

# Urban Dirt

Plant  
Propagation

Gardening Events and Information for Texans

## Plant Propagation

by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

Do you sneak plants home because your plant budget is maxed out? I've done that before. Many of us who love gardening learn that buying plants is expensive and addictive. Over the years I've learned of alternatives besides buying plants from the garden nurseries. Yes, I still buy, but I have begun propagating plants in order to save money and I am also acquiring new plants without paying for them. Right now I am growing Buddha belly plants, Datura plants, blue milkweed, basil and garlic. I'm also dividing my plants as well. I have some cannas, salvia, elephant ears and other bulbs/plants that I am dividing. I picked up 20 small succulents at a grocery store sale and they will be used for my fairy gardens. My semi-annual plant swap is this month. All of these plants I'm growing? I can trade them for new plants at a plant swap. FREE PLANTS! Some avid gardeners attend these and they bring a few rare plants on occasion. Do NOT think you can trade some common ruellia for that rare plumeria. These gardeners know their plants and the value of those plants. We gather together (with masks and a 6 ft distance) to talk gardening and trade plants. It's a lot of fun.

There are many ways to propagate plants. Plant propagation is the method used to produce more plants. Basically there are two ways: asexual and sexual. Sexual propagation uses two plants to make a third. Asexual propagation involves producing a new plant from the parent itself. It involves the stems, roots



Poppy seeds

or leaves of a plant. Sexual propagation is faster and cheaper but asexual propagation may be quicker and easier in some plant families.

One common method of plant propagation includes using seeds. I buy seeds for annual plants. Some gardeners save their seeds, but I do not want to worry about cross-pollination from other varieties of the same plant. That Mrs. Burn's lemon basil might have cross-pollinated with my holy basil. You know how things go bump in the night. My Buddha bellies are all from seed, but I only have the one variety of Buddha belly so nothing else cross-pollinated. The daturas are from seed and I have more than one type but if something new turns up, well, that's

*cont'd on pg. 4*



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

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## OCTOBER 2021

### Green Thumb Gardening Series

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

#### Plant Propagation

**Oct. 11**, 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)

**Oct. 19**, 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

**Oct. 5, First Tuesday** 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Meeting virtually via ZOOM

**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: [homegrown2021Q4.eventbrite.com/](https://homegrown2021Q4.eventbrite.com/)

**Oct. 7**, 10:00 a.m. - *Creating a Combination Planter* by Paul Winski, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Harris County, Extension Agent – Commercial Horticulture

**Oct 21**, 10:00 a.m. - *Sausage Making 101* by Shannon Dietz, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Harris County, Extension Agent – Agriculture & Natural Resources

### 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/>.

**Oct. 26**, 4:00 p.m. - Growing with Plants and Nature Family Zoom Event. The program can get you into the Halloween mood!

### Open Garden Day at Genoa Friendship Gardens

**Oct. 18**, 8:30 - 11:00 a.m., Genoa Friendship Gardens, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston, 77034.

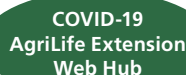
Tour the variety of exhibits including vegetable, perennial, rose, tropical, desert/xeriscape, native, Earth-Kind and plant trial gardens. Meet and talk with Master Gardeners about our plantings, and they are happy to answer questions you may have. Plants may be purchased online at <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/shop/>.

Plants purchased online, prior to October 18th, may be picked up at GFG this day. Remaining unsold plants from the October perennial sale will be available for purchase. **Cash only, quantities will be limited.**

.....  
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

*CEA – Horticulture*

Paul Winski - 713-274-0981

*CEA – Horticulture*

Brandi Keller - 713-274-0950



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## HERB OF THE MONTH

# French Sorrel (*Rumex scutatus*)

by Karen McGowan, Master Gardener

Bienvenue to fall in southeast Texas, friends, and welcome to October's Herb of the Month, French sorrel. While there are many varieties of sorrel, the most commonly used in cooking is French sorrel. *Rumex scutatus* is the true French sorrel, often called "Buckler sorrel," and is relatively little-known or used in the United States, although long and widely used in European dishes.

