

Urban Dirt

Gardening Events and Information for Harris County



Message from our President



**Dianne Lawrence, President
Harris County Master Gardeners**

Hello, everyone! We made it through another intense summer. Could slightly cooler weather and more rain be just around the corner?

We'd love some nice weather for our upcoming plant sale. Don't miss our sale on October 10th at Genoa Friendship Gardens featuring native plants, fruit trees and fall vegetables. Look for more information on page four of this newsletter and at hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-sales. Come out and see us! We love meeting our fellow gardeners and answering your garden questions.

We also welcome the public to our first Tuesday lecture series. On September 1st, Tiernan Pytlak, Applied Environmental Scientist from the Bayou Preservation Association, will speak to us about how Houston's bayous shape our communities. On October 4th, Brandon Hubbard, Horticultural Manager at the Houston Zoo will share insights into the zoo's vast gardens. Our Tuesday meetings are held at 11:00 a.m. at Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Rd, Houston 77055.

I hope you've been enjoying our free Green Thumb gardening lecture series, presented online through our partnerships with Houston City College (HCC) and Harris County Public Library (HCPL). This month our topics are "Hooked on Herbs," presented by Fiona Kilbride, and in October, the topic is "Garden Myths," presented by Valerie Depew. Find more information [here](#) and on page 44 of this newsletter.

As always, I hope you enjoy this issue and invite you to visit us on social media and at our website at <https://txmg.org/hcmga/> for more information about upcoming events and activities. Thank you for supporting Harris County Master Gardeners.

I look forward to seeing you!

Dianne Lawrence



In This Issue

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NORTHWEST SALES

January 23rd 2027
Fruit Tree Sale

March 20th 2027
Spring Tomatoes, Vegetables, and
Perennials Sale

Spring Creek Park
15012 Brown Rd,
Tomball, TX 77375



FALL 2026 - SPRING 2027 PLANT SALES

HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS



For more information visit:
hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-sales



SOUTHEAST SALES

October 10th 2026
Native Plants, Fruit Trees, and
Fall Vegetables Sale

October 17th 2026
Tree Giveaway
By Trees for Houston

February 27th 2027
Native Plants, Tomatoes, and
Tree Sale

April 24th 2027
Native Plants, Tomatoes, and
Tree Sale

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

Catch our



blogs in partnership with the
Houston Public Library at:

<https://hcpl.net/blogs/post/why-fall-is-better-yall-fall-vegetable-gardening/>

<https://hcpl.net/blogs/post/garden-smarter-with-these-3-permaculture-principles/>

Watch our Green Thumb gardening series

presented by HCMG and HCPL

WATCH NOW

Upcoming EVENTS

Tuesday, September 1, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
First Tuesday Meeting Lecture: “Living with Water: How Houston's Bayous Shape Our Communities” with Tiernan Pytlak, Applied Environmental Scientist, Bayou Preservation Association, Inc.

Click for updates:

<https://txmg.org/hcmga/lecture-series/>

Trini Mendenhall Community Center
 1414 Wirt Rd, Houston 77055

Friday, September 4, 1:00 p.m.
Texas Superstar Plants with Teresa See
Freed Community Center
6818 Shadyvilla Ln, Houston 77055

Wednesday, September 9, 10:00 a.m.
Plant Propagation with Teresa See
Mendenhall Community Center
1414 Wirt Rd, Houston 77055

Wednesday, September 9, 12:30 p.m.
Growing and Cooking with Herbs with Chevvy Tang
Weekley Community Center
8440 Greenhouse Rd, Cypress 77433

Thursday, September 10, 1:00 p.m.
Raised Beds with Teresa See
Bayland Community Center
6400 Bissonnet St, Houston 77074

Friday, September 11, 12:30 p.m.
Roses with Anna Schaumann
Freed Community Center
6818 Shadyvilla Ln, Houston 77055

Monday, September 14, 10 – 11:30 a.m.
GREEN THUMB presents:
“Hooked on Herbs” presented by Fiona Kilbride.

Herbs are easy to grow and very beneficial. Discover everything you need to know about the world of herbs.

