

Urban Dirt

Growing Roses in Texas!

Gardening Events and Information for Texans

Growing Roses in Texas

by Christa Kaiser, Master Gardener

Who does not know the song “*The Yellow Rose of Texas*” a traditional American folk song dating back to at least 1850s. There are different interpretations about whether the yellow rose was actually a rose or a beautiful woman. The rose industry began in East Texas back in the mid-1850s and the first transaction of rose sales occurred in 1879. Around 1940 the city of Tyler supplied 40% of the rose bushes for the entire nation and over 300 varieties of roses were grown in their nurseries. Chamblee’s Rose Nursery still produces fine quality roses. The Tyler Rose Park celebrates its history of growing, preserving, and displaying roses with a yearly parade. Lately the Knock-Out shrub rose, bred by American rose grower William Radner in 1989, has become the best-known rose for planting in public areas because of its disease-resistance. Rosarians and rose lovers still work diligently on creating their own rose, filing for patents and naming them.

Texas has several USDA Gardening-Growing Zones. Texas zones range from zone 6 to 9 to compare temperature extremes. This is an important tool when making planting decisions.



Carefree Beauty was in the 2016 Harris County Master Gardeners/Houston Rose Society plant trials at Houston’s Medical Center

Antique – Old Garden Roses

Native rose species are growing in all areas of the United States. In Texas, the Desert Rose (*Rosa stellata*) grows in dry, rocky places. It is a small shrub; the flower color is rose purple.

cont’d on pg. 3

Upcoming Events	2	Fall Vegetable Gardening	21
HCMGA Fall Plant Sales!!!	4	A Visit to Mercer Botanic Gardens.....	23
Green Thumb Ethnic		Green Thumb Gardening Series.....	25
Veggies Workshop	5	Ask a Master Gardener Online	26
Herb of the Month	6	Ask a Master Gardener In-Person	27
Native Plant of the Month	8	Recipe of the Month	28
Plant a Native Pocket Prairie in		Master Gardener of the Month.....	29
Your Own Back Yard	9	Open Garden Days at	
Prepping for Fall	12	Genoa Friendship Gardens	30
A Tonic for Heat Stressed Plants.....	13	Master Gardeners in the City	31
September Gardening Calendar	14	GFG Garden Workdays	33
Getting Down to Earth	15	Gardening Tools	35
Growing with Plants and Nature.....	19	MG In-Person Gardening	
Bug of the Month	20	Opportunities.....	36



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

UPCOMING EVENTS - SEPTEMBER 2023

Educational Programs

Sept. 5, First Tuesday 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Program: *Companion Plants* with Angela Chandler. Meeting in-person at Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Road, Houston, TX 77055

Public Gardening Lectures

Sept. 19, 10:30 a.m., *Succulents* by Debra Caldwell, Glazier Senior Education Center, 16600 Pine Forest Lane, Houston, TX 77084

Sept. 19, 1:00 p.m., *Raised Beds* by Teresa See, Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Drive, Houston, TX 77042

Sept. 21, 1:00 p.m., *Fall Gardening* by Teresa See, Fonteno Senior Education Center 6600 Bissonnet St, Houston, TX 77074

Sept. 26, 10:30 a.m., *Prepping for Winter* by Bennie Matusek, Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Rd., Cypress, TX 77433

Green Thumb Gardening Series

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

Growing Roses in Texas

Sept. 11, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. For the HCC program, register in advance to receive the link: hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops

Sept. 19, 11:00 a.m. - 12 p.m. Simply visit the Harris County Public Library System. No reservation required. Watch on Facebook – facebook.com/harriscountyp/live

Plant Sales!!!

Sept. 23, 9:00 a.m. - 1 p.m. **Westside Plant Sale** (In-person) Bear Creek Park, 3000 Bear Creek Dr, Houston, TX 77084

Oct. 1-19, **Southeast Fall Online Plant Sale**. Order at <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/shop/>

Oct. 21, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. **Online Sale Plant Pick-up day**, plus in-person shopping of remaining plant inventory at Genoa Friendship Gardens, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., 77034

Open Garden Day at Genoa Friendship Gardens

Sept. 18, 8:30 - 11 a.m. If you missed our sales or just want one plant (or more!), here's your opportunity! Remaining plant inventory will be available for sale in the greenhouse. The garden is open to tour and Master Gardeners will be available to answer gardening questions. And, visit the *Ask a Master Gardener* table for additional gardening information. 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston, TX 77034

Youth Events

Sept. 16, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Towne Lake Farmers Market on the Boardwalk; from 9:00 until 1:00, 9955 Barker Cypress Rd., Cypress. We will be helping children with a planting project.

Sept. 23, 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. West Side Plant Sale - Planting activity table at the sale for children attending with their parents.

Oct. 21, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Towne Lake Farmers Market on the Boardwalk, 9955 Barker Cypress Rd., Cypress. Planting or craft activity for the children.

Oct. 21, 10:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. KRB Kids Day sponsored by Buffalo Bayou Partnership, Tony Marron Park, 808 York St., Houston. We usually have over 100 children come to our table at this large, popular event we share with many other community groups focused on children.

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](#)



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

CEA – Horticulture
Brandi Keller - Brandi.Keller@ag.tamu.edu
Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator
Stephanie Gray - stephanie.gray@ag.tamu.edu



2023 Board of Directors

- President**
 Carolyn Boyd
Carolyn.Boyd@hc-mga.org
- First Vice President**
 Alexa Haass
Alexa.Haass@hc-mga.org
- Second Vice President**
 Kathryn McLeod
Kathryn.McLeod@hc-mga.org
- Past President**
 Jonathan Correia
Jonathan.Correia@hc-mga.org
- Secretary**
 Mary Stokman
Mary.Stokman@hc-mga.org
- Treasurer**
 Danny Dunn
Danny.Dunn@hc-mga.org
- Directors**
 Douglas McLeod
 Lucia Hansen
 Marsha VanHorn
 Fatma Ozel
 Jarvis Taylor

Assistant Treasurers
 Cindy Moore, Marsha VanHorn

Genoa Friendship Gardens
Steering Committee Advisors
 Vacant

Urban Dirt Editor
 Carolyn Boyd
UrbanDirt.harrishort@gmail.com
Assistant Urban Dirt Editor
 Terri Simon

Growing Roses in Texas, *cont'd from pg. 1*

Texas gardens with roses were influenced by the Spanish, French, African Americans, English, Germans, and others. This mix of cultures produced and preserved old roses by bringing them from their home countries to America. Here in Texas, they were planted in small gardens on old homesites, cemeteries, farmyards, vacant lots and abandoned fields where they survived sometimes for centuries without any care. The American Rose Society classes as “old” any rose introduced before 1867, but most collectors consider any rose that has existed seventy-five or more years as old. Old roses have a true rose perfume and are superior as shrubs. A dedicated group of collectors, known as “The Rose Rustlers”, worked together to find, document, and cultivate these old species so they are not lost forever. Members of this group include Dr. William C. Welch of Texas A&M University, Greg Grant, Smith County Horticulture Agent, and Michael Shoup, the founder of the Antique Rose Emporium in Brenham, Texas. *Antique Roses* are hardy, even under poor conditions, but they will be at their best if planted in a favorable situation with rich, well-draining soil. The rose bed should be located in an open area that receives at least six hours of direct sun daily and allows air movement around each plant. Old roses do not require the stringent and careful pruning that is required by many modern roses.

Earth-Kind Roses

Earth-Kind is a special designation given to select rose cultivars by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service through the Earth-Kind landscaping program. It is based on the results of extensive research and field trials and is awarded only to those roses showing superior pest tolerance, combined with outstanding landscape performance. Earth-Kind Roses are available in many Texas Nurseries. These cultivars are listed on the web page of the Texas A&M Horticulture Department.

Hybrid tea and Floribunda roses

Hybrid tea is an informal horticulture classification for a group of garden roses. The first hybrid tea roses were created in France in the mid-1800s by cross breeding the large floriferous Hybrid Perpetuals with the tall, elegant tea rose. Hybrid tea is the oldest class of modern garden roses. Hybrid teas are the largest and most popular rose class, due to their elegant, pointed buds that open slowly. Hybrid teas are grown in a large variety of colors. Propagation is usually done by budding, a technique that involves grafting buds from a parent plant onto hardy, disease resistant root stocks. The American Rose Society provides ratings for Hybrid teas. The “Modern roses” typically live six to ten years. More care is needed, a higher rate of nitrogen and low amounts of phosphorus and potassium and watering at least every 7 to 10 days is advised. Diseases might be black spot, rust, powdery mildew and botrytis blight and they attract pests like spider mites and Japanese beetles. Deadheading faded blooms encourages growth and more blooms. Pruning of all roses should be done around Valentine's Day. Remove dead or damaged canes as well as small twiggy ones. Remove canes that are growing towards the center of the plant to create an open vase shape. Cut back remaining canes by about two-thirds. Make cuts just above an outward-facing leaf node, and remove all remaining leaves from canes.

It is beneficial to mulch all your roses in the fall and at the time of planting. Mulching is the addition of a protective layer around the base of the roses. It helps to keep moisture, suppresses weeds and supplies valuable nutrients for your roses as they grow.

More detailed guidelines are available through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Master Gardeners presentations and specialist training in College Station.

*For more information about **Growing Roses in Texas**, join the Master Gardeners Green Thumb Gardening Series on September 11, 10 - 11:30 a.m. for the Houston Community College program, or September 19, 11:00 a.m. - 12 p.m. for the Harris County Public Library System program. See registration links in **Upcoming Events** on page 2 of this publication.*

Resources:

The Rose Rustlers by Greg Grant & William C. Welch. *Antique Roses for the South*, *Roses in the Southern Gardens* by G. Michael Shoup, *The Guide to Antique Roses*, American Rose Society, Houston Rose Society, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Wikipedia, and other websites.

