos and article by Becky Larkin, Master Gardener*

Gardening is always an experiment even when you are not planning for it, and a couple of our most fruitful experiments have been with the tomatoes. We are always fighting the birds and rabbits for produce, so we had been researching options. The birds tended to leave our yellow tomatoes, sungold and pear, alone, so that had worked. But we were stumped about what to do for the those delicious slicers we wanted to grow. Last year, the suggestion was made to wrap the tomato bunches with row cover, so we gave it a try. We took large pieces of light row cover and loosely wrapped the clusters just as they began to have a little blush to them, then tied it off with a twist tie. The loose cover provided room for the tomatoes to develop properly, gave them plenty of air circulation, and was transparent enough to see the ripe tomatoes ready for harvesting. With 16-18 tomato plants the chore was tedious, but we managed to increase our production by more than four fold. If you are interested in this process, take a look at Will Isbell's demonstration in the Harris County Master Gardeners Facebook Live video *Part 2: Keeping tomatoes healthy*.



*Row cover-wrapped tomato clusters*

Our unintended experiment with tomatoes came this year. We put in tomatoes the first part of March, and, since they were straight from the greenhouse, they promptly cooked in the bright light. Again, we pulled out the trusty row cover, this time to provide some shade. Additionally, our rabbits will eat anything other than onions if the plant is young and tender. We frequently use row cover to make short fencing around lower beds. It seems that if the rabbits can't see it, they do not even try to get in the bed to eat it. As you can see in the picture, we simply wrapped the cages leaving the top open. When a couple of cold fronts came through the first part of April, the wrapped cages seemed to provide a little hot house, and they continued to set fruit. What we were very surprised to see five weeks after planting was not only the size of the tomatoes but no sign of yellowing leaves, none. This is an experiment worth trying again. Next year, we will have one tomato bed with wrapped cages and a second one unwrapped as a control. We'll let you know what we find.



*Wrapped cages to protect plants from those wascally wabbits...uh, rabbits!*



## It's All About the Basil

by Brandi Keller, Harris County Master Gardener Program Coordinator



Everyone has their favorite herb, but not all herbs can be translated to "king" or "kingly" as basil is in Greek. There are 35 species of basil (*Ocimum*), but most of what we use is the species *Ocimum basilicum*, commonly known as sweet basil. Basil is a sun-loving herb that prefers rich, well-drained soil. It grows well in the garden, along landscape edges, in pots, and even on an indoor windowsill.

Remember to harvest or pinch your basil to prevent blooming and to create more leaves. Flowers tell the plant its life cycle is complete and the oils that make basil so important start to dry and diminish. Fresh cut basil is best stored in a glass of water at room temperature or can be preserved by drying or freezing. Since that oil content in the leaf also dries, you'll get a more potently-preserved herb by freezing. Of course, pesto is always reliable to preserve that kingly taste.

**Here are a few more resources:**

[Basil Factsheet](#)

[Basil Diseases](#)

[Basil and Pesto](#)

[Grow More Basil Faster with Cuttings](#)



'Nufar F1 Hybrid' is an improved hybrid sweet basil that differs slightly from Genovese, but Nufar is disease resistant to fusarium wilt, a soil-borne fungus that prevents the uptake of water into the plant.



Master Gardeners love to grow African blue basil in vegetable gardens to attract pollinators. The pink/ purple flower stems are long, seeds are sterile, and it attracts more pollinators than most plants.



While basil is attractive, it also makes food taste fresh and healthy. Here is a different recipe by Taste of Home that uses plain yogurt, basil, sugar, walnuts, and lemon zest. Click [HERE](#) for recipe.

If you missed the "All About Basil" talk - Click [HERE](#).



# Green Thumb 2021 Gardening Series

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Harris County Master Gardeners are pleased to offer the FREE *Green Thumb Gardening Series of Lectures* now provided virtually twice a month. We have collaborated with the Harris County Public Library and Houston Community College. Join us for one or both!  
Got questions? Go to [hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/](http://hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/)

## Second Monday, 10:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M. Houston Community College

Register in advance to receive the link: [hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops](http://hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops)  
*Second Monday of each month*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| January 11 – <i>Pruning Basics</i>             | June 14 – <i>Intro to Plumeria</i>        |
| February 8 – <i>Spring Vegetable Gardening</i> | July 12 – <i>Fall Vegetable Gardening</i> |
| March 8 – <i>Composting</i>                    | August 9 – <i>Gardening for Beginners</i> |
| April 12 – <i>Butterfly Gardens</i>            | September 13 – <i>Permaculture</i>        |
| May 10 – <i>Integrated Pest Management</i>     | October 11 – <i>Plant Propagation</i>     |