Existing for thousands of years and native to Europe, western Asia, and North Africa, true French sorrel has smaller, arrow-shaped leaves (akin to sheep sorrel, commonly found in weedy yards) that grow close to the ground; it's less than a foot tall, and the leaves are milder-tasting than common sorrel, bearing a slight lemon flavor. It is used to make the delightful classic French sorrel soup (a recipe for which can be found in *The Joy of Cooking*). While common sorrel is also culinary, it possesses a more tart lemon flavor.

French sorrel in the southern United States is a spring herb, with harvest time recommended young for the most tender leaves and best taste. French sorrel will go to seed in late spring or early summer, alongside most lettuce and spinach. Performing best when grown in dry, open areas with inhospitable soils, the plants have very deep and persistent tap roots and generally prosper with minimal attention. Planting sorrel from seed or dividing the roots are the two most common ways to propagate the herb. French sorrel is a perennial, and will probably not need a lot of supplemental care, but its bed does need to be kept weeded and the plants should receive at least 1 inch of water per week. If not divided regularly, it can become invasive in some environments.

The leaves of sorrel are flush in potassium, vitamin A and vitamin C. In prior times, sorrel was frequently used to fight scurvy because of the high vitamin C content. Cooked sorrel is puréed as a base for fish sauces and poached egg dishes; often added to a basic cream of potato soup with good results, or used in place of

half the spinach in a dish. Raw, sorrel is generally used in salads. With astringent properties like many herbs and some greens, sorrel is a nice, offsetting side dish for rich fatty meats and oily fish. While sorrel does not dry very well, it can, however, be puréed and frozen for later use in soups and sauces (the old trick of freezing in ice cube trays can be handy here).

A word of caution: Because French sorrel is very high in oxalic acid, do not cook it in a cast iron pot as the oxalic acid in the leaves will react with the metal, imparting an unpleasant

metallic taste to the leaves. Also avoid using aluminum cookware, as the oxalic acid could free toxic amounts of aluminum ions. To avoid these issues, stick to cooking French sorrel exclusively in stainless steel cookware.

Mostly because I adore shallots and would be a brand ambassador for them, if there were such a thing, and partly because I haven't done so in a while, I am including a recipe

to try, for sorrel sauce; either later, with French sorrel from your own garden, or in the event you can presently locate it (if you're in Houston, check Phoenicia and Central Market):

### Sorrel Sauce (suggested for fish or fowl)

#### Ingredients:

2 medium shallots, minced  
1 tablespoon butter  
About 20 finely chopped sorrel leaves, stem and tough veins removed  
1/2 cup dry white wine  
1 2/3 cup heavy cream

#### Instructions:

In a medium saucepan over moderately-low heat, melt the butter and sweat the shallots until soft, about 8 minutes. Add chopped sorrel leaves and "melt" (the leaves will quickly cook down and become extremely tender). Add white wine, bring to a simmer and cook until reduced by about a quarter. Add cream, bring to a simmer and cook until thick enough to coat the back of a spoon.



French Sorrel

#### Citations:

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/herbs/sorrell/sorrel-herb.htm>  
<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=285455>  
<https://davesgarden.com/guides/articles/view/2513>



## Plant Propagation, *cont'd from pg. 1*

okay. I'll have something new for the plant swap. I have small aluminum foil packets to store my seeds in the freezer. They can last for a while under the right conditions. Usually, 80% of the seeds will germinate. Of those, about 60% will give you sturdy plants. Four factors will determine your success rate with seed germination: light, water, heat and oxygen. Some seeds require special treatment. With scarification the hard seed coat requires softening or gently scraping the seed coat (with my toenail clipper!) so water can penetrate. Stratification uses refrigeration. Some plants require overwinter chilling and they are refrigerated for a few weeks to mimic winter. Seeds are one of the cheapest ways to propagate. The media used, the containers, the method of seeding, the watering, the light and temperature- all of these can change depending on cost, availability, and the type of plant you want. Once your seeds are ready to be transplanted, remember to harden them off if you are moving them to their permanent location. Hardening is when the plants are moved from greenhouse or indoor conditions to outdoors. It can take up to two weeks for your new seedling to acclimate to the different conditions outside. Start in a shady spot and gradually give the plants more sun. I do this anyway with any new plants I bring home. Just because you bought them at the store in full sun does not mean they can handle it. Those plants are usually shipped in the night before and sold quickly. It's possible they may have a

disease or insect infestation. They have probably spent their teenage years in a greenhouse and you should monitor them before allowing them to join your plant family.