Harris County Master Gardeners Fall Plant Sales!

As temperatures moderate in the Fall months, there are quite a few benefits to consider, for a Fall vegetable garden as well as planting trees and perennials. The weather moderates – milder days/cooler nights, lower humidity, better chance of rain, fewer pests and longer growing season for winter harvests. For trees and perennials, the soil is warmer and roots have time to get

established through the winter, plus the plantings will avoid transplant shock that can happen with Spring planting.

We are having two Fall sales. First up is the West Side in-person sale at Bear Creek Park on September 23rd and an online Southeast sale, October 1st - 19th, with pickup at Genoa Friendship Gardens. See our flyer below for details. We hope to see you there!

WEST SIDE SALE

September 23rd

9 am to 1 pm

Bear Creek Park
3000 Bear Creek Dr.
Houston, TX 77084

In Person Sales Only

HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

2023 FALL PLANT SALES

2 Sales - 2 Locations!

**Vegetables, Herbs,
Perennials and Ornamentals**

SOUTHEAST SALE

Genoa Friendship Garden
1210 Genoa Red Bluff
Houston 77034

October 1st - 19th

Online sales:
<https://hcmga.tamu.edu/shop/>

October 21st
Online sales pickup
In-person sale of remaining inventory

For more information go to:
www.hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-sales

TEXAS
MASTER GARDENER
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION
Harris County

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION



GREEN THUMB ETHNIC VEGGIES WORKSHOP

OCTOBER 7TH

Learn how to successfully grow produce from around the world!

Each participant will go home with samples from the garden!

Adults with children welcome to bring children free of charge.

	7 OCTOBER	BENNIE MATUSEK
	9am-10am	MASTER GARDENER

	Genoa Friendship Garden
	1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd.
	Houston, TX 77034

\$15 REGISTER HERE: <https://bit.ly/45BAWVd>

For questions email stephanie.gray@ag.tamu.edu



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.

HERB OF THE MONTH

French Marigold (*Tagetes lunulata*)

by Karen McGowan, Master Gardener

In consideration of this month's *Green Thumb* lecture topic, *Growing Roses in Texas*, for September we are profiling an herb that pairs nicely with roses and other garden items to help prevent pest invasions, French marigold.

Marigolds are a perennial favorite to organically manage common vegetable pests, and science is now beginning to prove what many gardeners have always maintained, that marigolds are an effective detractor to a wide range of bad bugs and crawling nuisances. Both French and African marigolds produce a toxin that kills soil-borne root-knot nematodes. Experienced gardeners speculate that the plant's pungent flowers repel a number of other garden pests, including mosquitoes and even rabbits. Native to both North and Central America, marigolds are an excellent working choice for pest prevention in the garden.

The 3 Different Types of Marigolds

Marigolds come in three types: (1) Signet marigolds are the smallest plants, producing minuscule flowers that rarely grow more than a foot high; (2) African marigolds boast the tallest stems and largest flowers, with some plants stretching three or four feet tall; while (3) French marigolds are somewhat bushier plants that grow up to about two feet in height. French marigolds generally tend to better manage wetter conditions than the others, hence making the latter selection for south Texas gardens preferable.

While African marigolds are best grown from small plants, French marigolds grow readily from seed. Although they come in a variety of colors, if you are looking to utilize French marigold for garden pest management the best variety is "orange flame," hands-down the most impressive marigold in the garden.

Orange Flame is an heirloom French cultivar that is as functional as it is beautiful. The burnt-orange petals frame a vibrant orange center, and their strong fragrance seems to keep pests at bay most effectively. While the color is distinctively attractive, whispering "autumn," the power of marigolds to repel

pests comes not from their flowers, but from a toxin that the plants excrete from their roots.

At The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, scientists have proven that both African marigolds and French marigolds are effective at fighting root-knot nematodes. The university study concluded that "most cultivars of African marigolds (*Tagetes erecta*) and French



French marigolds

marigolds (*T. patula*) are effective in reducing the most common root-knot nematode populations. The attractive flowering plants contain chemicals that kill nematodes."

The Department recommends that gardeners and farmers intercrop marigolds with susceptible plants in the garden in a strip-crop arrangement, or rotate blocks of marigolds throughout the garden from season to season. Marigolds can be planted in between rows of like crops or in the paths between beds to slow the spread of nematodes from one crop to another, but the real effect of marigolds as a biocontrol won't be felt until the following season. It's believed that nematodes are drawn to marigolds, and once in a close enough proximity to the marigold root system, nematodes are killed and their breeding cycle interrupted, decreasing the nematode population over time. An in-depth study by the University of Hawaii at Manoa found that marigolds produce several bioactive compounds, the most potent of which

cont'd on pg. 7

French Marigold, *cont'd from pg. 6*

– α -therthienyl – has devastating effects on root-knot nematodes. In regard to crawling and flying insects, the strong scent of marigold flowers is thought to repel a variety of pests, including aphids, cabbage worms, potato beetles, cucumber beetles, and squash bugs—just to name a few. With scientific evidence supporting marigold’s ability to repel unwelcome garden visitors, you can even make your own organic pest spray! If you’re feeling creative and ready to level up your organic pest-control efforts, you can make your own insecticide from marigold flowers. All you need to do is pick about a cup (250 mL) of fresh marigold flowers and blend the heads with two cups (500 mL) of water. Transfer the mixture to an airtight container and allow it to sit for two days. Strain the mixture through a cheesecloth to catch the solid particles, and the remaining liquid can be diluted with water to make a homemade spray. Add a few drops of liquid Castille soap to increase the spray’s sticking power, and you’re ready to tackle any bad bug that gets in your way!

French marigolds can thrive planted either directly in the ground or in pots, placed in well-drained soil and full sun. Care of French marigolds is relatively simple: once established, they need little care other than watering when it’s quite warm or dry, although container-grown plants will, of course, require more watering. Deadheading the spent blooms will also keep the plants tidier and encourage more flowering.

There are as well a few medicinal usages of French marigold. The entirety of the herb is aromatic, digestive, diuretic and sedative. It is used internally in the treatment of indigestion, colic, severe constipation, coughs and dysentery. Externally, it is used



French marigold

to treat sore eyes and rheumatism. The leaves are harvested as required for immediate use during the growing season, while the flowering plant can be dried and stored for later use.

Here’s to the hardiest herb-cum-pest squelcher, French marigold, and the happiest of fall gardens in 2023!

Citations:

<https://www.almanac.com/plant/marigolds>

<http://naturalmedicinalherbs.net/herbs/t/tagetes-patula=french-marigold.php>

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/flowers/marigold/french-marigold-growing.htm>

NATIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH

Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

by Robin Yates, Master Gardener

So, here we are, in September, and it has been a long, hotter than 'normal,' summer here in Houston. If you are like me, you are minimizing your exposure to the sunshine. But if you are like me then you also love to be outside, so you are looking for shade. It is time to plan how to improve the shaded areas of our yards for next year. The fall is a wonderful time to plant here in southeast Texas, for many reasons, not the least of which is the temperature moderates significantly, enabling us *Homo sapiens* to come out into the light of day again!

Last year I took Levels 1 & 2 of the Native Plant Landscaping Course (<https://npsot.org/our-work/class-schedule/>). One of the many important concepts I learned is the need for different layers in our landscape design. One layer that is widely overlooked in conventional suburban landscape design is that of understory, defined as plants that grow beneath canopy trees, yet above shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers. Considered shrubs or small trees, they are an important aspect of the natural environment, yet they are neglected and often totally absent from our conventional landscapes. The understory layer provides habitat, food, and protection for many wildlife species. It adds a sense of completeness and fills in a sense of place that only nature can provide.

One of my favorite native understory plants is Buttonbush, *Cephalanthus occidentalis*. Other common names include Honey Bells, Honey Balls, as well as Common Buttonbush. It is a multi-stemmed, deciduous shrub that typically grows from 6 to 12 feet tall, yet in full sun it can grow much taller. It loves moist surroundings, thriving along swamps, lakes, and riverbeds. It will grow in most soil types and can tolerate poor drainage. Its leaves are petiolate, in pairs of threes, with a glossy upper surface and dull below. Blooms are pink or white from June through September. Flowers are small and form dense spherical clusters or heads,

with an array of pistils extending beyond the white corollas. These odd blooms, after which the plant is named, then become masses of reddish nutlets that remain through the winter.

As Buttonbush blooms in midsummer, it attracts butterflies, bees, and other nectar-loving pollinators. One of its less used common names, Honey Balls, alludes to its use as a nectar source for beekeepers in the lower Mississippi valley! It is a larval host plant for many species of butterflies and moths. Birds, including ducks and waterfowl, consume its fruit and nuts throughout the year. This shrub or small tree added to your landscape is extremely beneficial to the ecosystem.

Indigenous peoples used the bark of Buttonbush to make concoctions for the relief of toothache, headache, inflammation and diarrhea. Yet, the plant contains a toxic substance Cephalathin, and it is regarded as a poison by the FDA, not to be ingested!

You will find an example of *C. occidentalis* in the shade beneath the Mexican Plum, *Prunus mexicana*, near the native plant landscaping bed at Genoa Friendship Gardens. It was

donated by Linda Pearson. Thank you, Linda! It is also in my front yard, and the photo you see here are of it. It is thriving next to a beautiful *Callicarpa americana*, American Beautyberry. Together they are the beginning of a native understory that I have added to the ubiquitous Crepe Myrtles, *Lagerstroemia* that were planted when my subdivision was built decades ago. Consider adding Buttonbush or another native understory to your yard this fall. With its added shade and benefits for wildlife, you and nature will be glad you did!



