

# Urban Dirt

## Gardening Events and Information for Harris County



### Brookwood Poinsettias – Put a Ring on It

Article by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener

Since I became a Harris County Master Gardener, this is the first year that I can remember having the opportunity to volunteer at The Brookwood Community in Brookshire to help with their poinsettias. I've known for many years how popular their poinsettia sale is, and was really happy to get involved and see their operation first-hand.

I had no idea in advance what task we would be doing, but it sounded like a great opportunity to serve another nonprofit. I learned how to prepare their poinsettias for sale, had a great lunch afterward in the Brookwood Café, and did a little shopping in their gift shop. A win-win-win!!

Fellow Master Gardeners Debra Caldwell, Valerie Depew, Susan Visinsky-Bracken and I were assigned the task of putting plastic rings around the poinsettia plants to give them support as they grow. I had no clue what that meant until it was demonstrated for us. As you can see in the photo, the ring was pulled up from the bottom of the pot (to not damage the plant) and four little "legs" were attached to the pot. The next step in the process will be to put protective sleeves on the poinsettias.



MGs Jo Ann Stevenson (L), Valerie Depew (R) (photo by: Debra Caldwell)



Plastic ring attached to poinsettia pot (photo by: Jo Ann Stevenson)



Continued on page 4

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EXTENSION

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Harris County

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2 Upcoming Events
- 3 Preserving the Harvest Workshop
- 5 Planting for a Rainy Day
- 6 Book Reviews by MG Terri
- 8 I Was a Judge at a County Fair
- 10 Native Plants versus Cultivars of Native Plants (Nativars) – Does it Matter?
- 13 Native Plant Spotlight: Texas Kidneywood
- 15 Recipe Spotlight: Cheese Bites and Herb Butter for the Holidays - Double Feature!
- 17 Bug Spotlight: Overwintering Insects
- 19 Getting Down to Earth - News from Genoa Friendship Gardens and Christ the Good Shepherd Garden
- 24 Master Gardener Spotlight
- 25 Plant Spotlight: Ornamental Kale
- 26 Herb Spotlight: Garlic Chives
- 27 Master Gardeners in the City
- 27 Ask a Master Gardener at McGovern Centennial Gardens
- 29 Ask A Master Gardener Events
- 30 Genoa Friendship Gardens
- 31 Gardening Calendar
- 33 2025 Green Thumb Gardening Series - NEW!!!
- 34 Ask a Master Gardener Online
- 36 Planting Guide

### Have Garden Questions?

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

# Upcoming EVENTS

Public Gardening Lectures  
Educational Programs  
Genoa Friendship Gardens  
Youth Activities  
Green Thumb Gardening Series  
Plant Sales

**Tuesday, November 5, 11 a.m.**

Dried Plants Workshop: Teas, Spice, & Floral Arrangements  
by Harris County Master Gardeners  
Genoa Friendship Gardens, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston

**Thursday, November 7, 12 p.m.**

Raised Beds by Harris County Master Gardeners  
Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr, Houston

**Monday, November 11, 1 p.m.**

Seed Swap by Harris County Master Gardeners  
Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr, Houston

**Tuesday, December 3, 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.**

First Tuesday Meeting  
Lecture: AgriLife Program Updates by Harris County AgriLife Extension  
Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Rd, Houston

**Friday, December 6, 11 a.m.**

Rain Gardens and Conservation by Harris County Master Gardeners  
Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr, Houston

**Friday, December 6, 1 - 5 p.m.**

Preserving the Harvest Hands on Workshop  
by Harris County AgriLife Extension - Family & Community Health  
San Jacinto Community Center, 604 Highland Woods Dr, Highlands  
Registration required. See Page 3 for registration QR and more information!

**Friday, December 6, 5 - 8 p.m.**

Growing with Plants and Nature Christmas Celebration  
Woodchase Park, 3951 Woodchase Dr, Houston

**Green Thumb Gardening Series 2025 - see page 33**

**To Resume in March 2025!**

Open Garden Day at Genoa Friendship Gardens  
1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston

Make a holiday gift donation to the  
Harris County Master Gardeners



Scan here



## 2025 Plant Sales - Save the Dates!

- Jan 25, 2025- Katy Fruit Tree Sale
- Feb 15, 2025- GFG Fruit Tree & Tomato Sale
- Mar 8, 2025- Katy Tomato & Pepper Sale
- Mar 22-23, 2025- Cypress Berry Center Sale
- Apr 12, 2025- GFG Perennial & Pepper Sale
- Apr 26, 2025- Katy Perennial Sale
- Oct 4, 2025- Katy Fall Sale
- Oct 18, 2025- GFG Fall Sale



## TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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

**CEA- Horticulture**

**(Commercial/Green Industry)**

**Stephanie Gray**

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**Master Gardener**

**Volunteer Coordinator**

**Robyn Adair**

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# Upcoming EVENTS

## Preserving the Harvest

### HANDS ON WORKSHOP

TOPICS COVERED:  
BASICS OF FOOD PRESERVATION, CANNING  
SAFETY & HOT WATER BATH CANNING

Date: Friday, December 6, 2024

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Location: San Jacinto Community Center,  
604 Highlands Woods Drive, Highlands, TX 77562

Price: \$35.00 per person (supplies included)

### TAKE HOME A CANNED JAM AND SALSA

Pre registration required, Class size is limited!  
Register at the QR code below by November 22nd.



Call the office at 713-274-0950 with any questions

TEXAS A&M  
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FAMILY &  
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The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.





## Brookwood Poinsettias – Put a Ring on It

*Continued from page 1*

A large portion of Brookwood's annual budget comes from poinsettia sales. This year there are 52,000 poinsettias. Our little group put rings onto 1,038 pots in three hours—that only made a dent, but it felt good to contribute to their program's success.

Revenue generated by poinsettia sales supports residents at Brookwood through financial scholarships. More than 100 adults with disabilities live on the campus at Brookwood. They plant the plugs in August and help maintain the plants all the way through the sale in November and December.

The Brookwood staff and regular volunteers we met all expressed their appreciation for our help that day. We all know how much nonprofits depend on volunteers, and we were happy that we were available that day to assist.



*That's a LOT of poinsettias – and this is just a fraction of them!! (photo by: Debra Caldwell)*

Here are a couple of short videos from Brookwood. One shows how the poinsettias are planted and the other shows the finished plants:

[Brookwood - Planting Poinsettias 2018 - YouTube](#) and

[Brookwood Poinsettias Growth Timelapse 2018 with Robert - YouTube](#).

For more information on Brookwood, their mission and who they serve, plus poinsettia sales and how to volunteer, visit <https://www.brookwoodcommunity.org/>.



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





## Planting for a Rainy Day

Article and photos by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

What has innocent, grassy leaves and flowers after it rains?  
Rain lilies, of course!

*Zephyranthes candida* are also known as fairy lilies or zephyr flowers and pop up after a rain. The flowers like full sun, six hours or more a day, and are low maintenance. They can survive in a variety of soil types, are hardy in zones 7-10 and don't require a lot of water. The plants like well drained soils and do well in gardens and containers. Some varieties have viable seeds. Rain lilies are native to South America and are members of the Amaryllis family. In ancient times, Romans and Greeks thought the flowers came from tears of the gods. Romans associated them with honor and to the Greeks they represented hope.

Today, there are more than 70 species. There are white, yellow, pink, red and some that look orange-pink. The tiger rain lily is yellow with pink-apricot stripes. Who knew rain lilies came in a variety of colors? I certainly didn't. I had only seen a few white ones here and there. At first, I thought they were crocuses. Then, I traded for some pink rain lilies at a plant swap. I was hooked. But I'm not alone. In the book, "Passalong Plants," by Felder Rushing and Steve Bender, Felder admits that he has "helped" himself to some rain lilies at an abandoned property.

I believe they are not very popular because people think they look too much like grass. Rain lilies have foliage that looks droopy like it's having a bad hair day, almost like a comb-over. They lie waiting patiently for a little rain, and then BAM! There they are. Their flowers are fleeting. They are here for a solo performance, lasting only one day, and then they blend into the background again. Even my tri-hybrid rain lily, *xHowardara* 'Riley Kate' only lasts for a day, but what a day. It's bright red color screams across the yard. The cross was made by a Texas breeder, Dr. Dave Lehmler. He crossed a rain lily (*Zephyranthes*) with an amaryllis (*Hippeastrum*) and an Aztec lily (*Sprekelia*). The plant is sterile, but it does put out bulbs. It's one of my favorites. Contrary to some gardeners, I don't consider rain lilies a minor bulb.

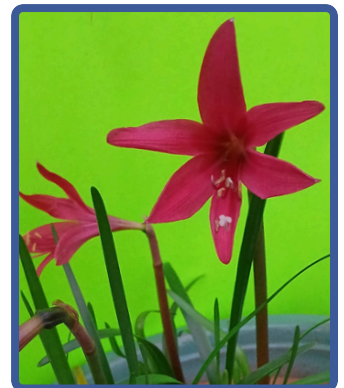
Rain lilies bloom from summer to fall. While they like to bloom after a good rain, it's not a requirement. My red *xHowardara* bloomed today and we haven't had rain for a few weeks. Don't take a rain check—get some rain lilies instead. They're a pleasant surprise.