Harris County Master Gardeners
HCC @Home Gardening Series.

Register here:

hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register

Tuesday, September 15, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.
GREEN THUMB presents: “Hooked on Herbs” presented by Fiona Kilbride.

Herbs are easy to grow and very beneficial. Discover everything you need to know about the world of herbs.

Harris County Master Gardeners
Harris County Public Library on You Tube

No reservation needed – visit
<https://bit.ly/4jo8lWa>

Tuesday, September 15, 1:00 p.m.
A Few Perennials with Teresa See
Tracy Gee Community Center
3599 Westcenter Dr, Houston 77042

Wednesday, September 16, 1:00 p.m.
Herbs with Chevvy Tang
Glazier Senior Education Center
16600 Pine Forest Ln, Houston 77042

Thursday, September 24, 2:00 p.m.
Native Plants with Kathie Dreher
Maud Marks Library
1815 Westgreen Blvd, Katy 77450

Upcoming EVENTS

Friday, October 2, 1:00 p.m.
A Few Perennials with Teresa See
Freed Community Center
6818 Shadyvilla Ln, Houston 77055

Tuesday, October 4, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
First Tuesday Meeting Lecture: “Zoological Horticulture” with Brandon Hubbard
Manager, Horticulture, Houston Zoo.
Click for updates:
<https://txmg.org/hcmga/lecture-series/>
Trini Mendenhall Community Center
1414 Wirt Rd, Houston 77055

Wednesday, October 7, 11:00 a.m.
Container Gardening with Teresa See,
Bayland Community Center
6400 Bissonnet St, Houston 77074

Thursday, October 9, 12:00 p.m.
Native Plants with Chevvy Tang
Freed Community Center
6818 Shadyvilla Ln, Houston 77055

Saturday, October 10
HCMG Plant Sale: Native Plants, Fruit Trees
and Fall Vegetables Sale
Genoa Friendship Gardens
1201 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston 77034

Monday, October 12, 10 – 11:30 a.m.
GREEN THUMB presents: “Garden Myths: Fact, Folklore, and a Few Tall Tales” by Valerie Depew.
 Not everything you’ve heard about gardening is true—some tips are treasures, others are pure fiction. We’ll dig into the most common myths, uncover what really...

works, and have a little fun along the way.
Harris County Master Gardeners
HCC @Home Gardening Series.
[Register here:](https://hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register)
hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register

Thursday, October 15, 11:00 a.m.
Seed, Cutting and Plant Swap,
Tracy Gee Community Center
3599 Westcenter Dr, Houston 77042

Saturday, October 17
Tree Giveaway by Trees for Houston
Genoa Friendship Gardens
1201 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston 77034

Tuesday, October 18, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.
GREEN THUMB presents: “Garden Myths: Fact, Folklore, and a Few Tall Tales” presented by Valerie Depew.
 Not everything you’ve heard about gardening is true—some tips are treasures, others are pure fiction. We’ll dig into the most common myths, uncover what really works, and have a little fun along the way.
Harris County Master Gardeners
Harris County Public Library on You Tube
No reservation needed—just visit
<https://bit.ly/4jo8lWa>

Wednesday, October 21, 10:00 a.m.
A Few Perennials with Teresa See
Mendenhall Community Center
1414 Wirt Rd, Houston 77055



Tropical Herb Spotlight: Bananas

Article and photos by Christy Jones, Master Gardener Intern

Bananas are one of the world's most popular fruits. Native to southeast Asia, they have been cultivated in tropical regions for thousands of years. Their long, graceful leaves are a beautiful addition to the landscape, pool, or patio. Although commonly called trees, bananas are actually herbs as they do not form woody stems. Their herbaceous "trunk" is a pseudostem comprised of layers of leaf sheaths that grow quickly. The plant has underground rhizomes and fibrous roots. The pseudostem supports the leaves, flower, and fruit-bearing stalk.

tropical year-round, bananas are mostly ornamental here. However, some smaller bananas and fruit varieties such as 'Apple' and 'Lady Finger'—due to their size—have a better chance of producing edible fruit in our area because they require fewer months to mature.