Other methods for plant propagation include using cuttings (stem, leaf, root), layering (tip, compound, mound or stool) and air layering. Division

or separation is one I use often. Once certain plants get crowded (cannas, elephant ears) I dig them up, separate them, dip the roots in a rooting hormone or cinnamon and place them in new pots. Cheap pots if I'm taking them to the swap. I water them in with a solution that helps with plant shock. Then I place them in shade for a few days before hardening them off.

Another plant propagation method is grafting. Grafting requires some knowledge and skill, but there are grafting lessons available around town. Panzarella in Lake Jackson has grafting classes scheduled for February 2022. The link is <https://www.panzarellacitrus.com/grafting-school> if you are interested. There are many types of grafting. If you become interested in grafting, there is a book available for you with more grafted methods than you can imagine. It's called the *The Grafter's Handbook* by R.J. Garner. The ISBN is 160358482X.

If you want to learn more about plant propagation, check the master gardener link <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/2021-green-thumb-gardening-series/> for locations and times.



Rhizomes

Photo by Terri Simon



Air layering on outdoor plants

Photo by Dave Domoney



## PLANT OF THE MONTH

# Phyllanthus urinaria

Article and photos by Don Tyler, Master Gardener

Odds are this may be one of the weirdest plants to ever garner the title, “Plant of the Month”, but I just could not resist.



Any thoughts.....?

That is a picture of a Chamberbitter. Clemson Cooperative Extension states this plant is “also known as gripweed, leaf-flower, or little mimosa”. (*Factsheet, HGIC 2314*, published June 17, 2021.)

I personally find gripweed the most fitting description because I have been griping all year long as this particular “weed” has cropped up everywhere. I do not know what I did to deserve this invasion of the gripweed but it has consumed me this year. (HINT: Maybe I do know what I did to deserve such an onslaught of Chamberbitter.....just read on!)

In an article entitled, “*Chamberbitter: Invasive and Difficult to Control*”, published by the LSU Agricultural Center, Mr. Ron Strahan states, Chamberbitter “*is a highly invasive summer annual broadleaf that has become a serious weed of nurseries and landscape beds*” and “*it has become problematic across the southeastern United States from Virginia to Texas.*” He goes on the state “*the most common distinguishing feature is fruit attached directly underneath sides of branches. Reproduction is by seeds, which explode from maturing fruit onto surrounding areas*”. And if that were not enough, “*Chamberbitter grows 1 to 2*

*feet in height and produces thousands of seeds.*” Let me emphasize the “thousand of seeds”!

Here is a picture of that characteristic “fruit” on the undersides of the gripweed!



Whereas I wanted to blame the environmental conditions of blowing these seeds into my yard and garden, it turns out I have not been diligent in applying good principles of weed control.

I am an avid organic vegetable gardener and so weeds can sometimes be a challenge as I do not use any herbicides. By the way, I am not knocking those that have chosen the non-organic route and if you fall in that category, the two references mentioned above list several pre- and post-emergent herbicides that have been found to be effective in controlling this particular weed.

Eliminating herbicides, organic gardeners are really left with two main control strategies. The first is mechanical which simply involves physically removing the weed. Did I mention my garden, yard and flower beds were inundated with this weed this year! (There I go again.....griping about the gripweed.....my apologies!) Seriously though, that is a lot of back breaking energy! If you pull this weed up you will be shocked to see quite a root system and so I recommend pulling the weed when the ground is moist. The weed pulls right out of the ground. However, if the ground is hard, I think you will find the stem to be very weak and the weed will just snap off at ground level and you will soon find yourself back pulling up the weed again.

*cont'd on pg. 6*

*New Fall perennials, plus assorted fruit  
and ornamental trees coming to the on-line HCMGA store!*

Be sure to check the HCMGA store, <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/shop/>, in October for a new array of plant selections. Varieties include, azaleas and natives, such as Buttonbush and Oakleaf Hydrangea. Also, a variety of perennials are available that include Purple Coneflower, Turk’s Cap, Cardinal Flower, Hot Pink Cereus and many more.