Pink Rain Lily



Rain Lily Tiger Lily



Rain Lily Howardara Riley Kate



Kings Ransom Rain Lily

### References:

Rain Lily | Zephyranthes Grandiflora - My Life in Blossom  
<https://mylifeinblossom.com/wiki/zephyranthes-grandiflora-rain-lily/>

Howardara Riley Kate | Riley Kate Howardara  
<https://www.plantdelights.com/products/howardara-riley-kate>

*Passalong Plants* by Felder Rushing and Steve Bender

The Rainforest Garden: Rain Lilies: The Spirit of Southern Gardens  
<http://www.therainforestgarden.com/2013/09/rain-lilies-spirit-of-southern-gardens.html>

Zephyranthes (Atamasco Lily, Fairy Lily, Rainflower, Rain Lily, Zephyr Lily)  
North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox  
<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/zephyranthes/>





## Book Reviews by MG Terri

### Plants to the Rescue

#### Ball Blue Book: Guide to Preserving

Article and photos by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

“Forest bathing” means to immerse yourself in nature. It can be a forest, a park or perhaps it’s a slice of heaven in your own back yard. This simple practice outdoors can help reduce your blood pressure and lighten your stress level. Try it!

It’s been a busy year for me, but I always manage to relax by reading. Two books have crossed my radar recently. One I accidentally ordered, but enjoyed, is called “Plants to the Rescue.” It’s a children’s book intended for grades 4th-6th. The book is written by Dr. Vikram Baliga, a horticulturist, and illustrated by Brian Lambert. It’s a wonderful book for parents and grandparents to give as a present. I did not grow up gardening, but many of my gardening friends have an interest in gardening because of a grandparent.



The book lists many interesting and unique facts about plants and how we are working on ways to benefit our planet by using plants. Our resources are limited. We must find ways that enhance and preserve our usage of these natural resources. We have many challenges ahead of us. Our population continues to grow, our weather is changing and it’s becoming warmer. We are using up our water supplies and our dependence on fossil fuels needs to be curtailed. As our population grows, plants and animals are losing their habitats because humans are infringing on their land.

How will we feed the people? We need to breed and grow plants that are hardy and produce well. We must be innovative with our growing techniques. We produce too much plastic and we are running out of places to dump that plastic. Worldwide, plastic is a major part of our waste and it breaks down very slowly. Currently, researchers are using cactus juice from prickly pear cactus to make a biodegradable substance that can be shaped into baggies.

There are many good ideas in the book, including using a banana peel to polish shoes. The book has great graphics and is well written. I am a little disappointed the Nemo’s Garden project and the Svalbard Global Seed Vault weren’t mentioned. Other than that, it’s a good read.

### Test Your Plant Knowledge

How well do you know plants? Try this quiz!

Answers are given at the bottom of this article.

- Which plant has the deepest roots?
  - Giant sequoia
  - Poison ivy
  - Shepherd’s tree
- What plant smells the worst?
  - Skunk cabbage
  - Wild ginger
  - Corpse flower
- Which plant is the most widely eaten by billions of people around the world?
  - Wheat
  - Corn
  - Rice
- Which plant has the most uses?
  - Cotton
  - Agave
  - Bamboo
- Which plant is the most nutritious with 46 types of antioxidants and 92 nutrients?
  - Broccoli
  - Coconut
  - Moringa tree



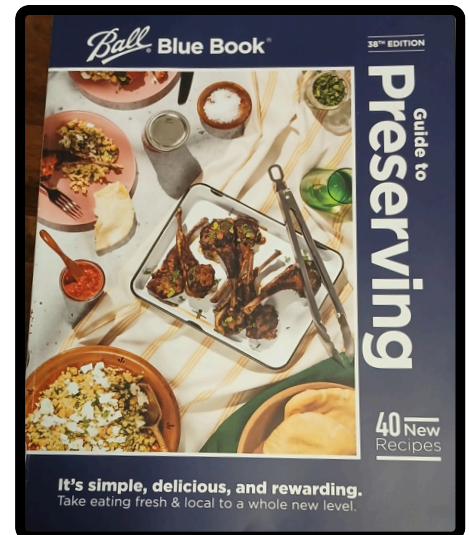
## Book Reviews by MG Terri

Plants to the Rescue

Ball Blue Book: Guide to Preserving

*Continued*

The second book I really enjoyed. It's been ten years since the last edition, so I was delighted to purchase the 38th edition of the "Ball Blue Book: Guide to Preserving." So many wonderful recipes inside a thin package. I have fallen in love with canning so I couldn't wait to get my hands on this book. It has more than 500 recipes and I already have several picked out to try. As gardeners, canning is an excellent way to preserve those bumper crops. I always have a few jars of something or other in my kitchen. I love my "army" of canned goods and I always have presents on hand. I am popular at parties. I usually take a jar of something and arrive a little early. I let the host know that they can either use what I brought as an extra appetizer or keep it for their own personal use.



Terri's Home Canning

The book covers lots of topics. There is a basic canning section at the beginning. This is followed by canning high-acid foods, tomatoes, jams, jellies, chutneys and others. It also has a meal creation section. If you have ever had and enjoyed my jalapeno jelly, check out page 59. This is the most popular canned good I make. Right now, I have several jars of red jalapeno jelly stashed. I ran across some red jalapenos at the store and made two trips. I am the jalapeno jelly queen. I went to Dallas recently to visit my son and grandson and they knew I was bringing some canned goodies. I did not have to ask for any help carrying in a dozen jars. This book was an exciting read for me, but I do wish it had more color photos. If you can, or know someone who does can, this book is a must.



Test Your Plant Knowledge Quiz Answers:  
1. C. 2. C. 3. C. 4. C. 5. C.

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





## I Was a Judge at a County Fair

*Article and photos by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener*

I volunteered to be a judge at the Austin County Fair in Belville in early October. This was completely new to me and I loved it! The opportunity to be a judge reminded me of going back to my high school and judging speech and drama competitions. This wasn't quite the same, but it was fun, especially because it involved horticulture.

I had the opportunity to work alongside MG classmates Jerri Grimland and Cindy Barger, as well as MG Beatrice Bomba and AgriLife Youth Outreach Program Coordinator Sommer Flowers. Fun fact: Sommer previously taught floral arranging—how cool is that? I'm sure with the name Flowers, she rocked it!

We judged the floral entries—single and combination plantings—from 9- to 17-year-old competitors. The participants had to raise their plants/flowers for three months and keep them healthy to enter the competition.

We were asked to select the Grand Champion and Reserve Champion in each category of 4-H Junior and Senior FFA entries. Every Grand Champion selected would then move into Saturday's Youth Supreme Champion Container Plant contest, where their entries would be sold. We were allowed to write words of encouragement and constructive criticism for the contestants so they can learn and improve for next year. I think I liked that part the best.



*Judges Jerri Grimland, Cindy Barger, Beatrice Bomba, Jo Ann Stevenson, Sommer Flowers*



What struck me the most was the choice of plants and the vessels used to display them. In addition to the regular pots you would expect, there were small trucks (even plastic dump trucks), an upcycled colander, a galvanized bucket, a small wagon, and a tin barn. The most creative was an old suitcase that held and displayed the plantings.

While we judged the horticulture entries, other volunteers judged quilts, art, photography, baked goods, canned goods and more.





## I Was a Judge at a County Fair

*Continued*

I have all new respect for 4-H participants, and even more for the dedicated and passionate volunteers who put in countless hours to make everything flow so smoothly. My dad and stepmom were heavily involved in 4-H in the Valley, and I could see that same passion in the volunteers in Belville.

I highly recommend volunteering as a judge and investing in our youth. I hope to be back next year!



*A selection of the winning entries at the Austin County Fair*



**ICYMI:  
In Case  
You  
Missed It**

**Read all  
the back  
issues on  
HCMGA  
Website in  
the  
Newsletter  
menu**



NEWSLETTER ▾
2024 Urban Dirt Newsletter
Urban Dirt Index
2023 Urban Dirt Newsletter
2022 Urban Dirt Newsletter
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# Native Plants versus Cultivars of Native Plants (Nativars) – Does it Matter?

Article by Margaret Pierce, Master Gardener

Now that gardeners are aware of the benefits of using native plants in their landscapes, the question of whether cultivars of native plants are “just as good” as true natives is being asked. The answer is not straightforward or simple. This article will address some of the pros and cons of planting nativars rather than true native plants.

First, some definitions:

## Native Plant

- A plant is considered native if it has occurred naturally in a particular region, ecosystem, or habitat without human introduction. *National Wildlife Federation*
- Native plants in a particular area are those that were growing naturally in the area before humans introduced plants from distant places. *Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center*
- A native plant is one that has evolved in a given place over a period of time sufficient to develop complex and essential relationships with the physical environment and other organisms in a given ecological community. *Doug Tallamy and Rick Darke*



Native - *Echinacea purpurea*,  
Purple coneflower.  
Photo by Joseph A. Marcus, Lady  
Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

## Cultivar

- A cultivated variety results when two plant species have combined creating a plant that is similar to the original species but exhibits some different characteristics.
- This can occur in nature, without human intervention, when two related species of plants cross-pollinate or where an unusual example of a species occurs.
- Humans can interbreed two species of plants to emphasize or modify certain desired traits, such as plant size, bloom shape or color, phenology, or disease resistance.
- Scientists or plant breeders also use genetic engineering to manipulate DNA to result in cultivars with certain desired traits.

## Nativar

- A nativar is a type of cultivar resulting when plant breeders select certain native plant traits over others using the methods described above.
- A mutation in a native population can also produce a nativar plant that is different in one or more ways, such as height or bloom color. This plant is then reproduced via seeds or cuttings.