Bananas come in a wide variety of heights and pseudostem colors with beautiful variations in leaf length and shape. These characteristics should be considered when selecting bananas for the landscape. Check out the newer 'Dwarf' banana varieties, which offer exciting new landscape options.



Banana 'Pink Banana' grows 5–6 feet and has a pop of pink

The larger bananas (and plantains) found in grocery stores take 11–15 months to grow. Because Houston's climate is warm but not



Banana 'Truly Tiny' grows only 3–4 feet tall

Although the family Musaceae contains three recognized genera—*Ensete*, *Musa*, and *Musella*—we will focus on the genus *Musa*, particularly *Musa acuminata* and *Musa balbisiana*, the two wild species that contribute to most of today's cultivated bananas and plantains.



Tropical Herb Spotlight:

Bananas

Continued

The following banana-growing tips have been compiled from information provided by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agent Dr. Julian W. Sauls, and University of Florida Extension Agents Jonathan H. Crane, Carlos F. Balerdi, and Ian Maguire.

Soil and Site Selection: Choose a sunny, flat area protected from wind, in well-drained, deep soil high in organic matter with a pH of 5.5–7.0. The site should be free from flooding or standing water. Shade delays plant growth but can be tolerated up to 50%.

Environment: Bananas flourish under uniformly warm conditions. Growth is best between 78–82 degrees. Focusing on the first 3–4 months of spring temperatures can have a lasting effect on growth during the heat of summer. Temperatures above 98 degrees may result in leaf scorch, while temperatures below 60 degrees will slow or stop growth. Wind can damage leaves, and wind above 25 mph may topple plants.

Planting: Dig a hole 3–4 times the diameter and approximately 3 times as deep as the container. Backfill the hole with a 50-50 ratio of native soil and organic compost. The soil should be level with or slightly above the container soil level. Ornamental bananas may be planted 2–3 feet apart, while fruit production bananas should be spaced 8–10 feet apart.

Water: Bananas are true tropical plants and need plenty of water—about 4–6 inches per month for normal growth and production. They are sensitive to drought, flooding, and inadequate drainage.

Fertilization: Bananas need the best care their first 3–4 months. Very fertile soil or a 3-1-6 ratio fertilizer applied every 1–2 months is optimal.

Thinning: Allowing numerous pseudostems to grow may lead to competition and reduce the health of the banana mat (the entire plant). It is best to have one main pseudostem, one half-grown pseudostem, and one small sucker. This will also help with crowding, disease, and fungal development.

Propagation: Suckers are used for propagation, and the rhizome base can be divided using a sharpshooter or spade when the stem diameter is 2–6 inches. The soil depth in the new container or garden should be the same depth from which it was taken.

Flowers and Fruit: The banana inflorescence (flowering stalk) will emerge from the center of the pseudostem 10–15 months after planting, depending on temperature and cultivar. The entire bunch may be harvested when individual bananas are plump and round. The bunch can then be placed in a cool, dark place to ripen.



Tropical Herb Spotlight: Bananas

Continued

Diseases and Insects: Few problems have been documented in Texas, and leaf tattering caused by wind is the most common problem. Fungal leaf spot has been observed and is easy to remove when identified. Because Houston's humidity and rainfall can be high, nematode populations in the soil may increase after heavy rain events.

Cold Preparation: Bananas will begin to die back when temperatures drop below 50 degrees. It is best to allow the plant to insulate itself, but adding mulch around the base is advised if temps are expected to go below 30 degrees for more than a few hours. Remove any mushy debris as soon as possible so fungus does not develop in the rhizome.

Varieties: Popular varieties in Houston include 'Dwarf Cavendish' that reaches 6–8 feet in height; 'Apple', 'Manzana', 'Blue Java', and 'Lady Finger', which produce fruit about 4 inches in length; and 'Maroon-Leafed Banana', known for its spattering of burgundy-red coloration.