Plant pickups will be at **Genoa Friendship Gardens**, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston, 77034. Select your pickup date and time when you check out.

*It’s a great time of year for planting!*



*Phyllanthus urinaria*, cont'd from pg. 5

In my mind, the most effective approach is what is commonly referred to as a “cultural control”. Simply put, mulch! Most resources will recommend at least 3” minimum in order to “create a physical barrier to weed penetration and eliminate the light required for weed seeds to break dormancy” (*Texas Master Gardener Handbook*, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Jayla B. Fry, editor). Maintaining a thick layer of mulch will prevent the majority of these “thousands of seeds” from germinating.

Another approach worth mentioning especially as it relates to garden beds is to implement “no-till” gardening. I do not want to get off on too much of a tangent but eliminating tilling prevents weed seeds from being brought to the surface which obviously allows them to germinate.

Bottom line, it is time for me to stop griping about the gripe-weed and instead implement well-proven weed control strategies to lessen the negative impact of invasive weeds like Chamberbitter.

## Home Grown Program Expands to a Podcast

<https://bit.ly/3w4cUAR>



*The Home Grown podcast is presented by the Agriculture & Natural Resources (ANR) Unit of the Harris County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office. The series provides information on urban agriculture / horticulture / gardening and ag literacy. The program focuses on topics that are relevant to the urban gardener.*

*The podcast can also be found at the following site: [www.listennotes.com/podcasts/home-grown-podcast-paul-OM7PKqityX\\_/](http://www.listennotes.com/podcasts/home-grown-podcast-paul-OM7PKqityX_/)*



TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION  
HARRIS COUNTY

# HOME GROWN LECTURE SERIES

OCT - NOV - DEC  
2021

\* ALL LECTURES ONLINE

REGISTER AT:  
[HOMEGROWN2021Q4.  
EVENTBRITE.COM](https://homegrown2021q4.eventbrite.com)

## CREATING A COMBINATION PLANTER

Paul Winski - Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension  
Agent-Horticulture

October 7, 2021 - 10:00 a.m.

## SAUSAGE MAKING 101

Shannon Dietz - Texas A&M AgriLife County  
Extension Agent-Agriculture & Natural Resources

October 21, 2021 - 10:00 a.m.

## CITRUS TREES FOR YOUR LANDSCAPE

Brandi Keller - Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension  
Agent-Horticulture

November 4, 2021 - 10:00 a.m.

## RAINWATER HARVESTING

Teresa See - Harris County Master Gardener

November 18, 2021 - 10:00 a.m.

## SO YOU WANT TO BE A RANCHER?

Shannon Dietz - Texas A&M AgriLife County  
Extension Agent-Agriculture & Natural Resources

December 2, 2021 - 10:00 a.m.

**CHANGED to September 17, 2021 - 10:00 a.m.**

## MAKING HOLIDAY PLANTS LAST

Brandi Keller - Texas A&M AgriLife County  
Extension Agent-Horticulture

December 16, 2021 - 10:00 a.m.

TEXAS A&M  
AGRILIFE  
EXTENSION



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. We are excited about our outreach to more children and their families through a collaboration with our AgriLife Extension agents.

Check out our Facebook Group at [www.facebook.com/groups/GPNVG](http://www.facebook.com/groups/GPNVG) where you will find videos of all of our Family Zoom presentations as well as many crafts and activities related to those presentations. Email [ogd.harrishort@gmail.com](mailto:ogd.harrishort@gmail.com) for any questions, information or comments about all of our Growing with Plants and Nature activities.

**Master Gardener, Karen Kabacinski**, presented a video for our September 28th Family Zoom Event on Fall Vegetable Gardening. Her presentation gave the children a tour of her garden while teaching about Fall vegetable gardening. Karen's presentation was followed by a craft activity by Master Gardeners, Diane Walker and Linda Persse, showing ideas for creating art projects using leaves and other natural objects you can find on a walk around your yard or neighborhood.