As we gardeners realize the fragility of the natural world with the impact of urban sprawl, climate change, habitat loss, and human intervention, we want to know what we can do. Adding green space is one solution, and we can best support our native flora and fauna by creating spaces that allow them to thrive. An ideal space should contain a variety of native plants to provide food and habitat for our native birds, bees, butterflies, and bugs that have evolved together over thousands of years.



Nativar - *Echinacea purpurea*,  
'Cheyenne Spirit Mix'.  
Photo by Margaret Pierce





## Native Plants versus Cultivars of Native Plants (Nativars) – Does it Matter?

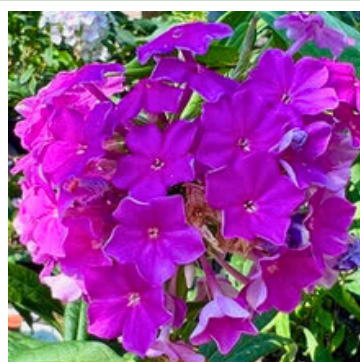
*Continued*

The demand for native plants is growing, and the nursery trade is listening. Finding native plants is far easier than it was five or ten years ago. Many retail nurseries have sections devoted to native plants and there is often a wide variety in their selection. Many of the offerings, though, are nativars. The



*Native - Phlox paniculata, Fall phlox. Photo by Stephanie Brundage, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*

nursery trade focuses on aesthetics and giving customers “pretty, easy to grow plants.” Consequently, nurseries sell plants with attributes such as compactness, showier flowers, longer bloom time, and novel leaf or petal colors. But these modifications may cause the plant to be less useful to pollinators. If plants are developed to be insect resistant, have double blooms, a different chemical makeup, or an unrecognized color, for example, those plants may not provide nutritional support to native insects, birds, and bees.



*Nativar - Phlox paniculata 'Texas Pink', Texas Pink Garden Phlox. Photo by Margaret Pierce*

Although many nativars have been developed, most have not been evaluated to determine how their benefits to pollinators compare to the true native from which they came. A recent study under Chicago Botanic Garden's Budburst Program compared natives versus nativars. Four area native species and several cultivars of each of the natives were evaluated, comparing the number of flower visits and total visits per plant over the growing season by native pollinators and non-native honeybees. The results were mixed—they varied according to the species being investigated. Some cultivars attracted as many pollinators as their native counterparts, while others did not. A few cultivars attracted more. The study's conclusion is summarized below:

*For those creating pollinator gardens or other plantings to support pollinators, e.g., prairie strips in agricultural settings, we recommend choosing taxa that perform better over the entire season. In general, we found that wild type plants (true natives) performed at or near the top in terms of seasonal pollinator attraction. In addition, using wild types in properties adjacent to natural areas will help avoid hybridization with wild*

*populations. However, for use in home gardens, we found several cultivars that were widely visited (and in some cases more frequently visited) that could be substituted for ease in upkeep and to maintain a desired aesthetic. - Imeña R. Valdez, thesis submitted to Northwestern University and The Chicago Botanic Garden for the degree of Master of Science in Plant Biology and Conservation, February 22, 2023.*

Kayri Havens, Ph.D. and Director of Plant Science and Conservation at the Chicago Botanic Garden, and an advisor to Ms. Valdez for her project and thesis, shared an observation with me: “I have found that highly modified flowers rarely provide the same resources as the wild type.” Her observation makes sense because the closer the cultivar is to the true native, the more likely pollinators will recognize it and be able to access and benefit from its pollen and nectar.





## Native Plants versus Cultivars of Native Plants (Nativars) – Does it Matter?

*Continued*

### Benefits of Nativars

- The attributes for which they have been developed might be better suited than true natives for urban gardens and smaller planting areas.
- Gardeners might find the nativar more desirable due to its size, color, disease resistance, lower water demands, or more prolific blooms and, therefore, expand the size of their gardens.
- Native fruiting plants cultivated to produce larger, sweeter fruits or native vegetables cultivated to be tastier and disease resistant benefit consumers.
- Planting nativars might reduce a gardener's proclivity to select plants heavily advertised in the nursery trade and which include invasives, non-natives, or exotic plants that don't handle weather extremes or are disease prone out of their native habitat.
- Nativars that offer more disease resistance than non-native plants might result in less use of synthetic pesticides.
- Some nativars provide pollen, nectar, habitat, or serve as host plants to native pollinators such as insects, butterflies, and birds.

### Concerns with Nativars

- Each nativar is unique in its benefit or detriment to the ecosystem in which it is planted and should be studied to determine whether it improves or damages that native system. Traits that are selected to be emphasized and traits that are eliminated in this selection process have consequences. These types of studies have not been undertaken for most nativars.
- Nativars can crowd out the true native species from which they came or cross-pollinate with the true native and eventually cause its demise.
- A phenological mismatch can occur with nativars whose bloom times are not in sync with the native pollinators and migrating birds.
- Nativars bred for certain characteristics, such as an unusual petal color or double petals, can be perceived as foreign by pollinators who will then not utilize the plant's pollen or nectar and will suffer insufficient sources of nutrition.
- Nativar plants have less genetic diversity than their true native "parents." A species must be resilient when faced with extreme climate events, disease, and pests. Certain plants of a species will be better able to handle that stress and adapt to survive than others, but when all are less diverse or identical (due to asexual propagation) all will fare equally and there will not be "stronger individuals."
- Some nativars are sterile, do not produce nectar or pollen, or do not produce seeds.



*Native - Tecoma stans, Yellow Bells Esperanza. Photo by Margaret Pierce*



*Nativar - Tecoma stans 'Loensp', Gold Star Esperanza. Photo by Margaret Pierce*



## Native Plants versus Cultivars of Native Plants (Nativars) – Does it Matter?

*Continued*

- If seed producing, the second-generation plant grown from seed might not have the same characteristics of the original nativar, in which case, propagation through cuttings or tissue culture is required.

In summary:

- Aim to increase native plants in your yard, emphasizing straight natives, particularly in wild areas where nativars could impact the survival of the true natives.
- It is fine to include some nativars in your yard, understanding that each nativar's benefits to the native ecosystem varies and that it may provide fewer benefits than its native ancestor.
- Request true native plants at area nurseries. For nativars you would like to plant, research how they affect the ecosystem compared to the true native from which they were derived.



### References:

[Nativars Research Project](https://budburst.org/nativars)

(<https://budburst.org/nativars>)

[Cultivars of Native Plants](https://extension.umd.edu/resource/cultivars-native-plants/)

(<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/cultivars-native-plants/>)

[Natives, Cultivars, and "Nativars"](https://grownative.org/learn/natives-cultivars-and-nativars/)

(<https://grownative.org/learn/natives-cultivars-and-nativars/>)

[From Nursery to Nature: Are native cultivars as valuable to pollinators as native species?](https://pollinatorgardens.org/2013/02/08/my-research/)

(<https://pollinatorgardens.org/2013/02/08/my-research/>)

[Cultivars of Native Plants](https://tynnativaplants.wordpress.com/definitions/cultivars-of-native-plants/)

(<https://tynnativaplants.wordpress.com/definitions/cultivars-of-native-plants/>)

[New Studies Weigh Ecological Value of Native Cultivars](https://wildrootsnj.com/blog/new-studies-weigh-ecological-value-of-native-cultivars/)

(<https://wildrootsnj.com/blog/new-studies-weigh-ecological-value-of-native-cultivars/>)

[Helping Gardeners Select the Best Nativars](https://www.chicagobotanic.org/research/helping_gardeners_select_best_nativars)

([https://www.chicagobotanic.org/research/helping\\_gardeners\\_select\\_best\\_nativars](https://www.chicagobotanic.org/research/helping_gardeners_select_best_nativars))

[The Nativar Conundrum: New Research on Natives vs. Native Cultivars with Dr. Doug Tallamy](https://www.ecobeneficial.com/2015/10/the-nativar-conundrum-new-research-on-natives-vs-native-cultivars-with-dr-doug-tallamy/)

(<https://www.ecobeneficial.com/2015/10/the-nativar-conundrum-new-research-on-natives-vs-native-cultivars-with-dr-doug-tallamy/>)

[Ask Doug: Cultivars vs Straight Species Native Plants](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFh-vhU1wH8)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFh-vhU1wH8>)

[Community Scientists Take on the Cultivar Conundrum](https://xerces.org/blog/Community-Scientists-Take-on-Cultivar-Conundrum)

(<https://xerces.org/blog/Community-Scientists-Take-on-Cultivar-Conundrum>)

Texas Gardener Magazine May/June 2024 – The Nativar Debate: Separating Fact from Fiction by Dr. David Creech



## Native Plant Spotlight

### Texas Kidneywood, *Eysenhardtia texana*

Article and photos by Robin Kendrick-Yates,

Advanced Master Gardener: Composting & Entomology

Whenever I think of pollinator friendly plants, my mind inevitably gravitates toward wildflowers. Yet, when I spend time in my yard and follow the pollinators, I discover them prioritizing other plants. One plant that continues to amaze me season after season is Texas kidneywood, *Eysenhardtia texana*. This small tree or shrub is said to be used for bladder and kidney ailments, thus its common name.

My wife and I came upon kidneywood around seven years ago







## Native Plant Spotlight

Texas Kidneywood, *Eysenhardtia texana*  
Continued

while browsing at one of my favorite local nurseries. I had never seen one before and it happened to be blooming, almost shouting, “Pick me, pick me!” (If you are reading this, you get what I mean). So, we complied, brought it home, and placed it in our front yard. I’ve been told that to know a plant, grow a plant. This has truly been the case with kidneywood.