Buttonbush, *Cephalanthus occidentalis* in Robin's yard

Photo by Robin Yates

References:

https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=CEOC2
<https://xerces.org/blog/planting-for-pollinators-button-bush>
<https://www.leavesforwildlife.com/product-page/buttonbush- cephalanthus>
https://plants.usda.gov/DocumentLibrary/plantguide/pdf/pg_ceoc2.pdf

Plant a Native Pocket Prairie in your Own Back Yard!

by Margaret Pierce, Master Gardener

Many of us understand the importance of using native plants in our landscapes, but don't know how to get started. Planting just one native species in our yards is a good start, but planting a diverse collection of plants native to our region should be our goal.

Plants do not operate in a vacuum – they, along with the native bugs, bees, butterflies and other insects thrive when they operate symbiotically in their shared ecosystem. If they evolved together, then nature has enabled them to get the most from the resources that each offers, and when their ecosystem is in balance, all thrive. Accordingly, what we really should seek to create are our own well-functioning pocket prairies, in spite of the fact that we might be in the middle of a very urban environment. Our urban pocket prairies should contain plants with a variety of attributes – such as flowers with different bloom color, shape and time of bloom, plants that offer habitat, such as grasses, and plants that produce berries and seeds, and trees for cover. Other helpful components include a source of water, ground areas with leaf litter, and native trees.



Echinacea purpurea – Purple Coneflower

To get you started, here are some first steps:

1. Where to plant your pocket prairie

To get started, first determine where you will locate your native plants. Most native plants do best with sun – either full or part. Find a spot or spots in your yard that offer this. By the way, all of your natives do not need to be together – you can insert natives throughout your existing landscape rather than having dedicated beds if that works best for you.

2. Preparing your beds

Next you should prepare your planting area/s by pulling and discarding any visible weeds and other unwanted vegetation. You do not need to turn your soil – if you do so, you are exposing your seed bank to sunlight and so more weeds will germinate with vigorous tilling. For a particularly weedy area, or if you are converting an area with turf grass, additional measures will need to be taken, such as covering the area with cardboard or newspaper, and mulch, and waiting a couple of months for underlying weeds to die. You can also dig up the turf or use a sod cutter to remove it.

3. What to plant

Now comes the fun part – researching what to plant! There are some great resources to find species appropriate for our area: **Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center** – searchable by state, and by desired characteristics. <https://www.wildflower.org/plants/> **Audubon's Native Plant database** – searchable by zip code, and results include native birds supported by each native plant. <https://www.audubon.org/native-plants>

National Wildlife Federation Native Plant Finder – searchable by zip code and sorted by the number of butterflies and moths using each plant as a host plant. <https://nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/> **Coastal Prairie Conservancy** – has two lists – 9 Natives for Sun and 9 Natives for Shade with recommended native plants for our region. <https://www.coastalprairieconservancy.org/9-natives>

cont'd on pg. 10



Lupinus texensis – Texas Bluebonnet

Plant a Native Pocket Prairie in Your Own Back Yard, *cont'd from pg. 9*

It can be daunting to pare down your list to a manageable number of species to plant. To make it a bit easier, here are some native plants I have had success with in my yard in Houston.

Perennials to plant:

- Asclepias species* – Aquatic milkweed (*A. perennis*),
Butterfly milkweed (*A. tuberosa*)
- Callicarpa americana* – American Beautyberry
- Callirhoe involucrata* – Wine Cup
- Chasmanthium latifolium* – Inland Sea Oats
- Conoclinium coelestinum* – Blue Mistflower
- Echinacea purpurea* – Purple Coneflower
- Eryngium yuccifolium* – Rattlesnake Master
- Helianthus maximiliani* – Maximilian Sunflower
- Lantana urtiquoides* – Native Texas Lantana
- Malvaviscus arboreus var. drummondii* – Turk’s Cap
- Muhlenbergia capillaris* – Gulf Muhly
- Penstemon tenuis* – Gulf Penstemon
- Rivina humilis* – Pigeonberry
- Rudbeckia species – Texas coneflower (*R. texana*),
Giant coneflower (*R. maxima*)
- Salvia coccinea* – Scarlet Sage
- Salvia farinacea* – Mealy Cup Sage
- Schizachyrum scoparium* – Little Blue Stem
- Silphium simpsonii* – Simpson’s Rosinweed
- Solidago sempervirens* – Seaside Goldenrod
- Tradescantia occidentalis* – Prairie Spiderwort
- Vernonia missurica* – Missouri ironweed

Annual seeds to disperse:

- Centaurea americana* – American Basketflower
- Gaillardia pulchella* – Indian Blanket
- Lupinus texensis* – Texas Bluebonnet
- Rudbeckia hirta* – Black-eyed Susan



Conoclinium coelestinum – Blue Mistflower

Photo courtesy Norman G. Flaigg, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

4. When to plant

Fall is a great time to plant most native plant seeds. In nature, if a plant is a summer bloomer, it goes to seed in the fall – that is a great guide for when to plant a particular species. Likewise, fall is a great time to put your native plants in the ground, when temperatures are cooler and we get a little more rain. This gives plants a time to settle in and their roots to start growing. Spring works, too, before the heat of the summer.

5. Maintaining your Pocket Prairie

Be sure to weed and water as needed - but fertilizer is usually not necessary if planted in “native dirt”, but periodic applications of native mulch will help suppress weeds, retain moisture, and break down into beneficial organisms to support your plants. If your soil is comprised of the sandy loam that builders sometimes use, you will probably need to amend or replace it entirely as it does not have the nutrients that plants need to thrive. If you remove it, replace it with a native soil mix. If you are amending it, remove a couple of inches of the sandy loam, and add native compost/double ground mulch and work it into the soil. As always, having your soil tested (<https://soiltesting.tamu.edu/>) will provide useful information about nutritional status.



Rudbeckia species

R. texana – Texas coneflower
Photo courtesy Carolyn Fannon, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

During the summer cut back your flowering natives if they are leggy and when flowers are spent – you will get another pop of color in the fall from many of your plants. You can also do another cut in early spring to remove dead branches. However, grasses provide habitat, and should not be cut back until spring.

Your natives will probably “wander”, popping up in other parts of your yard as species go to seed and disperse, taking on more of a native prairie look. You can remove these plants or let them grow – I personally like the natural look.

Remember

- One native plant in your garden is good, but...
- Multiple native plants of many varieties is OUTSTANDING!
- A garden with a variety of bloom colors, shapes, and bloom times supports all our native insects, butterflies, bees, birds, etc.
- Plant your natives together or plant them among other plants in your yard – native critters will find them!

cont'd on pg. 11

Plant a Native Pocket Prairie in Your Own Back Yard, cont'd from pg. 10

Recommended Plants for Urban Pocket Prairies

Botanical Name	Common Name	BLOOM COLORS + CALENDAR												MAX. HEIGHT (INCHES)	MIN. HEIGHT (INCHES)	LIFE SPAN	WATER NEEDS	LIGHT NEEDS
		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC					
<i>Asclepia tuberosa</i>	Butterfly milkweed					Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange					60	36	P	Wet	Sun
<i>Asclepias perinis</i>	Aquatic milkweed					Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink					32	24	P	Wet	Sun/Part Sun
<i>Callicarpa americana</i>	American Beautyberry									Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	60	36	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun
<i>Callirhoe involucrata</i>	Wine Cup			Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink							24	12	P	Avg-Dry	Sun
<i>Centaurea americana</i>	American Basketflower					Purple	Purple							60	18	A	Avg-Dry	Sun/Part Sun
<i>Chasmanthium latifolium</i>	Inland Sea Oats					Green	Green	Green	Green	Orange	Orange	Orange		48	24	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun
<i>Conoclinium coelestinum</i>	Blue Mistflower						Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue				36	18	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun
<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	Purple coneflower			Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink					48	24	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun
<i>Eryngium yuccifolium</i>	Rattlesnake Master					Green	Green	Green	Green					72	48	P	Wet	Sun
<i>Gaillardia pulchella</i>	Indian Blanket					Orange		18	12	A	Avg-Dry	Sun						
<i>Helianthus maximiliani</i>	Maximilian sunflower						Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow		60	48	P	Avg	Sun
<i>Lantana urtioides</i>	Texas lantana			Orange		60	24	P	Avg-Dry	Sun								
<i>Lupinus texensis</i>	Bluebonnet			Blue	Blue	Blue								24	12	A	Dry	Sun
<i>Malvaviscus arboreus var. drummondii</i>	Turk's Cap					Red		120	60	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun						
<i>Monarda citriodora</i>	Lemon mint					Purple	Purple	Purple						36	12	A	Avg-Dry	Sun/Part Sun
<i>Muhlenbergia capillaris</i>	Gulf muhly									Pink				20	48	P	Avg-dry	Sun
<i>Penstemon tenuis</i>	Gulf Coast Penstemon				Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple						36	12	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun
<i>Rivina humilis</i>	Pigeonberry			Red		36	18	P	Avg -Wet	Part Sun								
<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Black-eyed Susan					Yellow		36	12	A	Avg	Sun/Part Sun						
<i>Rudbeckia maxima</i>	Giant Coneflower			Yellow		84	36	P	Avg -Wet	Sun/Part Sun								
<i>Rudbeckia texana</i>	Texas Coneflower					Yellow		48	20	P	Avg -Wet	Sun/Part Sun						
<i>Salvia coccinea</i>	Scarlet sage		Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red		36	12	P/A	Avg	Sun/Part Sun
<i>Salvia farinacea</i>	Mealy Blue Sage				Blue		36	24	P	Avg	Sun							
<i>Schizachyrum scoparium</i>	Little Blue Stem							Green	Green	Green	Green	Green		24	60	P	Avg-Dry	Sun/Part Sun
<i>Silphium simpsonii</i>	Simpson rosinweed						Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow		60	36	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun
<i>Solidago sempervirens</i>	Seaside goldenrod							Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange		72	36	P	Dry	Sun
<i>Tradescantia occidentalis</i>	Prairie Spiderwort				Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue					24	6	P	Dry	Sun
<i>Vernonia missurica</i>	Missouri ironweed							Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple		72	48	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun



Callicarpa americana – American Beautyberry



Helianthus maximiliani – Maximilian Sunflower
 Photo courtesy Sandy Smith, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Prepping for Fall

Article and photos by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

This summer has been another scorcher for Texas. Last year we had 16 days of 100 plus degree weather. So far this year we have had 17 days of 100 plus degree temps. My plants are miserable. The death toll continues to rise and no funerals will be held. Most of my plants are in pots and they need daily watering. The lizards love me. Nearly all of my mint has died. I have killed five mint varieties so far. I keep placing them in the same spot and I now realize that maybe that spot is getting too much sun. Slow learner. The only surviving mint is in a place where it gets some morning sun and filtered afternoon sun. That mint is doing fine.