### Karen's presentation covered:

- What vegetables to plant in the fall
- Information about how she planned and prepared her fall garden
- Information about succession planting

Craft activity showing ideas for creating art projects using leaves and other natural objects



Broccoli, Red Beets, Bok Choy planted September 1st



Carrots & Parsnips planted September 9th—not sprouted yet



Peas planted September 8th

### Our plans for Growing With Plants and Nature going forward include:

- Returning to our in-person programs at Community Centers and expanding our services to children at other Harris County Events
- Maintaining our virtual presence while making our virtual programs available to a broader audience
- Collaborating with Extension Agents on outreach programs to children and their families

# 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 – *Pruning Basics*  
February 8 – *Spring Vegetable Gardening*  
March 8 – *Composting*  
April 12 – *Butterfly Gardens*  
May 10 – *Integrated Pest Management*

June 14 – *Intro to Plumeria*  
July 12 – *Fall Vegetable Gardening*  
August 9 – *Gardening for Beginners*  
September 13 – *Permaculture*  
October 11 – *Plant Propagation*

## 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 – *Pruning Basics*  
February 16 – *Spring Vegetable Gardening*  
March 16 – *Composting*  
April 20 – *Butterfly Gardens*  
May 18 – *Integrated Pest Management*

June 15 – *Intro to Plumeria*  
July 20 – *Fall Vegetable Gardening*  
August 17 – *Gardening for Beginners*  
September 21 – *Permaculture*  
October 19 – *Plant Propagation*



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating. Individuals with disabilities, who require an auxiliary aid, service or accommodation in order to participate in any Extension activities, are encouraged to contact the Harris County Extension Office at 713-274-0950 for assistance five working days prior to the activity.



*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**

**The Harris County Master Gardeners maintain the vegetable, herb, berry, and citrus beds in the Family Garden on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, so if you see one of us working there, feel free to say hi. Educational activities will resume in January.**

**McGovern Centennial Gardens at Hermann Park**

**1500 Hermann Drive**

**Houston, Texas 77004**

When events resume in January: 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.



# Getting Down to Earth

Article and photos by Pam Longley, Master Gardener

## News from Genoa Friendship Gardens

I love looking at friends' vacation pictures, but I know, to some people, it is like pulling out a wallet full of grandbabies. However, I wanted to share some flora from two botanical gardens I visited



*Echinops in Yampa Valley Botanical Gardens, Steamboat Springs, Colorado*

this summer in Northern Colorado and in Coastal Maine and an ancient tree in Edgartown on Martha's Vineyard that I thought you might enjoy.

Now to local news: **Paul Winski** came out to GFG in late



*"The Pagoda Tree", a Chinese Huai tree gifted to Captain Milton, planted in 1836, Edgartown on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts*



*Invincible Spirit hydrangeas at Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens in Boothbay, Maine*

September and brought several Blue Daze (*Evolvulus nuttallianus*) and Mystic Spires Blue salvia for the perennial/annual trial team to plant plus seven varieties of pelleted Easy Wave petunia seeds to propagate. In October, he will be delivering bare root Camarosa strawberries for a new trial to be planted in three beds. One trial will be an uncovered bed, one will have frost cloth over hoops for cover and one will have clear plastic over hoops. Which bed will fare the best? Stay tuned.

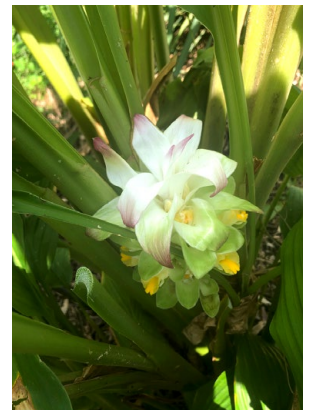
Paul surveyed the Ginger Root trial and told us that once night temperatures are below 50 degrees, the ginger plants will die back and then we will harvest the tubers. We expect the harvest to be in early January.



*Paul Winski, Carolyn Boyd and Rick Castagno discuss the Ginger Trial*

**Rick Castagno**, Vegetable Production Manager, reported 176 lbs. of sweet potatoes were harvested the week of September 13.