As a native plant to this area, kidneywood is adored by the insect life of our ecosystem! All varieties of bees, butterflies, and moths compete for nectar from April through October. As I’m writing this in September, I’m amazed by the number of pollinators swarming around this bush, while many other plants are past blooming or are struggling to recover from our brutal summer heat. It is not surprising that the dogface butterfly uses it to feed its larva.

Kidneywood is a perennial, deciduous shrub that grows up to 10 feet tall. It is native to central and south Texas, thriving in most well-drained soil types. It enjoys full sun and, once established, is both drought and frost tolerant. Our plant faces north and weathered winter storm Uri without batting an eye.

Kidneywood’s branchlets terminate in white blooms arranged in spikes up to 4 ½ inches long. It blooms intermittently throughout the year, especially after it rains. The delicate flowers have a wonderful fragrance that reminds me of the lilac I loved while growing up in Iowa. I find myself mesmerized by the beauty of the flower and its fragrance, while the pollinators are busy collecting nectar. It is in such moments that I feel most connected to terra firma. I have found native plants bring a sense of peace to my yard, reminding me that I belong here. We each need to ground ourselves throughout our busy lives. Native plants, like kidneywood, are an entrance to that place for me, and I hope for you as well!

You can find an example of the Texas kidneywood at Genoa Friendship Gardens. Drop by some Monday morning, and I will be happy to point it out to you. This is a great time of year to plant young perennials, giving them the winter to begin establishing their roots. Please consider adding this worthy species to your pollinator friendly yard!



### References:

Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center Database for *Eysenhardtia texana*  
([https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=EYTE](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=EYTE))

Butterflies and Moths of North America  
(<https://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/species/Zerene-cesonia>)





# Recipe Spotlight

## Cheese Bites and Herb Butter for the Holidays

Articles and photos by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener

You get two recipes for the price of one in this edition. 😊 Both are great for the holidays. Enjoy!

### Herby Citrus Cheese Bites

These mini cheese balls are perfect for entertaining during the holidays, but can also be made year-round. They are incredibly easy to prepare, but do require a little time to shape into balls. Do that task with a friend, as I did, and the time flies by. You can make them the size shown in the recipe or about half-size to double the number of bite-size appetizers. We omitted the capers and the hot sauce, substituted garlic powder for fresh garlic and garnished with parsley and dill. I found this recipe in the autumn edition of *Entertain & Celebrate* magazine.

If you aren't a huge fan of goat cheese, then alter the ratio. Instead of one part goat cheese to one part cream cheese (4 oz to 4 oz), you could try one part goat cheese to three parts cream cheese (2 oz to 6 oz) for a milder flavor. Serve with crackers or bread and enjoy!

Tips for variety: Dress them up for the holidays by adding finely chopped dried cranberries (or roselle if you have it) and substituting chopped rosemary for one of the herbs. You could also roll the cheese balls in chopped nuts for a different look.



### Herby Citrus Cheese Bites Makes 18

#### Ingredients

- 4 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 4 ounces goat cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh chives, divided
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley, divided
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill
- 1 tablespoon capers, drained
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 1/2 teaspoons hot sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1/2 teaspoon cracked black pepper
- Garnish: lemon zest, cracked black pepper

#### Instructions

1. In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat cream cheese, goat cheese, 1/4 cup Parmesan, 1 tablespoon chives, 1 tablespoon parsley, dill, capers, lemon zest and juice, hot sauce, garlic and pepper with mixer at medium speed until well combined. Cover and refrigerate until firm, about one hour.
2. In a shallow bowl, stir together the remaining 1/4 cup Parmesan, the remaining 1 tablespoon chives, and the remaining 1 tablespoon parsley. Divide cheese mixture into 18 portions (about 1 tablespoon each). Shape each portion into a ball and roll each ball in herb mixture until well coated. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Garnish with lemon and pepper if desired.



## Recipe Spotlight

### Cheese Bites and Herb Butter for the Holidays *Continued*

#### Herb Butter

Herb butter is a great way to find a new use for fresh herbs you might have unused from a recipe, and there are so many options. You can use one single herb or mix as many herbs as you have—parsley, sage, rosemary, thyme (reminds me of a song!) chives, cilantro, oregano, basil, dill, etc.

The basic recipe for herb butter is:

1/4 cup chopped herbs  
1/2 cup butter (1 stick)



How easy is that? You can certainly add more herbs if you'd like.

Be sure to bring the butter to room temperature and add salt if you want. I typically omit the salt. You can use unsalted or salted butter, whichever is your preference.

Combine the herbs and softened butter in a bowl and mix with a fork until thoroughly combined. You can use a food processor as well.

The herb butter can be stored in a jar or other container in the refrigerator for a few days or in the freezer for a few months. I rolled the butter into a log shape and stored it in parchment paper and zip-top bags in the freezer. Pre-slice or cut a slice whenever you want to use some.

A loaf of fresh bread and a jar of herb butter would make a great gift for the holidays or any occasion.

*Lemon zest was added  
to Rosemary, Sage,  
Thyme herb butter*

*This herb butter  
was made with  
basil alone*



*Rosemary,  
Sage, Thyme  
herb butter*

#### Tips and Uses:

- On toast with poached/fried egg or in an omelet
- On warm rolls
- On cooked vegetables or pasta, rice or polenta
- On chicken, fish or steak
- Under skin of turkey breast before cooking
- Add minced garlic (cooked in part of the butter before mixing)
- Add lemon, lime or orange zest





## Bug Spotlight

### Overwintering Insects

Article by Debra Caldwell, Advanced  
Master Gardener: Entomology



What do bugs do in the winter?

How do bugs cope with cold winter temperatures? Invertebrates are ectotherms or cold-blooded. They are not able to generate heat in their bodies like mammals and birds do. Invertebrates have evolved several ways to deal with freezing weather.

Freezing temperatures cause ice to form in cells of plants and animals. The expansion of ice crystals ruptures cells, turning plants to mush and destroying tissues of invertebrates. There are some species, primarily in Arctic regions, which produce a natural antifreeze in their bodies or have mechanisms to survive being supercooled or almost completely dehydrated.

To avoid freezing in Harris County, most bugs either migrate or become dormant. For example, Monarch butterflies migrate from Harris County to Michoacán, Mexico. Texas serves as a major route for Monarchs coming from northern states. Many fly along the Texas coast from the third week of October to the middle of November. In the winter, Texas and Mexico become home to migrating Green Darners, a type of dragonfly.



Monarch Butterfly  
Photo by Billings Brett, USFWS



Green Darner  
Photo by Kate Sadler, Houston  
Botanic Garden

Many invertebrates shelter in soil, under rocks or inside plant stems and tree trunks. In our mild winters, they often emerge during warmer weather. The Xerxes Society, the National Wildlife Federation and other conservation organizations advocate leaving natural nesting habitat such as fallen leaves, flower stems and brush piles to give overwintering insects the shelter they need.

This doesn't mean that your garden must be covered with dead vegetation and dry leaves. Everything in moderation—leaving a few standing stems and some leaf litter will provide shelter for the invertebrates who need it.

Many native bees and wasps are ground dwellers so leave a little bare ground for them. Cicada Killer wasps dig large burrows with tunnels and cells. As winter approaches, the female will put a paralyzed cicada in each cell, lay an egg and seal off the cell with dirt. The females die, but their babies have ample food in their underground nests.



Cicada Killer Wasp  
Photo by Debra Caldwell

## Bug Spotlight Overwintering Insects

*Continued*

Keep in mind, if you have diseased leaves or pest species that overwinter in mulch, it is better to do a thorough clean up. For example, pest species such as adult leaf-footed bugs can overwinter in mulch and organic debris. They will become active as it warms up and immediately lay eggs.

Some invertebrates become dormant in a hormonally mediated process called diapause. Unlike hibernation which is a drop in body temperature and decrease in metabolic activity, diapause is a suspension of growth and development. Different species halt development in different stages ranging from eggs to larvae, pupae and adults. Some mosquito species go into diapause as day lengths become shorter. The little pests aren't gone—they are in diapause, waiting for warm weather and longer days to complete their development and bedevil us again.

Several insects, spiders and other invertebrates cope with winter by moving in with us! They enjoy the warm temperatures in our homes as much as we do. Asian ladybeetles, an invasive species, are notorious for squeezing through cracks and getting into homes. Now is a good time to prevent these unwanted guests from entering our homes by caulking and sealing points of entry around windows, doors, plumbing, cracks and gaps.



Graphic by Debra Caldwell

### References:

#### Bug Guide

<https://bugguide.net/node/view/163372>

#### The Monarch Butterfly and Other Insect Pollinators

[https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife\\_diversity/texas\\_nature\\_trackers/monarch/](https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/texas_nature_trackers/monarch/)

#### Common Green Darner (Anax junius)

<https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/67731-Anax-junius>

#### Insect Cold Hardiness: Metabolic, Gene, and Protein Adaptation

<https://cdnsiencepub.com/doi/full/10.1139/z2012-011>

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<https://hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/>





# Getting Down to Earth

## News from Genoa Friendship Gardens – Houston, 77034

Article and Photos by Pam Longley, Master Gardener

Mike Breazelle has been tending the Herb Garden since he became a volunteer at GFG. What a difference he has made! It was a weedy mess. He taught me about the careful use of agricultural vinegar for weeds between the bricks and the edges of the garden. I always wondered why it smelled like dill pickles back there before I knew the origin of it! This garden has a lot of gravel from the original parking lot that GFG was built on as its base, and he thinks the soil became virtually anaerobic because of that. He has put in a no-till cover crop potting mix with 13 cultivar seeds, including clover, corn, legumes, buckwheat and millet, to encourage nitrogen-fixing and aeration. He also added some whimsy of the season by planting mini pumpkins there.