Mint

I went out of town for two days and I deliberately overwatered my plants hoping they would survive. I watered heavily the evening before and again early the next morning before I left. When I returned it looked as though two of the mint plants in the sunny spot drowned. How ungrateful.

This is the time to get your fall vegetable beds ready. Yes, rip out the tomato plants. They are just forgotten corpses left to rot in the sun. If you're an optimist, you can hope for a second fall crop from your pepper plants. Don't forget to amend your soil. Fall gardens have several advantages: cooler weather (we hope), fewer bugs, and a longer growing season (depending on when our cold weather sets in). Every *Urban Dirt* has a planting schedule included so please refer to it when starting your fall vegetable garden. It has shaded areas to let you know when to plant seeds vs vegetable transplants. It also lists optimal growing times as well as marginal growing times.

For now, I must be content with the few stragglers I have left. I know some of them may revive in the fall. A few have thrived with the heat - all of the basil, my Texas native star hibiscus, the rosemary, my chewed up cannas (thanks to the snails), that

darned Goji plant I hate, and my newest acquisition, a Himalayan celosia amaranth. The celosia is an annual and I don't care for annuals or celosias, but this was a new introduction so I bought it on a whim. The color is fantastic. The stalk is fuchsia colored and the leaves are variegated with green and a fuchsia-red color. That plant is so striking you can see it from the street. It's a show stopper. I still have seeds left so I may plant more in the spring.



Himalayan Celosia Amaranth

The plants that are doing well are those that were moved under the carport. It's a little crowded under there now. Those



along the edges get morning light along with a few hours of southern sun and they are happy. My lone mint plant looks good. The white salvia is blooming. My abutilon looks okay. Surprisingly, my black turmeric plants are looking nice- they're in better shape than the regular turmeric plant. I'm most impressed by my parsley! It's a giant Italian

White salvia

cont'd on pg. 13



A Tonic for Your Heat Stressed Plants - From Angela Chandler

Article by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

I know I've printed this before, but in case you've missed it, this is Angela's pick-me-up drink for thirsty, stressed plants.

- 5 gallons of water
- 2/3 cup liquid seaweed
- 2/3 cup Epsom salt
- 1 Tablsp. Super Thrive™

Water plants well the day before application day. Apply mixture to the root zone of your plants. Shrubs may use ½ to 1 gallon, other plants will need less. If you use it weekly on container plants, dilute it by half. You should notice a change within a few days.

Prepping for Fall, *cont'd from pg. 12*

parsley I have in a small pot. I grew it from seed and it's happy under the carport. I have never had parsley live this long through the summer. I think it's a keeper. With a little luck all of them will make it through fall. I'm sure you have some plants that are doing "borderline well."

It's not too late to add a few flowers into the mix if you want some color for fall. Bovvila.com has several recommendations for flowers that



Black tumeric



Giant Italian parsley

can be planted now to provide fall color in your garden. Black eyed Susans attract pollinators, are drought resistant and should bloom until November. For a shock of blue, cornflowers (*Centaurea cyanus*) are annuals that are low maintenance. Keep them contained by deadheading. Marigolds (*Tagetes erecta*) can be grown as a companion plant in your vegetable garden.

Experiment with color. Blue cornflowers mixed with marigolds or black eyed Susans are a beautiful combination.

Be bold!

In the meantime, take care while gardening in this heat. Early morning or late afternoon hours are best. Please avoid gardening during the middle of the day, especially if you are a heart patient. Stay hydrated. Water alone is not sufficient. You need to replace the electrolytes also.



Abutilon biltmore ballgown

My suggestion for fall gardening - go to one of our plant sales! We have some coming up in September and October - <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-sales/>. The West Side Fall in-person plant sale is September 23rd and the GFG Fall sale will open on the website October 1st through 19th. To order go to hcmga.tamu.edu/shop/. The GFG plant pickup day and in-person sale will be October 21st. I hope to see you at one of our sales.



September Gardening Calendar

by Karen Shook, Master Gardener

Apologies for stating the obvious, but as I am writing this in mid - August, it is miserably hot and dry. While September is historically cooler than August, the forecasts continue to say temperatures will be above average for the next several months (Note, I use the past 25 years for “average”). Let’s hope they are wrong. In the

Perennials and Ornamental Grasses

- Some spring flowering perennials can be divided (daylilies, calla lilies and irises). Others should wait until it is a bit cooler (Shasta daisy, gaillardia, cannas).
- When the weather cools a bit, celebrate fall by planting chrysanthemums for fall color. Fertilize every 2 - 3 weeks until flower buds appear, then once a week until buds show color.
- You can also plant perennials, ornamental grasses, groundcovers, and vines. Prepare the soil first! Fertilize the new plants. Established plants can be fertilized in September, then pause until February.

Annuals

- Start seeds for cool season like snapdragons, stock, calendula, alyssum. They will typically be ready for transplant in six to eight weeks. You can start the hardening process once two sets of leaves appear.
- Pansies can be planted now for color into spring.

Bulbs

- Refrigerate tulip and hyacinth bulbs by late September to give adequate chill time for December planting.

Roses

- Roses (other than once blooming) that were not pruned in late August, should be pruned in early Sept. Reduce size by 1/3 (or to desired height) making cuts just above a bud. Remove dead wood, diseased canes, twiggy growth. Fertilize and water after pruning. Continue regular fungicide spray schedule.

meantime, I’ve been using my indoor time studying options for rain dance moves.

I know you are keeping your beds mulched. Remember the mantra, check for “too wet, too dry, just right” and water accordingly. Remember a good, deep watering is better than frequent, light watering.

Shrubs

- Check soil acidity. Many plants prefer slightly acidic soil and Harris County tends toward alkaline. Acidify as needed especially for acid loving azaleas and camellias.
- Red tip photinias sheared early in the month should give a nice show with colorful new growth in cooler weather.
- Prepare beds for planting shrubs in October.
- Mid-to-early fall is a good time to take semi hardwood cuttings for plants you want to save in case of severe winter weather or plants you just want to share.

Natives

- Plant bluebonnet, Indian paintbrush seeds in early fall. Scarified bluebonnet seeds germinate more quickly. Rake them gently into the ground.

Edibles (vegetables, herbs, berries, fruits)

- It is time to plant most cool weather vegetables (after weather cools a bit, but not so late in September that we have a freeze before veggies are ready to harvest). Check your seed packet to estimate timing.
- It is a good time to plant strawberries if you can find them. Fertilize the soil prior to planting.
- See the following link for recommended planting times: [*Harris County Vegetable Planting Guide*](#)

Trees

- Light pruning of lower branches and some inner branches may be needed to let the sun through to lawns and plants below the trees.
- September is often an active month in hurricane season. Make sure you don’t have any dead branches waiting to fall.

Citations:

A Garden Book for Houston. 2nd ed., River Oaks Garden Club, Houston, Tx 1968.
 Groom, Dale, and Dan Gill. Texas Gardener's Handbook. Cool Springs Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2012.
 Richter, Robert. Month-by-Month Gardening Texas. Cool Springs Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2014.
Weather.gov/wrh/climate

Getting Down to Earth

Article and photos by Pam Longley, Master Gardener

News from Genoa Friendship Gardens

The grass around GFG is toasting brown like so many yards in Houston, but, joyfully, this morning I felt Fall in the air with a little time in the high 70s and low humidity. It gave me hope that the worst of the summer heat is going to be behind us soon. And, with the Fall, comes the best growing season of all. But, the nurseries would have us believe that Spring is best because that's when they always stock many more plants for sale. We MGs need to help change this idea by educating the public about the joys of working in cooler weather with fewer bugs and more rain, giving plants a much better chance of survival than in Spring. In Spring the weather can get hot early and very quickly, like it did this year. So please talk to people about your experiences with fun fall gardening whenever you are volunteering as an MG or working in your own garden, especially promoting perennials and native plants for lower maintenance and saving money.

The Southeast Online Fall Plant Sale at GFG will "go live" October 1. The site will be open through October 19 and the plant pick-up date is October 21. We are still trying to fill the profit gap that was caused by our inability to sell citrus trees earlier this year. We will be offering other fruit trees, perennials and herbs. Whenever possible, we will be propagating from our own gardens to save expenses. We now have Juliet tomato plants growing in

the greenhouse, planted from seed, to bump up to gallon size to entice customers who might be leery of planting tomatoes in the Fall. Also in the greenhouse are "42 Days" tomatoes.

Doug McCleod procured the seeds that are aptly named for its extraordinarily short mature date.