**Janice Muhm**, our Greenhouse Guru, planted turmeric in the herb garden in spring 2020. It looks much like a banana tree and the flowers are now at their peak. The tubers will be harvested in the same manner as the ginger. Time from planting to maturity is about ten months. Turmeric is well known for being a part of curry powder and for its medicinal properties that some say help prevent Alzheimer's disease and suppress tumors. Qualified disclaimer: The author is not making a claim here.



*Turmeric blooming at GFG*

*cont'd on pg. 12*



*Getting Down to Earth, cont'd from pg. 11*

Article and photos by Dale Hudson, Master Gardener

**Christ the Good Shepherd Garden**

For the optimistic volunteers, CGS Garden in September felt like a Goldilocks environment. Conditions were not too hot or too cold, rainfall was not too much or too little, and the seasonal chore list was not too long or too short. Summer crops were in our rear-view mirror and preparations for Fall plantings were underway.

First, a quick update on the HCMGA trials. The Candle Fire okra trial is concluded. When compared to three other okra varieties planted in an adjacent bed, the Candle Fire fruited earlier and profusely, but flamed out (pun intended) rather abruptly after seven weeks. The familiar green varieties fruited later but continued to produce for nine weeks, reaching for the sky and the blazing hot sun. The trial offers up clear choices to inquisitive gardeners depending on what growing habit most appeals to them.

The pepper trials among nine varieties of “not hot” peppers have also shown clear distinctions between each other as the growing period continues. As the final report will reveal, there are the early fruited, the late fruited, and the steady unspectacular fruited who will probably win “best in show” when scored by the CGS yardstick for most produce available to the area food pantries.

So what exactly was on our chore list for this month? Not to be overlooked, this is prime time for composting the material we will use for prepping our beds for the fall/winter plantings. Our eight beds of sweet potatoes, planted in early June, will soon be harvested and eight beds of Texas Sweet 1015 onions will be planted in

*Lovely Candle Fire okra blossom*



*A mix of both red and green cabbage transplants ready to go into the beds for Fall.*

late November. Then there are the brassicas and the turnips and the kale and the Swiss chard and maybe some beets or carrots or collards, and yes, we continue to be excited about a first-time HCMGA trial of strawberries in mid-October. Just like the fabled Goldilocks family, we look forward to happy days ahead.

*cont'd on pg. 13*



*Recent MG volunteer Baxter Swenson works with Mike Chidalek to screen compost for the Fall garden beds at CGS.*



*Getting Down to Earth, cont'd from pg. 12*

Article and photos by Nancy Graml, Master Gardener

**McGovern Centennial Gardens**

**Summer Crops Still Producing**

Even as we started planting our fall garden in the middle of September, we continued to harvest eggplants, black-eyed peas, watermelons, peppers, cucumbers, and sweet potatoes. The eggplants were some of the prettiest of the summer crops with consistent purple flowers and a variety of beautiful purple and white fruit. Watermelons ripened all through September. In past years, visitors sometimes thought they were ripe enough to pick and, so, helped themselves. We tried a new tactic using a paint pen to write on the watermelons “I am not ripe,” “Please do not pick me,” and “I go to the food bank.” This new strategy has seemed to work well; we have harvested far more than in past years.



*Calliope eggplant*



*Ripening pepper plant*



*Watermelon with a message!*

**Managing Pests and Beneficials in the Garden**

Master Gardeners strive to keep the Family Garden completely organic, as one of our goals is to show guests how it is possible to grow successfully without toxic pesticides. Workdays include plant inspection to see what critters have recently invaded. Leaf-footed bugs and cabbage beetles are easy to squish or flip into a wide-mouthed jar filled with soapy water. Generally, we use a water hose to spray off aphids, but many times we will see lady beetle eggs and larvae already present. We keep our eyes open for lace-wing eggs and make sure they are not disturbed. The Master Gardeners even hand-transfer beneficials as needed.