Mike Breazelle

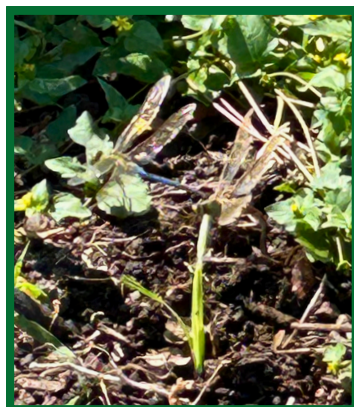
We had a tour of veterans again on September 19, shepherded by Dianne Lawrence. The Professional Group, a diverse group of professional and retired women, is coming back again for a tour and class on “Gardening in Extreme Weather,” which will be led by Robin Yates and Pam Longley on October 26.

We are all gradually getting linked to GroupMe, an online social media platform being used to connect volunteers at GFG for needed projects. The new interns are using it frequently to group up, and it seems to be working well!

*As seen at GFG*



Becky McGraw Wall posed with our new “Welcome” sign made by our own Noe Tristan from rebar and recycled metal pieces.



Green Darner dragonflies mating. They are named for their resemblance to a darning needle and are a species of the Aeshnidae family, common in North America but also found in the Caribbean Islands, Tahiti, Japan and China



Evelyn Dravis and Becky McGraw Wall with the zinnia and vinca “friends” of the summer Rose Garden



## Getting Down to Earth

Continued

### Christ the Good Shepherd Garden – Spring 77379

Article and Photos by Jack Goodwin, Master Gardener

It is harvest time for our sweet potatoes at CGS Garden. This past spring, we planted eight of our twenty-eight raised beds with two varieties of sweet potatoes. We started digging up five of the beds today. Pictured is one basket of potatoes that were brushed off and placed on holding racks for a few days to cure. We do not wash off the soil during this process. When the sweet potatoes are ready, we will clean them and distribute them to the food pantries in our area. Our crop this year is average but much less damaged by rodents and insects than last year. We added soil around started plants this time and did not let the vines grow into the areas between beds. This was to encourage nutrients to go into the potatoes and not be used for extra vines. It seemed to work very well. Pictured working sweet potatoes are John and Ann Zdansky, Charlie Dorchak and other faithful volunteers.



*Sweet potato harvest!*



As promised an update on our beehive project and a bit about its beginnings!

### Melliferous Musings

Article and Photos by Baxter Swenson, Master Gardener

"I think I'd like to have a beehive in our backyard," I told my wife one day. "You're kidding right?" she responded. Though deep in her heart, she knew that I was serious. For almost sixty years, I've been fascinated by these industrious and often misunderstood little creatures.





## Getting Down to Earth

*Continued*

Her questions were valid. “What if the grandkids get stung?” “Isn’t the backyard too small?” “Is it legal to have a beehive in our neighborhood?” “Who’s going to take care of them when we’re out of town?”

After lots of reading, research and interesting discussions, my cautious wife has begun to appreciate my interest in raising bees.



Now, three generations of our family are discovering interesting things about bees:

- ❖ Male bees are called “drones.” His one purpose in life is to mate with the queen, after which, he dies.
- ❖ A virgin queen will mate with as many as 17 drones during her “maiden flight.”
- ❖ With the exception of the drones, all other bees in a hive are female.
- ❖ The queen, who can live up to 5 years, is the only fully developed female, and her only function is to lay eggs. A productive queen can lay up to 2,000 eggs a day.
- ❖ Worker bees are undeveloped females whose primary function is to care for the wellbeing of the hive. They have many tasks during their lifetime beginning with caring for the queen and her brood and ending as “foragers.”
- ❖ During the summer, the average lifespan of a worker bee is 5–6 weeks as they fly 500–1000 miles gathering pollen and nectar. During this brief lifetime, they produce 1/12 of a teaspoon of honey. During the winter, a worker bee lives 4–5 months.
- ❖ Bees maintain a hive temperature of around 95°F summer and winter by fanning their wings or clustering together.
- ❖ A large, healthy hive contains approximately 50,000 bees and, under the right conditions, can produce well over 100 lbs. of honey.
- ❖ Bees propagate themselves, usually in the spring, by swarming. If a hive becomes too crowded or if a queen’s egg-laying capability diminishes, the colony “grows” a new queen and forces the old queen to leave the hive, usually taking up to half of the bees with her.
- ❖ Beekeeping is used as a form of therapy for persons dealing with anxiety and PTSD.



In 2022, Master Gardener Dale Hudson asked the leadership at Christ the Good Shepherd Community Garden why we didn’t have a beehive. I saw this as a “sweet” opportunity and said that I’d “bee” willing to look into it. From previous experience, I knew that we needed bees, a structure and a good location.

Bees can be purchased from a reputable company or beekeeper—a single 10 frame hive with bees costs about \$400—or you can attempt to catch a swarm. For economic reasons I chose to go with the second option. I caught a swarm and purchased a double, 10 frame hive without bees for \$100. A suitable location at the garden was chosen, and our adventure “bee-gan”.

## Getting Down to Earth

Continued



Christ the Good Shepherd Garden  
Bee Hive

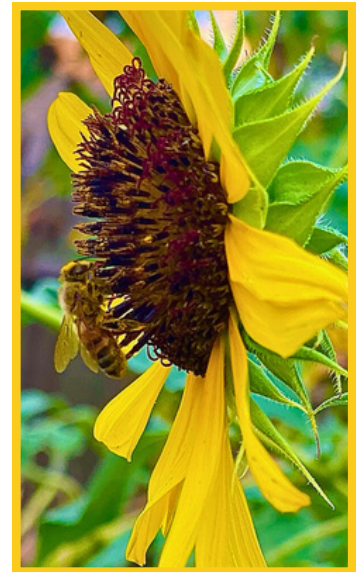
At CGS, we noticed our honeybees at work in the garden. We have been deliberate about growing plants that attract pollinators. In addition to the benefits to the garden, we have harvested 80 pounds of honey, most of which has been given away.

Most people ask if I ever get stung. The simple answer is yes, but that has only happened when the hive has been opened for inspection. Our hive is calm and well “bee-haved”—so much so that I often work with only a veil covering my face. No gloves or other protection is needed. A smoker is used to calm the bees and mask the smell of any alarm pheromones. Stings usually occur if I accidentally crush a bee with my hand or if I work with them when it is cloudy or later in the day. Only one other person has been stung at the garden when they were trimming the grass around the hive. Bees don’t like high-pitched sounds close to the hive. “Bee-ware” of weed whackers.

If you are at all interested in this fascinating and beneficial hobby, there are many resources to help you get started. The public library, online forums and local beekeeper clubs provide sweet opportunities for learning.

Perhaps you’d like to help the bees but are unable to have a hive of your own. The next best thing is to create a pollinator garden that will attract all types of pollinators such as native bees, honey bees, hummingbirds and butterflies.

Following is a list of plants that are suitable and available at local nurseries in our area that will bring life, color and beauty to your yard and home.



- *Baptisia australis* (False Indigo)
- *Cuphea hyssopifolia* (Mexican Heather)
- *Helianthus annuus* (Sun Flowers)
- *Hibiscus syriacus* (Rose of Sharon)
- *Ocimum basilicum* L. (Sweet Basil)
- *Ocimum basilicum* ‘Siam Queen’ (Thai Basil)
- *Rudbeckia laciniata* (Cutleaf Coneflower)
- *Ruellia caerulea* (Katie Blue, dwarf Mexican Petunia) – a Texas Super Star
- *Ruellia humilis* (Wild Petunia)
- *Salvia leucantha* (Mexican Bush Sage)
- *Tecoma stans* (Esperanza) - a Texas Super Star



## Getting Down to Earth

Continued

In addition to the garden hive, I have a hive in my backyard and my garden is flourishing. My grandkids have their own “beekeeping suits” and love helping me care for the bees. Extracting the honey has become a “sticky” family event. What started out as a random statement to my “bee-loved” wife has evolved into an enjoyable family affair.