## Third Tuesday, 11:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M. Harris County Public Library Facebook Live

No reservation required. Watch on Facebook – [facebook.com/harriscountyppl/live](https://facebook.com/harriscountyppl/live)  
*Third Tuesday of each month*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| January 19 – <i>Pruning Basics</i>              | June 15 – <i>Intro to Plumeria</i>         |
| February 16 – <i>Spring Vegetable Gardening</i> | July 20 – <i>Fall Vegetable Gardening</i>  |
| March 16 – <i>Composting</i>                    | August 17 – <i>Gardening for Beginners</i> |
| April 20 – <i>Butterfly Gardens</i>             | September 21 – <i>Permaculture</i>         |
| May 18 – <i>Integrated Pest Management</i>      | October 19 – <i>Plant Propagation</i>      |



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# Ask a Master Gardener – Resuming Select In-Person Activities!

by Valerie Depew, Master Gardener

After a hiatus of over thirteen months due to the COVID pandemic, the Ask a Master Gardener program is back! We will be resuming our Farmer's Market table hosting activities starting in May. These events will be in compliance with COVID protocols, such as wearing masks and social distancing. However, with most of our volunteers now vaccinated, and with these activities occurring outside, we are ready to take those first steps to get back out there and educate the public.

These events will kick off with our table hosting the first weekend in May at the Urban Harvest Farmer's Market and the Garden Oaks market. The second weekend will be the Tomball Farmer's market, followed by the Westchase

market held on the third Thursday of the month. The last two regular markets for us are Towne Lake and Memorial Villages, which we attend the 3rd and 4th Saturdays of the month. Please note, for those of you who have volunteered at Towne Lake in the past, this is a new date and time.

We also have an additional event on the schedule for May: the Mercer Spring Plant Sale, to be held May 8th at the Mercer Botanic Garden. Our AAMG table will be there for the day of the sale only, but we will have two shifts available for volunteers.

If you are interested in volunteering for these events, the SignUp is available at: <https://signup.com/go/wBSYeQe>

## The full AAMG schedule for May

- Sat., May 1**      **Urban Harvest**, 3401 Westheimer, Houston, Texas – 7:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
**Garden Oaks Farmer's Market**, 949 Wakefield, Houston, Texas – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Sat., May 8**      **Tomball Farmer's Market**, 205 West Main St., Tomball, Texas – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
**Mercer Spring Plant Sale**, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, Texas 77338 – 8 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.
- Sat., May 15**     **Towne Lake Farmer's Market**, 9955 Barker Cypress Rd., Cypress, Texas 77433 – 12 to 3:30 p.m.
- Thurs., May 20** **Westchase Farmer's Market**, 10503 Westheimer Rd., Houston, Texas – 3 to 7 p.m.
- Sat., May 22**     **Memorial Villages Farmer's Market**, 10840 Beinhorn Rd., Houston, Texas – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
**Bay Area Plant Swap**, Bay Area Community Center, Clear Lake Park, 5001 Nasa Parkway, Seabrook, TX 77586 – 8:00 to 11:00 a.m.

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

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

**As a public health precaution to help prevent the spread of Covid-19,  
Harris County Master Gardeners have suspended in-person  
educational events until further notice.**

**However, this garden is a public space, so you are still welcome to visit  
according to the guidelines set forth by Hermann Park Conservancy. The Harris  
County Master Gardeners maintain the vegetable, herb, berry, and citrus beds in  
the Family Garden, so if you see one of us working there, feel free to say hi.**

**McGovern Centennial Gardens at Hermann Park**

**1500 Hermann Drive**

**Houston, Texas 77004**

When events resume: 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.



## MG of the Month - *Rick Castagno*

by Karen Breneman, Master Gardener

**C**ongratulations to **Rick Castagno!**

Rick was raised in El Paso, Texas, and is a graduate of Texas Tech University where he earned a degree in Petroleum Engineering. During his 40-year career in the oil and gas industry, Rick worked for a variety of companies in positions from engineer to management. He started his career in Casper,



*Rick Castagno*

Wyoming, where he met the love of his life, Cheryl. Cheryl and Rick have two daughters and two grandchildren. Besides playing with his grandchildren, his hobbies include home brewing beer, gardening, golf, and travel.

Rick graduated from the first all-virtual 2020 Master Gardener class. After volunteering at several MG gardens, he has found a home at the Genoa Friendship Gardens

(GFG). Since late 2020, Rick has been the vegetable production coordinator for GFG. This involves preparing seedlings in the

greenhouse, then transplanting them into raised beds and large container planters. Rick also set up a partnership with Heights Interfaith Ministries and Star of Hope to take the vegetables that are harvested at GFG. The 2020/2021 winter crop included collards, mustard greens, onions, radishes, carrots, and elephant garlic. The 2021 spring crops include various varieties of tomatoes, peppers, melon, squash, cucumber, peas and pumpkin.