Our Master Gardener interns have cleared out the choking-on-weeds Herb Garden and it is being solarized until cool weather comes. Then it will be refreshed with new herb plants. It has been a great project for the MGs to take a big mess and turn it back into the charming space the rocks and garden art once surrounded. We so appreciate seeing their happy faces every week.

From a generous vendor, GFG was gifted hundreds of seed packages consisting of a wide variety of flowers and vegetables (packed for 2023). After sorting through the packages, the seeds will be used in the GFG gardens, in *Growing with Plants and Nature* youth programs and offered to visitors at our *Ask A Master Gardener* booths. Plus, there are plenty for us to take home and try our hands at propagation! That is one of those benefits of working at GFG - access to seeds and leftover plants from sales at discounted prices.

cont'd on pg. 16



Dianne Lawrence planting radish plugs in the greenhouse



The GFG pond is blooming!

Getting Down to Earth - Genoa Friendship Gardens, cont'd from pg. 15

As seen at GFG



Noe Tristan and Doug McLeod picking okra



Tree frog on white eggplant

Photo by Noe Tristan



Chinese Bitter Melon in the Ethnic Vegetable Garden

cont'd on pg. 17

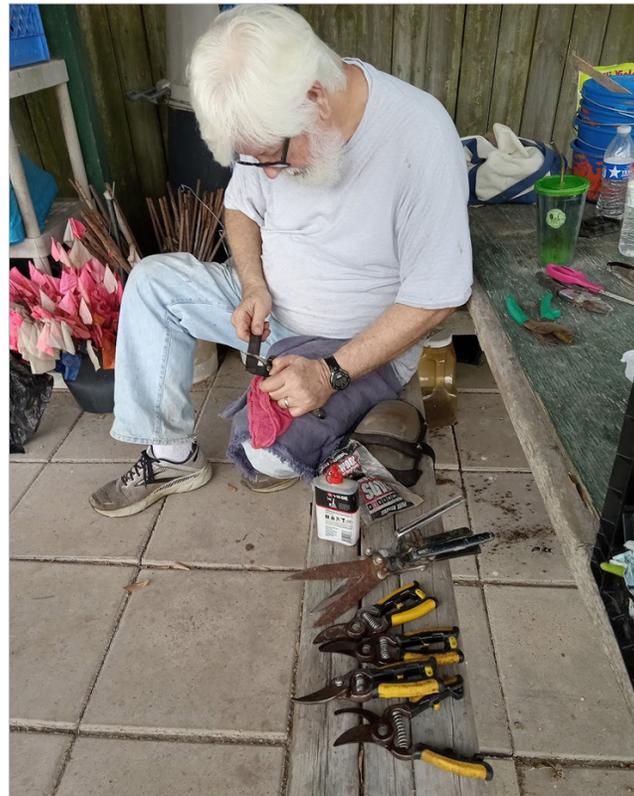
Getting Down to Earth, cont'd from pg. 16

Article and photos by Dale Hudson, Master Gardener

Christ the Good Shepherd Garden - Spring, TX

Gardeners are typically early morning people, but I feel safe in saying that 100 % of August gardeners in Harris County this year have become early risers. At the CGS Garden we have shifted our starting time to 7:30 a.m. and the smart ones on the crew try to arrive by 7:00 a.m. We vegetable gardeners like to half-kiddingly tell folks that we have three growing seasons in Houston; namely Fall, Winter, and Spring. No kidding, I can name on one hand the veggies that thrive in +100 ° F temperatures day after day.

That being said, our okra is loving it; so is the eggplant. Our sweet potatoes are telling us to just keep the irrigation coming and they will create their own shade and not complain. The pepper beds are saying hot is okay, but there is a case to be



Wes Carr, a volunteer at CGS Garden, ensures the veggie harvest goes smoothly with sharpened and oiled tools



On the hottest, most miserable day of summer, Mother Nature is still beautiful if one pauses a moment to look.

made that too much of anything can be a problem. The cucumbers tried to hang on, but sadly the sun won. The herb beds look baked, except for the purple basil which seems as happy as ever. The surprise of the summer is a clump of zinnias. I won't try to explain how zinnias wound up in the herb bed, but they have exploded with blooms and single-handily are nurturing all the neighborhood butterflies.

Let's switch thoughts to Fall gardening. Over several years of "learning by doing" we have come to appreciate the great opportunity we have in our area for Fall gardening. We have awakened to the fact that almost everything that we typically grow in the Spring can also be grown in the Fall. There are even advantages. Maybe the biggest is the absence of pests.

cont'd on pg. 18

Getting Down to Earth - Christ the Good Shepherd Garden, cont'd from pg. 17

Good example is squash vine borers. They are uncontrollable in the Spring but hardly show up in the Fall. Same is true for the

quasi-scientific classification, leaf munchers. In the Spring they get more hungry as the weather heats up, but in the Fall they tend to disappear as a chill in the air arrives.

The CGS Garden team leaders are huddling already here in the heat of summer to plan the Fall plantings. Options on the menu include the brassicas, carrots, beets, green beans, turnips, lettuce, radishes, collard, kale, summer and winter squash, and tomatoes. I will speak for the entire volunteer crew at CGS when I say, we are ready for that first cold front.



Bridgette Laurin, a newly graduated MG intern, is already harvesting and trimming purple basil at the CGS Garden.



Volunteer Ken Bache, and MG Jack Goodwin remove the over-growth of sweet potato vines at CGS Garden.

Growing with Plants and Nature

Growing with Plants and Nature offers children and their families opportunities for learning about gardening and nature through hands-on activities and lessons focused on plants and the creeping, crawling, and flying creatures with whom the plants share the natural environment.

We provide programs to community organizations, plant sales, fairs, farmer's markets, and other events.



Towne Lake Farmer's Market

In the past month, the Growing with Plants and Nature Committee was fortunate to have Master Gardener Interns and current students contribute at our community team activities.

We had an opportunity to say thank you to the Trini Mendenhall Center. Interns took the lead in providing a planting and nature craft at the request of the Center. Parents and children had the opportunity to make and take home a "Chia garden gnome", butterfly fan, and seed planted into a compostable, repurposed empty toilet paper roll.

The following week, we presented a session at the LGEG Head Start training program for teachers. A focus was on inexpensive supplies available by reusing and repurposing materials easily collected. We showed many of the projects and activities we have developed and offered in our programs over the years. Instructions to enable the teachers to pass on these activities to colleagues and children were included.

We were pleased that our participation in the Master Gardener job fair will provide us with new team members who we know will bring energy and new ideas.

Our final activity was our traditional sharing of space with AAMG at the Towne Lake Farmer's Market. It is gratifying that many families return to our table each month, eager to make a new project.



Trini Mendenhall program: Master Gardeners Vicki Brooks, Janet Leininger, Noah Otote-Ingram, Julee Jackson, Rita Whipple, Pam Jackson and Pat Whipple.



LGEG program: Master Gardener Coordinator, Stephanie Gray, Master Gardeners Pat and Rita Whipple, Jasmine Carey, Ex-tension Agent, Master Gardeners Linda Perse and Liz Pozzi.



Master Gardener session at the LGEG Head Start training program for teachers.

'BUG' OF THE MONTH

Zigzag Spiders

Article by Debra Caldwell, Advanced Master Gardener: Entomology

The Zigzag Spider (*Argiope aurantia*) has many common names including Zipper Spider, Writing Spider, Yellow and Black Garden Spider, Golden Orb Weaver, Yellow Argiope, Corn Spider, and others. They are members of the Araneidae family, the orb weavers. The genus name, *Argiope*, means 'silver faced'. As shown in the ventral view, the cephalothorax is covered in silvery hairs. The specific *aurantia* means 'golden', referring to the gold markings on the abdomen.

These big, beautiful spiders usually come to our attention in late summer when they weave large circular webs that stretch between attachment points.

Females have bodies that are about an inch long compared to males that are a third of their size. Add a couple of inches of legs to both ends of the body and you have a very big spider! I found the females in my photos in the eaves of the aloe greenhouse at the John Fairey Conservation Garden. Even though I knew they were there, I would get busy tending the aloes, and then be surprised as came face to face with one of them! Luckily, they aren't aggressive or harmful to humans. If they do bite, it feels like a bee sting and doesn't bother people who aren't allergic to the venom.

Unlike most spiders which have two claws on each foot, the Argiope spider has three claws that help them spin complex webs. In the middle of the web, they weave a distinctive zigzag pattern. There is controversy about the purpose of the zigzag, called a stabilimentum. Some scientists believe that it helps stabilize the web while others think it may keep birds from flying into the web. You might be surprised to learn that the large, elaborate web is consumed by the spider and recreated every day.

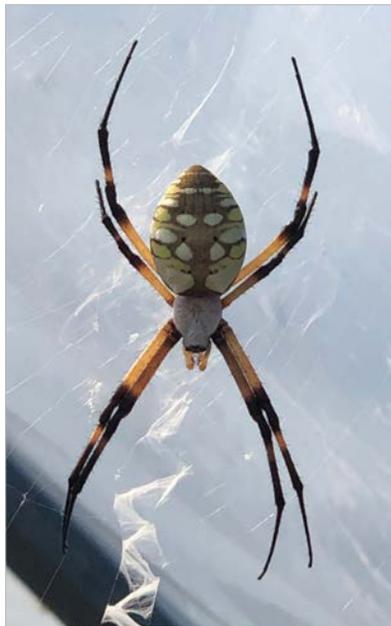
Females mate once a year in late summer or early fall. A little male finds a female, builds a small web in the female's web, and then vibrates the strands to attract the female. The hapless little guy dies spontaneously during the mating process! The story isn't as sad as it sounds because he blocks other males who might try to mate with the female, gets to pass on his genes, and may even provide a protein snack.