References:

[How can veterans cope with PTSD? Some are turning to beekeeping](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2019/09/11/ptsd-treatment-coping-beekeeping-helps-veterans-deal-anxiety/2284649001/)

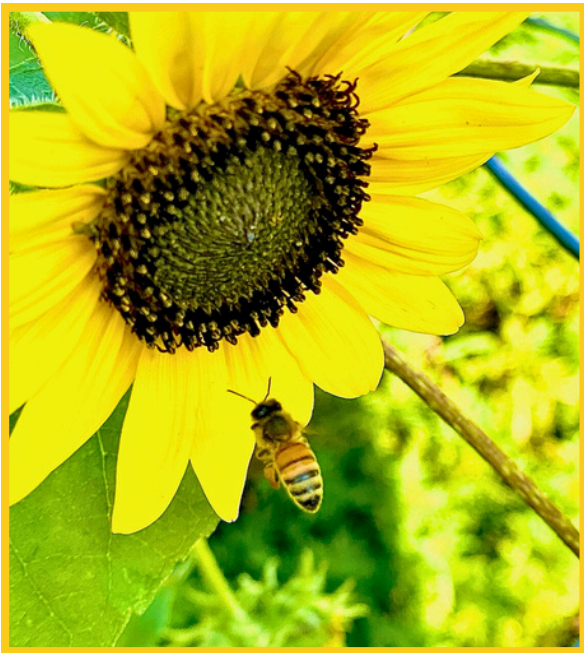
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<https://bestbees.com/2022/06/01/types-of-beehives-and-bee-boxes/>

[How to Create a Pollinator Garden in 7 Steps \(2024 Guide\)](https://www.architecturaldigest.com/reviews/lawn/how-to-create-a-pollinator-garden)

<https://www.architecturaldigest.com/reviews/lawn/how-to-create-a-pollinator-garden>



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*Christ The Good Shepherd Garden is a 100% volunteer operated vegetable donation garden benefiting food pantry facilities in the Spring Klein area. Most of our volunteers are members of the Christ the Good Shepherd church, the owners of the garden. Several master gardeners are involved on a weekly basis. CGS is a year-round operation with 28 raised beds forty feet long. These beds are refurbished after each harvest with tilling, fertilizing with 13-13-13 and adding compost from our year-round compost operation headed by John Zdansky with help from many volunteers. Five large silos full of grass clippings and chopped leaves are aged, watered and turned for two to three months.*



# Master Gardener Spotlight

Article by the Membership Committee

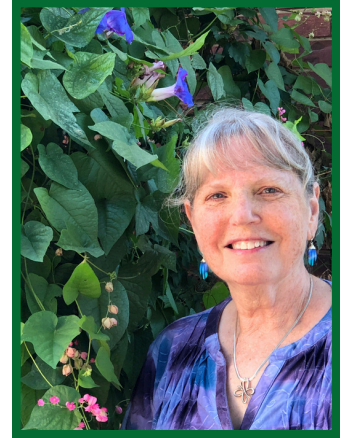
## Master Gardener of the Month

## September

Deb Stutsman was a member of the class of 2004—one of the first classes offered at Genoa Friendship Garden in the summer, so working teachers could attend!

Deb has always been a Texas girl and, although some summers can be brutal, enjoys gardening all year round. Born in Victoria, Texas, she began her love of flower gardening as a young child when visiting her Granny, who grew coral vine in the lattice work on the front porch, roses, daylilies, poppies and the magical multicolored lantanas. Her dad was an avid organic gardener—even before organic gardening was “cool”. He had a huge vegetable garden; his compost bin was legendary, and Deb helped her mom cook, can, and freeze all of his produce to enjoy year-round. Her dad was her veggie gardening buddy and mentor well into his 90's. While not in the garden, she loves road trips and visiting national parks with her husband.

**Congratulations!**



Starting her career as a kindergarten teacher, Deb later went back to college to become a librarian. Her first library job was at Spring Branch Elementary, where she has now been gardening with the students for over 30 years—starting with an afterschool garden club. After retiring in 2015, she started the vegetable and butterfly gardening program with all students during the day and was instrumental in the design, building and planting of the current butterfly, pollinator and veggie gardens at the school. She continues to seek grants and donations and to volunteer to improve the garden and offer meaningful gardening experiences to the students.

Deb has served as the garden coordinator at Spring Branch Elementary for nine years and on other youth related Master Gardener committees like Growing with Plants and Nature and Cylinder Gardening. She has also enjoyed working on plant sales and the Ask The Master Gardener committee.

## October

**Congratulations!**



Thank you, Deb, for all you do!



Maggie Mentakis has always been a lifelong learner and crafter. So, after retiring from the busy life of a surgeon and Medical Information Officer, there was finally time to broaden her horizons. She and her husband Alex followed their kids to Texas and proceeded to build a home—no landscaping! This was the perfect opportunity to learn more about horticulture in the demanding Houston climate, make new friends and connections, and give back to the community.

Maggie's time is now spent volunteering at GFG and helping to manage the greenhouse to support the plant sales and needs of GFG. She also volunteers for Project Mammogram, which provides low and no cost mammograms and breast cancer treatment to those in need, is president of the local knitting society and tries to play pickle ball in the cool mornings—if she is not working in her yard!

Thank you, Maggie, for all you do!



# Plant Spotlight Ornamental Kale

Article and photos by Jennifer Elfert, Master Gardener



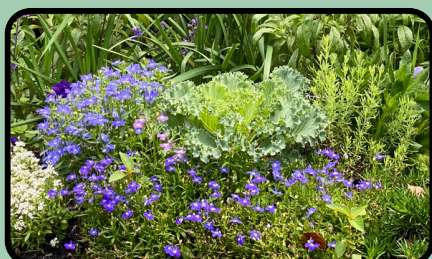
Ornamental kale is a winter annual that brings vibrant color to garden beds during the colder months. It can be grown in containers or directly in the soil. Belonging to *Brassica oleracea*—the same species as edible cabbages, broccoli, and cauliflower—ornamental kale is edible but grown for its more elaborate and colorful leaves. But don't underestimate this plant being planted for its foliage, it gives flowers a run for their money when it comes to enhancing the beauty of your garden!

Ornamental kale grows best in full sun but can tolerate partial shade. It enjoys fertile, well-drained, slightly acidic soil and has a temperature tolerance as low as 5°F. *Brassica oleracea* 'White Peacock' tends to be the most cold-hardy. These lovely plants grow to be 6–12 inches tall and about 18 inches wide, so plan your spacing accordingly.

The most common pests are caterpillars which you can easily remove by hand. Most gardeners remove the plants when they are damaged by insects or when spring temperatures get above 70°–75°F. Instead, I cut the plant down to a couple of inches of stalk. I've discovered that about half of the time it will slowly sprout a new plant over the summer that's presentable by fall, especially when it's shaded. The plants that don't resprout will end up feeding the soil, so for me, that's a win-win.

Ornamental kale will keep your garden beds bursting with life over the winter months into early spring throughout the Houston area and zone 9. If you haven't considered growing ornamental kale before, now is the time to find it at your local nurseries. Plant them in the conditions listed above and you won't be disappointed!

*Ornamental kale pairs well with winter annuals and early spring color*



Ornamental kale planted among sweet alyssum, lobelia, pansies and salvia



Ornamental kale with coleus and marigolds



Ornamental kale with begonias, creeping jenny, inpatients and golden stonecrop





## Herb Spotlight

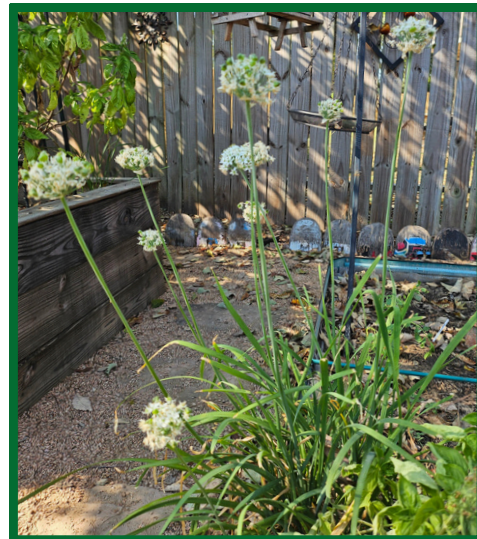
### Garlic chives, *Allium tuberosum*

Article by Aurora K., Master Gardener Intern

Photos by Cate Hanson, Master Gardener

Garlic chives, *Allium tuberosum*, also known as Chinese chives or jiǔ cài 韭菜 in Mandarin, are a graceful and fragrant herb to consider planting in your garden. The plant is native to East and Southeast Asia and is now a popular choice in North American gardens due to its prized culinary and ornamental qualities.

Garlic chives are a pungent herb known for their strong oniony fragrance and subtle garlic flavor, similar to green onions and chives. They're a good candidate for an herb garden because they can be easily snipped at any time when you need a garnish or want to add quick flavor to your cooking without the work of smashing and peeling garlic cloves. They can be grown in a small pot and brought inside the kitchen during frosty weather. They are used extensively in Chinese cuisine in many stir fry dishes and soups and will elevate many dishes like simple scrambled eggs. In addition to their culinary purposes, garlic chives have been used as a potent ingredient in Chinese medicines for the kidneys, lower back and knees.



Outside in the garden, garlic chives can live in dry to medium, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. They grow in clump-forming bulbs as part of the onion family, but are botanically distinguished by their thin, flat leaf shape as opposed to the hollow tube-like leaves of true chives. Their straight leaves grow up to 12"–18" tall in clumps 1'–2' wide and resemble soft blades of grass that arch at the tips, creating a fountain of green that remains attractive throughout the growing season. Their greyish tint will soften bright oranges and set off pink flowers, and they work well as low-maintenance edging. The plant can expand rapidly through its tuberous rootstocks and self-seeding, so it should be deadheaded before the plant sets seed, and clumps be should divided every three years to maintain vigor. They'll send up stalks with white blooms from late summer to fall with pretty umbels of tiny star-shaped flowers. These flowers are also edible, and their scent is similar to violets and will attract pollinators.

Garlic chives are a visually elegant and a tasty, multi-functional addition to any herb and flower garden!

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##### Medicinal Herbs

<https://hortipm.tamu.edu/county/smith/tips/veggie/medicinalherbs.html>

##### Choy Division

<https://www.choydivision.com/>







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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.