*Beneficial tropical orb weaver spider*

Pollinators are some of the most important beneficials we have in the Family Garden. A traditional box hive of honey bees is tucked behind a fence in a corner of the garden, and a small native beehive resides in the black-



*Bee visiting African Blue Basil*



*White Mist Flower for bees*

berry corner. The perimeter beds are dedicated to native pollinator plants, mist and cardinal flower, gay feather, Turk's cap, lantana, etc. We also grow pollinator and host plants in the vegetable and herb beds: African blue basil, milkweed, passion flower, Dutch pipe vine, balms, verbenas, etc. The better the pollination, the more produce we can harvest.

berry corner. The perimeter beds are dedicated to native pollinator plants, mist and cardinal flower, gay feather, Turk's cap, lantana, etc. We also grow pollinator and host plants in the vegetable and herb

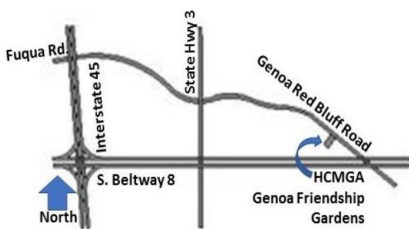


# Genoa Friendship Gardens Open Garden Days

Open the 3rd Monday of every month,  
8:30 a.m. until 11:00 a.m., March thru October.

Admission to the Exhibit Gardens is Free.

- Tour the variety of exhibits including vegetable, perennial, rose, tropical, desert/xeriscape, native, Earth-Kind and plant trial gardens.
- Meet and talk with a Master Gardener about our plantings, and they are happy to answer questions you may have.
- Contemplate the serenity of our gardens and catch a view of the water garden.
- Plants may be purchased online at <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/shop/> as the Greenhouse is currently closed.



**HCMGA**  
1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road  
Houston, TX 77034



# Ask a Master Gardener – In-Person Activities

by Valerie Depew, Master Gardener

Our Farmer’s Market table hosting activities have resumed. These events are in compliance with COVID protocols, such as wearing masks and social distancing.

For Harris County MGs interested in volunteering please see the SignUp link: <https://signup.com/go/wBSYeQe>

We need volunteers for the two new events and for the Community Garden. There are also openings for several markets. If you do not see an opening where you wish to serve, please contact Valerie Depew at [vdep56@gmail.com](mailto:vdep56@gmail.com). We will work hard to accommodate those situations!

## The full AAMG schedule for October

- Fri., Oct. 1**      **SE Texas Ag Summit**, Baytown Community Center, 2407 Market St, Baytown, 77520 – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.  
(lunch and dinner provided)
- Sat., Oct. 2**      **Garden Oaks Farmer’s Market**, 949 Wakefield, Houston, 77018 – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
**Mercer Botanic Gardens**, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338 – 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
Mercer Pollinator Festival will also be in progress.  
**Urban Harvest**, 3401 Westheimer, Houston, 77042 – 7:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- Sat., Oct. 9**      **Tomball Farmer’s Market**, 205 West Main St., Tomball, 77375 – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Sat., Oct. 16**     **Mercer Botanic Gardens**, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338 – 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
**Towne Lake Farmer’s Market**, 9955 Barker Cypress Rd., Cypress, 77433 – 9:30 a.m to 1:30 p.m.
- Thurs., Oct. 21** **Westchase Farmer’s Market**, 10503 Westheimer Rd., Houston, 77042 – 3 to 7 p.m.
- Sat., Oct. 23**     **Memorial Villages Farmer’s Market**, 10840 Beinhorn Rd., Houston, 77024 – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
**Woodchase Park Community Garden**, 3951 Woodchase Drive, Houston, 77042 – 10:00 a.m. to 12 p.m.

## 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!*

# October 9th & 23rd GFG Garden Workday!

8:30 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 *October* include the following. Wish them a **HAPPY BIRTHDAY** when you see them!

**Toni Anderson, Nancy Ayres, Robin Brady, Irene Crutchley, Pat Daniel, Bev DeMoss, Terry Garner, Celeste Germany, Bruce Heiberg, Rebecca Hudman, Dale Hudson, Rose Marie Israwi, Mary McGowen, Christine Smith-Byerly, Stan Stevenson and Marsha VanHorn**

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



## It's that time of year!

As you all know, we are in hurricane season until November 30th. Hopefully, storms will bypass our area this year. But, to make sure you and your families are prepared for an event, check out <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/prepare/ready.php> .

# 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** 8:30 am - 12pm

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

**Weekend Workdays** 8:30 am - 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)