After mating, the female creates one to three balloon shaped egg sacs and lays hundreds to over a thousand eggs inside. Females guard their egg sacs as long as they can until they die in the first hard frost. The baby



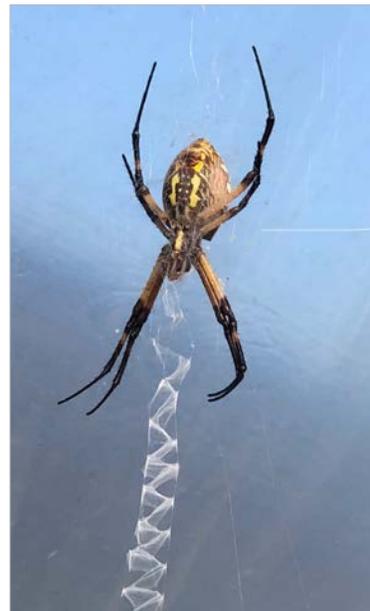
Argiope aurantia

Photo by Caroline O'Hara



Argiope aurantia (ventral)

Photo by Debra Caldwell



Argiope aurantia (dorsal)

Photo by Debra Caldwell

spiders hatch but remain dormant in the sacs until spring. Many are eaten by parasites and predators such as birds. Hopefully, 'my' spiderlings were less at risk inside the greenhouse.

The species' range extends from southern Canada, through the continental United States, Mexico, and Central America to Costa Rica. They are 'good guys' in the garden consuming many flying pests as well as the occasional bee or other insect that flies into their webs.

References

<https://extensionentomology.tamu.edu/insects/black-and-yellow-argiope-zipper-spider-corn-spider/>
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1809950/pdf/14667377.pdf>

Fall Vegetable Gardening

Article by Olina Raney, Master Gardener Intern

As Harris County residents look forward to cooler weather after the hot summer months, extension agents and master gardeners suggest considering starting a fall vegetable garden. There are many benefits of fall plantings. Milder days, cooler nights, lower humidity, better chance of rain, fewer pests and longer growing season and harvest times are some of these benefits. Also, as the soil is warmer, the plant roots have time to get established to survive through the winter and avoid transplant shock in the spring. When vegetables are grown in the home, the fresh vegetables taste better as they can be eaten soon after harvesting. Also, the gardener has control of pest management practices. Its also good exercise and a way for families to come together growing the vegetables and harvesting the produce. This article on growing vegetables known to thrive in Harris County, Texas fall gardens is much derived from Paul Winski's talk referenced on the next page.

Keys to Success

1. *Location* - Choose a sunny location, with sunlight at least eight hours. Some cool season crops can grow with less sunlight with morning sun and afternoon shade. It is best to choose a location which limits competition from other plants, shade from buildings, fence etc. 1. If the garden is visible from inside the home it will provide a soothing effect when the garden can be viewed. 2. *Proper soil preparation* – Use good quality soil with good drainage. Adding compost improves the soil, as the soil in our region is typically of the clay variety.

Raised beds can be helpful using stone or cinder blocks with holes or rot resistant redwood or cedar wood. Avoid treated lumber. Raised bed should be less than 4 feet across, 8 to 12 inches high or up to 3 feet high.

Fall vegetables can also be grown in containers such as a 10 or 12 inch or larger container with drainage holes at the bottom of the container. Vegetables such as radishes or lettuce can easily be grown in such containers.

3. *Varieties* – Select the right varieties for the planting zone. Varieties recommended for the area are listed on the *Vegetable Varieties for Harris County Fact Sheet* provided in the References..

4. *Plant at the right time* – The *Vegetable Garden Planting Guide for Harris County* provides first and last freeze dates. Count back for seed sowing date for transplanting in time for the planting window.

Earlier planting allows root systems to establish generally leading to stronger plants with better disease and pest resistance.

5. *Seeds or Transplants* – When starting plants from seed, select proper varieties, use a sterile potting mix, clean containers and provide light, If using a plant light, 14 to 16 hours of light will reduce plant leggedness. Fertilize regularly with a soluble fertilizer after 4 weeks. When using transplants, choose plants at the right growth stage. Look for healthy, creamy white roots. Foliage should have no spotting, lesions, burned edges or insects. There should be no blooms or fruit set when buying plants. Overall, the transplant should have a healthy appearance.

6. *Planting* – Harden the plants 4 to 7 days before planting. Ideally plants in late afternoon or on an overcast day to minimize stress to the plant. Prepare the planting hole. Provide a starter nutrient boost such as adding one tablespoon of 10-10-10 fertilizer at bottom of hole. Thin seedlings by following instructions on the seed packet.

7. *Mulching* the vegetable beds helps with soil moisture retention, regulates the soil temperature and provides weed control. The types of mulch include compost, leaves, pine needles, grass clippings and straw.

8. *Fertilizer* recommended is a balanced product such as 10-10-10 with equal ratios of N, P and K. Nitrogen (N) helps with the greening of the plant. Phosphorus (P) helps the root system, blooming and fruiting. Potassium (K) aids movement of water and nutrients aiding proper plant growth. Two types of fertilizers are available: Soluble fertilizer which is available to the plant immediately and slow-release fertilizers which are absorbed continuously by the plant over time. It is important not to over fertilize as it could burn the foliage.

9. *Water* as needed with good quality water. Less watering is required as compared to summer crops. Drip irrigation puts water near the roots where the plants need it. Overhead watering is best done in early morning hours to reduce potential pests and diseases. Addition of compost holds moisture and improves drainage.

10. *Harvest* early morning for optimum quality. Rinse before storing. At peak, the produce has best flavor and nutrients. Pick frequently to encourage more blooms and new growth. If pesticides are used, read label for how many days not to harvest after application.

cont'd on pg. 22

Fall Vegetable Gardening, *cont'd from pg. 21*

Cool Season Vegetables

Broccoli and Cabbage are the easiest to grow among Brassica family. Transplants are best to put out in mid-September to October with 12 to 15 inch spacing in full sun. When you see heads begin to form, side dress with 2 to 4 tablespoons of balanced fertilizer. Once you harvest a head of broccoli, side shoots will grow heads which can later be harvested.

Brussel Sprouts can take 3 to 4 months to grow. These are cold tolerant. Start with transplants spaced 2 feet apart. Need full sun.

Cabbage, space 1.5 to 2 feet apart. Long crop takes about 5 months to form. Needs fertilizer on a regular basis, 2 to 4 tablespoons of fertilizer especially nitrogen every 3 to 4 weeks.



Cauliflower, space 2 feet apart. One head per plant. 2 to 4 tablespoons fertilizer every 3 weeks. Pull up the leaves around the head when 2 to 3 inches in diameter to cover the head, and secure with a piece of twine. This keeps the head white.

Collard Greens, Kale, Swiss Chard are quick growing. Can start from seed or transplant. Space 1 to 1.5 feet apart. Use young tender leaves for salads.

At Genoa Friendship Gardens and Christ the Good Shepherd in Spring 2021, Master Gardeners grew Kale & Swiss Chard. They were seeded October 21, 2020. First harvest was January 4, 2021, last harvest was May 26, 2021. Frost blankets were used during the freeze and did not lose any plants. Kale varieties grown were Black Magic, Redbor, Winterbor, Red Russian, White Russian and Scarlet.



Swiss Chard Trial at Genoa Friendship Gardens grown by Harris County Master Gardeners.

Swiss Chard varieties grown were Rhubarb Supreme, Charbell, Bright Lights, Barese, Fordhook Giant, Peppermint and Rhubarb. All seeds were purchased from Johnny's Seeds. These plants make for a lovely edible landscape.

Beets prefer cool soil. Plant in October then again in December. Soak seeds overnight. Beets do well in partial sun. Thin plants 4 to 6 inches apart. Harvest small, tennis ball size, for best quality. Beet greens are edible.

Carrots can be planted from October to December. Sow weekly, thin planting to 4-inch centers. Seed needs light to germinate.



Fertilize regularly with 2 tbsp. when tops are 4 inches and again when tops are 5 to 6 inches. Shorter carrots do better than longer ones. The carrot cultivar trial included Atomic Red, Sweetness III, Tender Snax, Sugar Snax, Purple Haze.

Radishes can be planted from October to February, thinning as needed, tolerates partial shade, harvest in 4 to 5 weeks.



Lettuce seeds grow when soil is 60 to 68°F, can refrigerate for germination. Seed can be raw or pelleted, with latter having better germination. Leafy varieties perform better than head varieties. Harvesting outer leaves allows plant to keep growing.

Spinach can be planted October through March. Soak seeds before planting. Space 4 to 6 inches apart. Mulch well to keep leaves off the ground. Harvest when 6 to 8 inches tall or harvest leaves as needed. Bloomsdale variety found to be a good producer.

Onions perform well in this area. Plant seeds in early November or plant sets in January. Needs full sun. Sweet onions grow best in low sulfur soil so it is good to have soil test done. When plants have 5 to 6 leaves, all small amounts of fertilizer frequently, 0.5 cup per 10-foot row.

References:

Fall Vegetable Gardening by Paul Winski, Harris County Extension Agent, YouTube, August 2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbbZwbYXF5>
Vegetable Garden Planting Dates for Harris County, Extension: <https://harris.agrilife.org/files/2011/05/VegPlantingChart.pdf>
Vegetable Varieties for Harris County Fact Sheet: <https://harris.agrilife.org/files/2011/05/vegvariety.pdf>

A Visit to Mercer Botanic Gardens

Article and photos by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener

“You have to go to Mercer”, our friend Bonnie told us repeatedly, “It is beautiful. You will love it.”

Charles and Thelma Mercer bought 14.5 acres along Cypress Creek in 1949 and lived and gardened there for 25 years. Mrs. Mercer wrote a letter to Harris County officials in 1974 recommending they purchase the property with one stipulation – that it be used as a garden and horticulture facility. The rest, as they say, is history.