## Ask a Master Gardener at McGovern Centennial Gardens

*Article by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener*

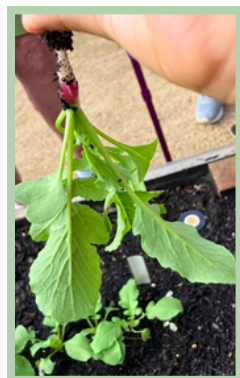


The Harris County Master Gardeners manage the Family Garden at McGovern Centennial Gardens in Hermann Park. You will see our volunteers there on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Debuting in August, an Ask a Master Gardener table has been added on the first Saturday of each month because of the number of horticultural questions the volunteers have been getting from the public.

I had the wonderful opportunity to serve alongside fellow MGs Phil John and Jen Bennett at the October AAMG. We met with visitors from all over the US and the world, including Brazil, India and Vietnam, and Hurricane Helene evacuees from North Carolina. We had 75 visitors during our 3-hour window.

## Ask a Master Gardener at McGovern Centennial Gardens

*Continued*



*A young girl picked a radish so Phil could show her how the roots grow. (Photo credit: Jo Ann Stevenson)*



*MG Phil John showing off the eggplants to a visitor (Photo credit: Jo Ann Stevenson)*



*MG Jen Bennett answering questions from a group of visitors from Vietnam (Photo credit: Jo Ann Stevenson)*



*Roselle in foreground and okra with blooms in background – notice the pink blooms on roselle and cream color blooms on okra (Photo credit: Jo Ann Stevenson)*



*A young girl from North Carolina was fascinated with the roselle, so we let her take one with her (Photo credit: Jo Ann Stevenson)*

It was clear that the roselle plants were the main attraction that day in the garden. It seemed that every group stopped and gawked at the roselle and asked each other what it was, if it was edible, etc. I was thrilled to talk to folks all morning about one of my favorite plants to grow—roselle. I explained the relationship to okra (growing in the next bed), and the many uses of the deep red calyx in tea, salads, sauces, etc. Folks were really excited to have a taste and learn how similar the tartness is to cranberries, and that the lemony-flavored leaves are also edible. We had great conversations with visitors who were genuinely interested in learning about a new plant they had never seen or heard of.

Visitors to the Family Garden were also interested in the jicama—it was the first time I've seen that growing, and the blue flowers are beautiful—as well as okra, pineapple, small eggplants, newly planted radishes, the bees buzzing around the African Blue Basil and all the herbs. They were very curious about what happens to the produce, and we explained that almost all of it is donated to local food banks.

Note: Visitors are discouraged from picking fruit and veggies from the Family Garden, but we did allow a young girl to pick a radish and other visitors to harvest and taste roselle as teaching moments, and explained to them that they could only do so with permission.

Elsewhere in the gardens, the American Beautyberry was putting on a show of purple and white berries all along the Pine Hill Walk (behind the Friendship Pavilion). Salvias and roses looked happy in the Rose Garden, and the Pergola Walk was lined with more salvias, cestrums, lantana, verbena and many other flowers in bloom in this gem of a Houston garden.





MG Jo Ann Stevenson  
discussing roselle with visitors  
(Photo credit: Jen Bennett)

## Ask a Master Gardener at McGovern Centennial Gardens

*Continued*



It was a great morning to spend in the garden, and it was fun to see visitors drawn to the roselle, and for me, personally, to have an opportunity to educate the public about a plant I love to grow.

If you would like to learn more about roselle, here is a link to the August 2023 Urban Dirt with my article on page 14, <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/files/2023/08/AugustUrbanDirtNewsletter.pdf>.

## Ask A Master Gardener In Person Events

Saturday, November 2, 8 a.m.-12 p.m.  
Urban Harvest  
2752 Buffalo Speedway, Houston, 77027

Saturday, November 2, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.  
McGovern Centennial Gardens - Family Gardens  
1500 Hermann Dr, Houston, 77004

Saturday, November 2, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Mercer Botanic Gardens  
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338

Saturday, November 9, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.  
Tomball Farmers Market  
205 West Main St, Tomball, 77375

Saturday, November 9, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.  
Farmers Market on Grand Parkway  
Church of the Holy Apostles  
1225 Grand Parkway S, Katy, TX 77494

Saturday, November 16, 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
Towne Lake Farmers Market  
9955 Barker Cypress Rd, Cypress, 77433

Saturday, November 16, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Mercer Botanic Gardens  
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338

Saturday, November 23, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m.  
Memorial Villages Farmers Market  
10840 Beinhorn Rd, Houston, 77024

Saturday, November 23, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Interfaith Ministries Fall Refugee Family  
Festival, Rice University  
6100 Mail St, Houston, 77005



Saturday, December 7, 8 a.m.-12 p.m.  
Urban Harvest  
2752 Buffalo Speedway, Houston, 77027

Saturday, December 7, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Mercer Botanic Gardens  
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338

Saturday, December 7, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.  
McGovern Centennial Gardens  
Family Gardens  
1500 Hermann Dr, Houston, 77004

Saturday, December 7, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.  
Tomball Farmers Market  
205 West Main St, Tomball, 77375

Saturday, December 14, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.  
Farmers Market on Grand Parkway  
Church of the Holy Apostles  
1225 Grand Parkway S, Katy, TX 77494

Saturday, December 21, 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
Towne Lake Farmers Market  
9955 Barker Cypress Rd, Cypress, 77433

Saturday, December 21, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Mercer Botanic Gardens  
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338

Saturday, December 28, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m.  
Memorial Villages Farmers Market  
10840 Beinhorn Rd, Houston, 77024

## Genoa Friendship Gardens



The Flower Trial Garden



The Water Garden



The Greenhouse

The Texas A&M 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.-11 a.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.





# Gardening Calendar

By Karen Shook, Master Gardener

**"And all at once, summer collapsed into fall." - Oscar Wilde**

**It's a bit cooler recently, but I am definitely ready for "summer to collapse into fall."**

While our rainfall this year is above average, August through October have been relatively dry. Keep your beds mulched and continue to check for "too wet, too dry, just right" and water accordingly.

Gather those fallen leaves (yours and your neighbors if they don't use them) to use as mulch or as the "brown" in your compost. (If you pick up leaves from others, be aware that some may be gathered via lawn mower and may contain grass, weeds, or weed treatments.)

November and December are good times to prepare planting beds for the spring as well as for general clean up and maintenance.

November comes with a chance of frost so be sure to have your frost supplies ready. Historically, first frost in Zone 8 is November 7 to November 28. First frost in Zone 9 is November 25 to December 13.

## Perennials, Ornamental Grasses and Natives

- Finish dividing spring blooming perennials. Most like to be divided every couple of years. Remember to keep the roots moist until the plant is replanted.
- As chrysanthemums and other perennials finish blooming, cut the stalks to the ground. Cutting back ornamental grasses can be done, but you might like the tan-colored seed heads as a winter display.
- You can still spread wildflower seeds. Gently rake them into the soil.

## Annuals

- Plant cool season annuals, like pansies, violas, dusty miller, snapdragons, and stock. Fertilize and mulch.
- Existing annuals should only be fertilized if they are showing deficiency symptoms.

## Bulbs

- Finish planting spring bulbs. For tulips and hyacinths, wait until December. Tulips should be refrigerated for at least three weeks. While bulbs are often planted in clusters or drifts, I sometime plant a bulb or two individually. I love the surprise each year when they bloom.
- Cut back foliage that has browned. Mark the location of dormant summer bulbs. It is also a good idea to mark where you plant spring bloomers so you don't accidentally dig them up or damage them.
- When you cut back iris foliage, gently dig some bone meal around the rhizomes.

## Shrubs

- Plant or move woody ornamentals including shrubs, roses, trees and woody vines so they are well established before summer heat arrives.
- Keep azaleas moist in cold weather to avoid damage.
- In late December, most shrubs will be dormant and can be pruned. Pruning too early (before dormancy) can encourage plants to set out new growth. Avoid pruning shrubs that bloom in the spring.

## Lawns

- Apply preemergent herbicide in early November if you didn't apply in October.
- Gather fallen leaves from your lawn and use as mulch or place in compost. Or using a mulching mower, mulch them down into the lawn to help cover the soil surface and deter cool season weeds.



## Gardening Calendar

*Continued*

### Edibles (vegetables, herbs, berries, fruits)

- Oranges and satsumas may be ready to harvest. It is typically best if they are harvested before turning fully orange.
- Prepare the vegetable garden for spring planting by clearing dead plants, pulling weeds, and tilling the soil. Consider a cover crop.
- See the following link for recommended planting times for cool season crops like beets, radishes, lettuce:  
[Harris County Veg Planting Guide](https://harris.agrilife.org/files/2019/03/Vegetable-Planting-Chart-2019.pdf) <https://harris.agrilife.org/files/2019/03/Vegetable-Planting-Chart-2019.pdf>

### Groundcovers and Vines

- Plant hardy perennial vines in December. No fertilizing is needed until spring.
- Mulch tender vines covering the roots and lower stems.
- Ground covers can be divided and transplanted.

### Trees

- Celebrate Texas Arbor Day on Friday, November 1, by planting a tree.



#### References:

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.

[www.weather.gov/wrh/climate](http://www.weather.gov/wrh/climate)

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



### Visit us at these social media pages:

Harris County Extension Horticulture Facebook Page

Harris County Master Gardeners Facebook Page

Harris County Master Gardeners Instagram Page



# **REEN THUMB 2025 GARDENING SERIES**

THE TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE AND THE HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ARE PLEASED TO OFFER THE GREEN THUMB GARDENING SERIES OF LECTURES FREE ONLINE.