Banana 'Maroon Leafed' grows 5–6 feet tall and offers stunning burgundy accents in the landscape

With a little preparation and care, bananas can be a fantastic addition to your garden or landscape!

You are invited to Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens' September 16th Lunch & Learn — 'Bananas Unpeeled' presented by Christy Jones and Kelsey Williams. The program will include an indoor presentation followed by an outdoor tour of Mercer's banana collection. For more information or to register, visit www.pct3.com/MBG.



Banana 'Lemon Tasting' is a 12–15 foot plant that has a classic majestic canopy



Gingerleaf

An Invasive Plant Mystery

Article by Lisa Rawl, Master Gardener

Our Ask A Master Gardener Online (AAMGO) helpline team recently received our most challenging plant identification question to date and because it turned out to be a little known, very invasive plant for our area, we thought more gardeners should be aware of it. Back in March, a homeowner emailed us requesting help identifying and eliminating a weed that had taken over much of the St. Augustine grass in her backyard near the north end of the Addicks Reservoir. She said she had been dealing with the problem plant since Hurricane Harvey flooded her yard in August 2017, and she suspected the plant may have come in under the fence from her neighbor's yard. The plant was taking over large areas of her back yard, in the dappled shade under a large water oak, and she had tried multiple methods to eradicate it through the years, including hand-digging, scalping, consumer herbicides, re-sodding the back yard, and professional lawn company applications of strong herbicides. Nothing has helped control the weed and it continues to return—the plant also survives our hard freezes, high summer heat, and drought.

The homeowner described the plant as vine-like and low growing, with heart-shaped green leaves and roots 3–4 inches deep. She said the plant had tiny white flowers. Through some additional questions, we found out the plant tended to form a thick mat, and did not have milky sap in stolons, petioles, or leaves.

Here are a few of her photos:



Our committee members reviewed every plant we could think of that even remotely fit the appearance and description of the plant, and used multiple plant ID apps and AI to try and identify it, without success. The leaves resembled many different plants, including violets, *Dichondra*, *Dioscorea* species, and *Ipomoea* species like tievine, but nothing was a true match.



Gingerleaf

An Invasive Plant Mystery

Continued

The mystery was finally solved with the help of our experts at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. We sent the photos and information to Paul Winski, our friend and former Harris County Commercial Horticulture Agent who is now the statewide Program Specialist for the Green Industry, and he sent the photos and information to several of his AgriLife colleagues. Dr. Barron Rector, Associate Professor and Extension Range Specialist, recognized the plant from the 1990's and sent the details for further confirmation to several of his colleagues, including Barney Lipscomb, a botanist with the Fort Worth Botanical Gardens. Mr. Lipscomb provided the final identification confirmation, along with a copy of an older journal article and botanical information.

The mystery plant is *Lycianthes asarifolia*, commonly known as gingerleaf, and it is in the plant family Solanaceae. Gingerleaf is native to South America and in the United States; it has only been found in Houston and New Orleans. Another common name used for *L. asarifolia* in other countries is motojobobo, though that common name is also used for the Peruvian groundcherry or cape gooseberry, *Physalis peruviana*. Despite the common names, *L. asarifolia* is NOT a ginger, and we do not have any research-based information from United States sources about whether or not the plant is edible; we cannot recommend tasting plant parts if you run across it.

According to the journal article, *Lycianthes Asarifolia* (Solanacea) New and Weedy in Texas, written by Monique Dubrule Reed and Mary Ketchersid and published in SIDA 18(1): 361-362 in 1998, gingerleaf was first collected in Houston and sent to Texas A&M for identification in July 1997. The plant had likely already been in town for three or more years because by the time TAMU specialists were involved, it had "overrun several residential yards in Houston, forming a dense, attractive ground cover in shaded areas."

According to Reed and Ketchersid, the plant was "reproducing vegetatively and sexually, for numerous flowers and immature fruits were seen in early December 1997 and mature fruits were collected in March 1998." The original location where gingerleaf was collected was in Hunter's Creek Village in the Memorial area. The owners of the landscapes with gingerleaf had not been able to kill the plant despite trying a variety of methods, just like our recent AAMGO helpline client.