Now, when you walk in the gate¹ you are welcomed by a life-size bronze statue of Mrs. Thelma Loraine Mercer (1902-2000) sculpted by Edd Hayes. The statue was unveiled at the 40th anniversary celebration in January 2014.²

Today the gardens span 180 acres divided by Aldine Westfield Road. Precinct 3 maintains the 60 acre gardens on the east side, and the west side has walking trails through the arboretum, picnic



Mrs. Mercer, with rake in hand and her cat Jinks



Iris collection on right and crinums on left side of walkway

facilities and play areas. Garden beds are separated by wide walkways and contain daylilies, blooming gingers and other tropicals, endangered species, azaleas, camellias, palms, Texas native plants, vegetables, herbs, frequently changing gorgeous floral displays and more. Plants are easily identified by signage with the common name, scientific name, plant family, and origin of the plant.

Fairy gardens and whimsical structures dot the Children’s Garden. There are bog plants, roses,

plants for color, plants for healing, plants for pollinators, plants for shade, and even plants with a nod to Shakespeare. The Storey Lake garden features one of the largest public collections



Fairy garden display in the Children’s Garden

of crinums in Texas and a vast collection of Louisiana iris. Sit a spell and watch the turtles in the lake before moving on to the walking trails in undeveloped natural areas or along the creek.

According to the garden’s brochure³, the gardens contain more than 10,000 cataloged, researched, and displayed plants native to many parts of the world. In addition, Mercer is a designated Center for Plant Conservation research and demonstration site⁴. The garden’s mission is to establish and maintain a versatile botanical facility for the greater Houston and Gulf Coast region that serves the public, horticultural industry, and scientific community.⁵



Pollinator friendly lantana

Despite Bonnie’s frequent urgings, I was hesitant to go to Mercer simply

cont’d on pg. 24

A Visit to Mercer Botanic Gardens, cont'd from pg. 23



View of Storey Lake and pavilion

because of the distance (roughly 30 miles and almost an hour's drive from our house). What finally convinced us to go was the opportunity years later to get volunteer service hours as Master Gardeners on a Saturday morning, answering gardening questions and handing out information to the public. We have been back several times since then, to volunteer and also just to walk through the gardens, admire the beauty and take photos. We are not alone in that aspect – Mercer is one of the top locations in Houston for taking photos to celebrate graduation, engagement, quinceanera, birthdays and other occasions.

The gardens were heavily damaged by floods in 2016 and I remember seeing photos of it covered by silt from the creek. Hurricane Harvey caused 10-12 feet of floodwaters to overflow in 2017 and the gardens were closed for several months. Mrs. Mercer's statue was covered in eight feet of water. Storey Lake and the

Creekside Ramble walking trails reopened in 2021 and the visitor center reopened in January 2023. The Baldwin Boettcher Library onsite is now undergoing renovations. The old greenhouses have been relocated and there are hints of expansion, something to look forward to.

Bonnie was right. It is beautiful and I love it. Why did we wait so long to go? There is always something in bloom all year and something new to see at Mercer Botanic Gardens. So, go, and go frequently!

Visit all our wonderful public gardens in Harris County and say a silent thank you for those visionaries like Mrs. Thelma Mercer who have made our part of the world more beautiful.



Garden sculpture with seasonal color



Portion of the ginger garden



*Detail of Chinese Snowball, *Viburnum macrocephalum*, Caprifoliaceae (Honeysuckle) family, from China*

¹ Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Road, Humble TX. Open daily except some holidays. Admission is free. A pdf map is at this link: <https://www.pct3.com/Portals/45/Documents/MBG/Mercer%20Botanic%20Gardens.pdf>

² <https://www.chron.com/neighborhood/humble/news/article/Mercer-Arboretum-celebrates-40-years-9541877.php>

³ https://www.pct3.com/Portals/45/Documents/MBG/Brochure15.875x18-Visitor%20Map-MercerBotanicGardens_g3_WITH%20BLEEDS.pdf

⁴ <https://www.publicgardens.org/about-public-gardens/gardens/mercer-botanic-gardens>

⁵ <https://www.pct3.com/MBG>

Green Thumb 2023 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**
Got questions? Go to hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/

Second Monday, 10:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.
Houston Community College @Home Gardening Series
Register in advance to receive the link: hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops
Second Monday of each month

January 9 – <i>Soil and Food Web</i>	June 12 – <i>Pollinator Gardening</i>
February 13 – <i>Spring Vegetable Gardening</i>	July 10 – <i>Fall Vegetable Gardening</i>
March 20 – <i>Benefits of Growing Native Plants</i>	August 14 – <i>Exploring Ethnic Vegetables</i>
April 10 – <i>Tips for Great Lawns</i>	September 11 – <i>Growing Roses in Texas</i>
May 8 – <i>Gardening with Less Water</i>	October 9 – <i>Trees and Tree Care</i>

Third Tuesday, 11:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
Harris County Public Library Facebook Live
No reservation required – facebook.com/harriscountypub/events/
Third Tuesday of each month

January 17 – <i>Soil and Food Web</i>	June 20 – <i>Pollinator Gardening</i>
February 21 – <i>Spring Vegetable Gardening</i>	July 18 – <i>Fall Vegetable Gardening</i>
March 21 – <i>Benefits of Growing Native Plants</i>	August 15 – <i>Exploring Ethnic Vegetables</i>
April 18 – <i>Tips for Great Lawns</i>	September 19 – <i>Growing Roses in Texas</i>
May 16 – <i>Gardening with Less Water</i>	October 17 – <i>Trees and Tree Care</i>



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.





Ask A Master Gardener Online

by the AAMGO Committee

Q: Which type of Honeysuckle, passion fruit, dogwood tree and redbud tree can I grow in Katy Texas? I know that some Honeysuckle is invasive along with the passion fruit vine. What Dogwood tree and Redbud will survive this kind of over 100-degree heat for 3 months plus?

A: Thank you for your question regarding some plant and tree choices for your landscape. There are native versions of all of these that can do well in our area, provided certain growing conditions are present.

Honeysuckle

The aggressive type of honeysuckle that you may be thinking of is *Lonicera Japonica chinensis*, referred to as Japanese Honeysuckle. In some areas it may be considered invasive, but we usually refer to it as an aggressive grower. A honeysuckle that is much more suited to our area and behaves in a more mannered way is *Lonicera sempervirens*, or Coral Honeysuckle. This page on [Coral Honeysuckle](#), from Texas A & M, describes this plant well:

In East Texas coral honeysuckle frequents stream banks, woods and thickets. It is wide ranging from Connecticut to Florida, west through the south and midwest to Nebraska. It is a smooth, twining evergreen vine bearing dark, shiny green leaves which are white on the lower surface. The upper pair of leaves are fused together, just below the flower cluster. The tubular or trumpet shaped corolla occurs in whorls of four to six blossoms. They are usually red outside and orange inside, or rarely, all orange or yellow. Red to green twining stems fade to grey with a shreddy texture when mature. Clusters of red berries mature in September to October. Ornamentally, coral honeysuckle is well suited to climb on a fence or trellis, it is evergreen through most of Texas, and often blooms in January and sporadically throughout the growing season to attract pollinating hummingbirds. There are many named cultivars. It is not nearly as aggressive as Japanese honeysuckle which is on many noxious weed lists.

This plant should be readily available at our local nurseries, particularly those that specialize in plants native to our area. Another plant to consider, particularly since you are in the far western part of the county, is *Lonicera albiflora*, or White Honeysuckle. The [Lonicera albiflora](#) page from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is very informational.

Passion Fruit

There are many cultivars for passion fruit, but our native vine, *Passiflora incarnata L.*, is a reliable and hardy choice. The vines of this beautiful native can grow considerably when they are in a spot that suits them. I have seen passion flower vines reach the top of two-story houses and make their way up tall pine trees with ease. However, that growth can easily be curbed by regular maintenance. There is no guarantee that they will survive a very deep or prolonged freeze. Some will return from the roots while some will succumb, but that is unpredictable. Their yellow fruits should appear at the end of summer or early fall. This [Passiflora incarnata](#) page from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center offers helpful information. Also, in this article from *Texas Gardener*, [Planting Passion](#), you will find a good background on this beautiful vine.

Dogwood

Native to East Texas, Dogwoods are seen growing in rich bottomlands underneath the canopy of taller trees. They are not going to do well in soil that tends to be dry or in direct sun. As such, they are most successful when planted in companionship with other tall and established landscape trees. This [flowering dogwood](#) article from the Texas A&M Forest Service on dogwoods, and from the [Texas Tree Planting guide](#) is more information about planting requirements for dogwoods. Even though these are native dogwood trees, they are not without their pests and diseases, and as such are not known to be a relatively long-lived tree in our area. They particularly will not thrive in situations of prolonged drought.

Redbud

While you will often see the native Eastern Redbud, *Cercis canadensis*, planted in and around Houston, the native Texas redbud, *Circus canadensis var. texensis*, is also a fine choice for our home landscapes. The [Circus canadensis var. texensis](#) page from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center on this lovely native tree reads in part:

The redbuds of eastern North America have long been popular for their pink-purple early spring flowers that appear on bare wood before

cont'd on pg. 27

If you are a Harris County MG, interested in volunteering for AAMG Online and want to be trained, please contact coordinator.harrishort@gmail.com.

Ask a Master Gardener – In Person Activities

by Margie DiGiacomo, 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.

Prospective volunteers and interns: if you see that an event is full and it is one that you would really like to attend, please reach out to Margie DiGiacomo so that we can add you to the

volunteer list. Please remember that we want to provide many opportunities for you to earn your hours and interact with the public!