In December, Paul Winski (TAMU AgriLife County Extension Agent-Horticulture) asked for suggestions on plants that could be trialed at GFG. Being a home brewer, Rick immediately mentioned that we should try growing hops. Paul loved the idea and assisted with getting the soil and hops for a new bed. Cascade hops were chosen since it's one of the most popular craft brewing choices with tones of citrus and grapefruit. The hops have been planted and will be ready for harvest this fall at which time Rick will test them out in a new home brew.

Thank you for all your hard work, Rick!

### Nominate a Master Gardener of the Month

We want to recognize the people who are working hard to keep our organization functioning.

To let the Membership committee know about the volunteers deserving of the award, contact

Karen Breneman at [kbreneman2017@gmail.com](mailto:kbreneman2017@gmail.com) or phone at 281-463-2110 or 832-923-1712.

Thank you in advance for your nomination.

## *For Harris County Master Gardeners Only!*

# May 8th & 22nd GFG Garden Workday!

8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Houston TX



*Appropriate Covid-19 protocols will be observed. As a reminder, please remain socially distanced at least six feet apart, wash your hands and use hand sanitizer. If working closer than six feet, a mask is required.*

Genoa Friendship Garden Workdays are an opportunity for Interns and Master Gardeners to meet with other gardeners, and to learn by working in a variety of gardens. Test your practical gardening skills and learn from other gardeners' knowledge. Explore the various options of working in a collection of gardens with perennials, proven Earth-Kind winners, the fruit tree orchard, native plants, composting, and greenhouse activities.

Come and enjoy a few hours working in the garden with fellow Gardeners while gaining your required membership service hours. Work tasks will be outlined, and available to gardeners to seek their interest. Garden leads will be on hand to guide you through the tasks.



For some of you that have considered this a distance you couldn't commit to on a regular basis, it is *always* available if you want to be surrounded by old or new friends.

***GFG also offers Mon./Wed. workdays (8:45 a.m. – Noon) for MGs who can attend during the week.***

Please join us at our GFG Garden Workdays!

Evan J. Hopkins,  
*Master Gardener*





## Have Garden Questions?



We have developed a new form located at <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/>

You can submit your question and up to three photos. Be sure your photos are focused and clear.



Please subscribe to our Harris County Horticulture YouTube page for access to recorded videos.

Thank you for your support.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel>



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

**Angela Byargeon, Vivian Cromwell, Valerie Depew, John Philip, Karastin Katusin, Gabby Matringe, Cindy Moore, Marleine Oren, Diane Perez, Mary Stokman and Cig Vergason**

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

# Gardening Tools

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

Planting times are for seeds unless otherwise noted	Vegetable Garden Planting Dates for Harris County											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Artichoke	Dormant Crowns								Transplants			
Asparagus (dormant crowns)									Transplants			
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 AGRILIFE

EXTENSION SERVICE

13105 NORTHWEST FREEWAY, SUITE 1000

HOUSTON, TX 77040

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. Reach us via these links:



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

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



<https://twitter.com/pharrishort>



<https://www.youtube.com/channel>



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

## MG In-person Volunteer Gardening Opportunities

### Learning Tuesdays at Centennial Gardens

As a reminder, every Tuesday, we will have a 30-minute lesson on a component of the garden for MGs and Interns. So you can get in an hour and a half of volunteer work and 30 minutes (sometimes more!) of continuing education. The workday begins at 9 a.m. We'll take a break mid-morning for a rest and the 30 minute class, then should finish up by 11 a.m. Email Becky Larkin directly, if you are interested in attending at [rebeccalarkin117@gmail.com](mailto:rebeccalarkin117@gmail.com)

### Genoa Friendship Garden

1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Houston 77034

**Weekday Workdays** 8:30am - 12pm

Every Monday and Wednesday we are working in the gardens. Feel free to drop in to get service hours!

**Weekend Workdays** 8:00am - 12:00pm

Please join us every 2nd and 4th Saturday at our Weekend Workdays. These are opportunities for Interns and MGs to meet with other gardeners to learn and work in a variety of gardens while observing safe physical distancing.

### Gardening on the North side at Christ the Good Shepherd Church (CGS)

Monday, Thursday and Saturday - 8:00 - 10:00 a.m.  
CGS garden is located between TX 249 and I-45 just north of FM 1960 at 18511 Klein Church Rd, Spring, TX 77379.

All work tools and equipment are provided, including gloves, water, sunscreen, and bug spray. We welcome new faces to join our group. Contact **Dale Hudson** by phone or text at 832-659-7799, or email at [UTVOL66@gmail.com](mailto:UTVOL66@gmail.com).

The garden has 28 raised beds for vegetables and two uniquely designed raised beds for herbs. There is a heated greenhouse where veggies and herbs are started from seed. And, there is a specifically designed composting area where all of the compost and mulch requirements for the garden are met on site. Gardeners with special skills or interests can focus on a particular area and lead or learn in the setting they enjoy.

CGS garden is approved as a Texas AgriLife research site, and as such we conduct plant trials throughout the year.

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)