**SECOND MONDAY, 10AM - 11:30AM  
HOUSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
@HOME GARDENING SERIES**

Register in advance to receive the link:  
[hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register](https://hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register)

**Online the Second Monday of each month**

**THIRD TUESDAY, 11AM - NOON  
HARRIS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY  
ON FACEBOOK LIVE**

No reservation required –  
[facebook.com/harriscountypub/events/](https://facebook.com/harriscountypub/events/)

**Online the Third Tuesday of each month**

**History of Genoa Friendship Gardens** Monday January 13 & Tuesday January 21

Unpaving a Parking Lot - A look at history, photos and purpose of GFG Demonstration Gardens.

**Spring Vegetable Gardening** Monday February 10 & Tuesday February 18

Choose the best veggies, prepare soil, start seeds & use natural pest control for homegrown produce.

**Seasonal Tree Care** Monday March 17 & Tuesday March 18

Assess how your trees recovered from the winter storms and prune before summer's heat.

**Sustainable Gardening** Monday April 14 & Tuesday April 15

Learn resources and methods to promote biodiversity and a balanced ecosystem in our gardens.

**Some Like It Hot / Xeriscaping** Monday May 12 & Tuesday May 20

Grow and care for drought tolerant plants, and better manage our urban water resources.

**Cover Crops and Living Mulches** Monday June 9 & Tuesday June 17

Low-maintenance ground covers will save on next season's fertilizer needs & manage pests better.

**Fall Vegetable Gardening** Monday July 14 & Tuesday July 15

Prepare your backyard garden and discover which vegetables are best to grow for the fall season.

**Plants of the Bible** Monday August 11 & Tuesday August 19

The cultural significance and spiritual meaning of plants in the Bible and similar ones we can grow.

**Powerful Perennials** Monday September 8 & Tuesday September 16

"Plant once, enjoy for years" garden stalwarts provide beauty, pollinator value, and easy care.

**Composting** Monday October 13 & Tuesday October 21

Why buy compost when you have everything at home to make your own, and it's easier than you think.



**GOT QUESTIONS? GO TO  
[HCMGA.TAMU.EDU/ASK-A-QUESTION](https://hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question)**



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:** I have several potted citrus trees. Any recommendations for potting soils I can buy or mixtures? How often should I fertilize potted trees?

**A:** Thank you for your question regarding patio citrus. With all of the terrible and unpredictable weather we have had the past few years, it is a good idea to grow citrus in containers. I personally do the same and currently have one orange, one tangerine and one Meyer lemon on my back patio.

The primary listed requirement for citrus container growing media usually just states "well-draining soil," essentially meaning that most good quality container mixes will be adequate. I personally have had very good luck by using commercial rose soil mix in my citrus containers, supplementing that with some good organic compost.

In [Container Citrus Production](https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/container-citrus-production/) (<https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/container-citrus-production/>), the Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service provides this advice on a formula for a homemade mix:

*As with most container gardening, using native soil is not recommended. Native soils are often too heavy for the container. A good homemade growing media mix for Citrus would be: 4 parts shredded aged pine bark and 1 part peat moss or coir (cocoa fiber). This mix ensures high organic matter and good drainage, or a well-drained potting mix can be purchased. If coir is used in the potting media, apply agricultural gypsum (calcium sulfate) to replace the high levels of sodium ions with calcium ions and help flush out other toxins that often are found in coir.*

Fertilization recommendations vary. Some will state that a slow-release fertilizer applied once a year in the spring is sufficient. [Patio Citrus](https://aggie-hort.tamu.edu/patiocitrus/index.html) (<https://aggie-hort.tamu.edu/patiocitrus/index.html>), a guide from the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, recommends this approach. However, the Clemson University guide cited above states:

*Frequent watering of containers will consequently flush out essential plant nutrients. To prevent nutrient loss, a slow-release fertilizer, such as a 12-6-6 or a 12-4-6, is recommended. Several applications will need to be made throughout the growing season, depending upon the release rate of the product. The release rates of these products are both moisture and temperature dependent. The higher the temperature, the quicker the release rate of the nutrients. During the growing season, citrus trees will need 2 to 3 applications to maintain adequate growth.*

A good rule of thumb is to apply two early fertilizations of an organic slow-release fertilizer—one in early spring and another at the beginning of summer. However, you will not want to provide a nitrogen-containing fertilizer after mid-summer so as not to encourage a lot of new fall growth. Late summer is the time to switch to a water-soluble, seaweed-based product that will help strengthen your trees for the cold weather ahead. It should be said, though, that using a water-soluble fertilizer frequently throughout the year is a good idea as it will provide many of the trace minerals that container citrus needs to thrive.



[Care of Patio Citrus](https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=25682) (<https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=25682>) is another resource for growing citrus in containers from the University of California Master Gardeners of Monterey Bay.

Fertilization summary:

- Slow-release product with at least a 2-1-1 ratio early in the year
- Water soluble seaweed-based organic fertilizer later in the year

There are many products locally available that will fit these criteria. I would recommend a visit to some of our independently owned nurseries inside Loop 610 as they will have the products that you need and will also have staff available to answer any questions. Our primary guidance with any product is to advise that you apply it according to the package directions.

I hope that this information will be helpful for you and that you have a nice citrus harvest soon.



## Ask A Master Gardener Online

Continued



**Q:** We want to rid our yard of a few pests. Is it harmful to the soil or plants to toss moth balls around the flower beds and patio? Someone recommended that, but I want to be sure it is safe. Thank you.

**A:** Thank you for sending in your question. Mothballs are a pesticide, so whenever they are used it should be strictly according to the package label. Mothballs are intended to be used within an airtight container to kill clothes moths and carpet beetles and their eggs and larvae; they should not be used in any other context because of their potential for harm. According to the [National Pesticide Information Center](http://npic.orst.edu/ingred/ptype/mothball/regulation.html) (<http://npic.orst.edu/ingred/ptype/mothball/regulation.html>), mothballs should not be used outside.

Another common mistake is using mothballs in gardens or other outdoor locations to control insects, [snakes](http://npic.orst.edu/pest/snake.html) (<http://npic.orst.edu/pest/snake.html>) or other wildlife. Using mothballs outside can harm children, [pets](https://npic.orst.edu/health/pets.html) (<https://npic.orst.edu/health/pets.html>) and other animals. Mothballs used outdoors can also contaminate soil, plants and water.

Here are two more resources regarding the use of mothballs:

[Mothballs are a Pesticide and Should be Used with Care](https://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/mothballs-are-pesticide-should-be-used-care) (<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/mothballs-are-pesticide-should-be-used-care>) - Oregon State University Extension Service

[The Facts About Mothballs](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/PI289) (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/PI289>)- University of Florida IFAS Extension

What we strongly advocate as a strategy to manage garden pests is an approach called IPM or Integrated Pest Management. This is a system guided by knowing which pests are causing problems in your garden and then using a scaled approach to take care of them. This starts with the least harmful level of intervention and then escalates as needed. The goal of using IPM in the garden is to balance the landscape in favor of the plants rather than the pests. [HERE](http://landscapeipm.tamu.edu) is a page from the Texas A&M Extension Service that describes IPM in the home landscape (<http://landscapeipm.tamu.edu>).

If you have any additional questions about pests in your garden or need help in identifying them, please contact us again using our AAMGO form.

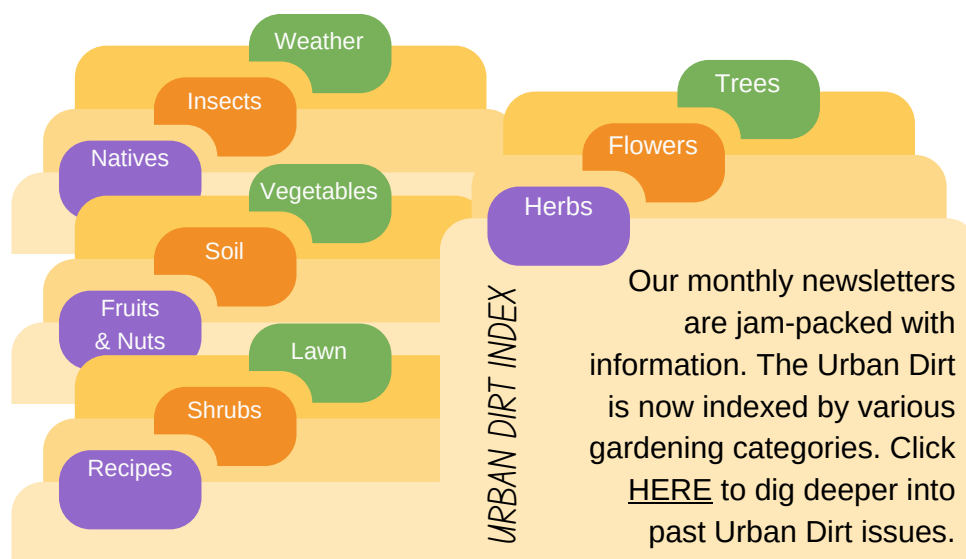


Make a holiday gift donation to the Harris County Master Gardeners


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Thank you for your support!



Our monthly newsletters are jam-packed with information. The Urban Dirt is now indexed by various gardening categories. Click [HERE](#) to dig deeper into past Urban Dirt issues.

	<b>Vegetable Garden Planting Dates</b> for Harris County												Texas AgriLIFE Extension Service Harris County Office 713-274-0950 <a href="https://harris.agrilife.org/hort/">https://harris.agrilife.org/hort/</a>	
	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)														
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.

## 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/](http://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>