The SignUp is available here: <https://signup.com/group/7369887112200440118>

The full AAMG schedule for September

- Sat., Sept. 2** **Mercer Botanic Gardens**, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Humble, 77338 – 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Urban Harvest, 2752 Buffalo Speedway, Houston 77027 – 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- Sat., Sept. 9** **Tomball Farmers Market**, 205 West Main St., Tomball, 77375 – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Sat., Sept. 16** **2023 Katy Area Safety Fest**, 5000 Katy Mills Circle, Katy 77494 – 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
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.
- Mon., Sept. 18** **GFG Open Garden Day**, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston 77034 – 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.
- Thurs., Sept. 21** **Westchase Farmer's Market**, 10503 Westheimer Rd., Houston, 77042 – 3 to 7 p.m.
- Sat., Sept. 23** **Memorial Villages Farmers Market**, 10840 Beinhorn Rd., Houston 77024 – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
ONE with Wings Event, 1E1 Franco Lee Park's Wetland Trailhead, 9400 Hall Rd., Houston 77089
 7:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- Thur., Sept. 28** **2023 American Community Gardening Conference**, AAMG tables will be open before and after workshops,
& Fri., Sept. 29 and during breaks on Thursday (9/28) and Friday (9/29). Alief Hayes Campus, Community College,
 2811 Hayes Rd, Houston 77082

Ask a Master Gardener Online, *cont'd from pg. 26*

the leaves emerge. Texas redbud is the appropriate variety to use if you live on limestone soils from southern Oklahoma through central Texas to northeastern Mexico. It is drought-tolerant within its range, prefers dappled shade but is also found in full sun, and can do well even on relatively thin soils. Its glossy, rounded leaves bring welcome shade and its flowers attract pollinators.

I have a 15-year-old Texas Redbud in front of my home, in the direct sun. It has survived years of freeze and drought with no problems at all, and is a reliable spring bloomer. It might do slightly better with some afternoon shade, but it has been a tough little tree.

The last part of your question is regarding tree survival in excessive heat. While I would not hesitate to recommend the Texas Redbud, I would be hesitant to advise you on a Dogwood. While

it may survive, dogwoods are more challenging to grow and will need ideal planting conditions.

Additionally, while in theory native vines and plants can be planted at any time, in practice it will take a lot of nurturing to help them get established if planted during the summer. Fall, on the other hand, is an ideal time to plant as the roots will have time to become established. Late winter, such as January or February, is also a very good time to plant trees. This timing allows the roots to become established before the demands of spring growth.

I hope that you have found this information to be helpful. If you need additional guidance or have more questions, please contact us again.

Recipe of the Month

Rose Lemonade

Article and photo by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener

My husband Stan and I visited Antique Rose Emporium for their special Mother's Day event this year. It was a nice way to remember our mothers while roaming through the beautiful roses and peaceful scenery. We didn't let the rain ruin our visit. Now I wish we had some of that rain!

The lunch included regular lemonade and rose lemonade, and I can't tell you how many cups I had of the rose lemonade because I honestly lost count. It was so refreshing in May and

even more refreshing in this summer heat. September threatens to continue the hot temps (I wish I could say "warm", but it will be downright hot!) and this drink will be perfect for quenching your thirst. It also fits in with the Green Thumb¹ "Growing Roses in Texas" presentation this month.

A special thank you to Kim and Jim Keeter of the Antique Rose Emporium² for sharing this recipe. I hope you enjoy it, too.

Rose Lemonade

6 servings

Rose Simple Syrup

1. Add 1 cup of sugar to 1 cup of water.
2. Add 1/2 cup of dried rose petals* (you can adjust quantity based on personal taste).
3. Bring the mixture to a boil and then reduce the heat to a simmer.
4. Simmer for about 10 minutes or until the sugar has dissolved and the mixture has thickened slightly. You want it to just coat the back of a spoon. You don't want it too thick.
5. Strain the flowers out of the syrup and store your rose simple syrup in an airtight container in the fridge.

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup lemon juice, freshly squeezed
- 1/3 cup rose simple syrup
- 6 cups water

Stir and enjoy over ice!

Variation

- 1 frozen lemonade concentrate made to directions on package (or 1 gallon store bought lemonade)
- Torani Rose Syrup or other commercially made syrup (there are organic options available)
- Start with 1/4 cup syrup and add to your preference!

* Important Safety Note

Please ensure that you are using rose petals that have not been treated with pesticides or other chemicals that are harmful to people. You can also dehydrate your own petals from your roses in your garden to use for the simple syrup. You can use these petals for a variety of things, not just the simple syrup, the possibilities are endless!



Rose Lemonade served on Mother's Day 2023

¹ Green Thumb Lecture Series: See details on page 2 and 25 and at this link: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/2023-green-thumb-gardening-series/>

² The Antique Rose Emporium, 10000 FM 50, Brenham, Texas 77833, is a short drive from Houston, <https://antiqueroseemporium.com/>. This is a retail nursery that has been in business for 35 years, but offers so much more than roses. Their 8-acre display garden is a lovely place to visit and view several historic structures dating back to the late 1800s and early 1900s that were moved from Independence and Brenham and restored. Stroll through the nursery, or hold a special event in the chapel or Champneys Green, a 1904 Victorian home named for rosarian John Champneys who introduced climbing roses to the South in the early 1800s.

MG of the Month - *Stephanie McIntyre*

by Karen Breneman, Master Gardener

Congratulations! Stephanie is a retired Computer Science and Technology teacher who moved with her family from New Jersey to Texas right before the start of the



Stephanie McIntyre

pandemic. She learned so much from the MGs in NJ and was excited for the opportunity to join last year's MG class here in Harris County.

Stephanie has logged volunteer hours this year through giving gardening talks as a member of the Speakers Bureau, helped out

at a few Growing With Plants and Nature events, and helped support the current MG class and Stephanie Gray on the days the class meets. Most of her volunteer hours were logged through working on the *Weekly Update* which she helped publish for a few months during the spring. Stephanie said, "One of the best parts of being a MG for me has been the new friendships I've made with other MGs as we bond through gardening".

Thank you for your efforts and enthusiasm!

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.

Thank you in advance for your nomination!

Genoa Friendship Gardens



The Flower Trial Garden



The Water Garden



The Greenhouse

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

The Genoa Friendship Gardens

located at

1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road
Houston, Texas 77034

Weekly Garden Hours: Open all year round, Monday and Wednesday mornings, 9 a.m.-11a.m. (weather permitting).

We welcome professional organizations, schools, churches, and individuals tours of the garden! If interested in a tour, please email the HCMGA Program Coordinator at coordinator.harrishort@gmail.com

Open Garden Days

are 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, and register at the Welcome Table to receive additional monthly notices for children and family events.

- Tour the variety of exhibits to inspire you with vegetable, perennial, rose, tropical and native gardens.
- Visit our Ask a Master Gardener table for information about planting citrus, fruit or berries for your home orchard, or planting your vegetable garden.
- Contemplate the joy in the Earth-Kind 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.

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

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.

McGovern Centennial Gardens at Hermann Park

1500 Hermann Drive

Houston, Texas 77004

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.

Home Grown Podcast

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/

Log on to listen to a recent interview with Master Gardener volunteer Rick Castagno. He shares his experiences at Houston demonstration gardens, and a few stories of what's been grown in the vegetable beds.

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



HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

2023 FALL PLANT SALES

WEST SIDE SALE

September 23rd

9 am to 1 pm

Bear Creek Park
3000 Bear Creek Dr.
Houston, TX 77084

In Person Sales Only

2 Sales - 2 Locations!

Vegetables, Herbs,
Perennials and Ornamentals

For more information go to:
www.hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-sales

SOUTHEAST SALE

Genoa Friendship Garden
1210 Genoa Red Bluff
Houston 77034

October 1st - 19th

Online sales:
<https://hcmga.tamu.edu/shop/>

October 21st
Online sales pickup
In-person sale of
remaining inventory

TEXAS
MASTER GARDENER
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION
Harris County

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION



Hurricane Season is here!

Our hurricane season is June 1st through 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>.

For Harris County Master Gardeners Only!



GFG Workdays

Monday & Wednesdays

8:45 a.m. – Noon

1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Houston TX

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 garden leads will be on hand to guide you through the tasks.

For some of you who consider this a distance you can't commit to on a regular basis, you can drop in any time. You will see old and new friends!

Please join us at our GFG Garden Workdays!



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>

Our monthly newsletters are jam-packed with information. The *Urban Dirt* is now indexed by various gardening categories. Go to <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/urban-dirt-index/> to dig deeper into past *Urban Dirt* issues.

If you would like to receive new editions of the *Urban Dirt* newsletter each month, please add your name to the mailing list [HERE!](#)

Gardening Tools

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

 Vegetable Garden Planting Dates for Harris County	Texas AgriLIFE Extension Service Harris County Office 713-274-0950 https://harris.agrilife.org/hort/												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Planting times are for seeds unless otherwise noted													
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.



TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE

EXTENSION SERVICE

13105 NORTHWEST FREEWAY, SUITE 1000

HOUSTON, TX 77040

713-274-0950

harris.agrilife.org/program-areas/hort/

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. You will avoid the need to track down planting guides and other gardening resources if you subscribe, and you can easily share information with others. This is definitely a timesaver for these busy garden days and helps promote our organization. Reach us via these links:



www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners

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 Will Isbell at mcg.harrishort@gmail.com, if you are interested in attending.

Genoa Friendship Garden

1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Houston 77034

Weekday Workdays 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Every Monday and Wednesday we work in a variety of gardens. They include a large vegetable production garden, Texas AgriLife research plant trial beds, wildflower area, native plant landscape, Perennial and EarthKind gardens and the greenhouse. Feel free to drop in to earn service hours!

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.

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