Texas A&M specialists conducted herbicide trials at the original site in 1998 and couldn't find a treatment that provided complete control. They found that "treatments which have weakened the *Lycianthes* have also damaged the surrounding turf." In 1998, Reed and Ketchersid suspected that fruit, seeds and other plant parts were being distributed from yard to yard through lawn equipment, and they were very concerned that if the plant



Gingerleaf

An Invasive Plant Mystery

Continued

made its way into Memorial Park, it might be impossible to eradicate and could become a noxious weed in southern portions of Texas.

At the end of the journal article, Reed and Ketchersid mentioned that the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) was conducting a formal risk assessment. They also mentioned that because another population of gingerleaf had been found in New Orleans in 1991 (this population had not produced fruit), the Louisiana Department of Agriculture was considering a full survey for the plant in the New Orleans area.

Fast forward to 2026...while there are quite a few international references, there is still very little information about gingerleaf in the United States. An online search using the botanical name did not turn up any references to a USDA APHIS risk assessment, or to any surveys or additional research that might have been performed by Louisiana or Texas experts. Interestingly, the Army Corps of Engineers included *Lycianthes asarifolia* in a 2006 report about invasive species that could impact their ability to manage threatened and endangered species on military installations. For Texas installations, *Lycianthes asarifolia* was listed among species that could affect management of the Black Capped Vireo and Golden Cheeked Warbler. The range for both birds is Central Texas into Mexico, and doesn't include Southeast Texas.

Perhaps the most accessible US references for identifying gingerleaf are [HERE](#), from the Flora of the Southeastern United States website (with very good photos), and [HERE](#), from the Flora of North America (a botanical description with illustrations). The plant can also develop small orange fruit, but unfortunately, the references don't have photos of the fruit. Another source of reference photos is iNaturalist.org; a spot-check of iNaturalist showed many accurate identifications of gingerleaf, with a variety of photos—most of the reports are international, but there are four reports in Louisiana (New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Lafayette) and three reports in Texas, all within the last 5 years. The iNaturalist reports from Texas consist of one in Montgomery, TX, and two in Southwest Houston inside the Tollway.



<https://fsus.ncbg.unc.edu/main.php?pg=show-taxon-detail.php&taxonid=6983>



Gingerleaf

An Invasive Plant Mystery

Continued

While it appears that gingerleaf is moving beyond the areas where it was originally discovered in Texas and Louisiana, we don't have much data about how far or where it has spread. And unfortunately, we don't have any research-based information about what might help control the plant once it establishes itself in other landscapes. At this point, probably the best strategy for keeping gingerleaf from taking over a landscape, especially shady areas, is going to be regular inspections of your landscape. If you can catch the plant early enough, before the stolons have spread and rooted in multiple locations, then you might be able to dig out the entire plant. You'll need to dig carefully, at least 5 inches deep and all around the plant, making sure that you get all plant parts—leaves, stolons, and attached roots. If gingerleaf has become intertwined with turfgrass or other plants, then the other plant material will likely need to be removed too. Then throw everything away—do not put plant parts in a compost pile or bin. You'll want to monitor closely to make sure gingerleaf doesn't show up in other locations.



<https://fsus.ncbg.unc.edu/main.php?pg=show-taxon-detail.php&taxonid=6983>

If you find that you have a larger patch of gingerleaf in your landscape, then the only thing we can suggest to try, because there aren't any other options at the present time, would be some type of containment, which will take a lot of work and still may not be effective. Given the growth habits of the plant, you'd need to install some type of solid edging material around the entire patch that goes into the ground at least 6–8 inches deep, with another 6–8 inches above ground. You would also need to regularly maintain that patch to remove any flowers and fruit that you find to prevent seeds from developing, and hand edge around the patch, throwing away trimmed leaves and stolons. Even with a containment effort, it's possible that pets or wildlife roaming through the patch could break off pieces that might root elsewhere.

If you suspect that you have gingerleaf in your landscape, you are welcome to send clear, closeup photos of leaves and flowers (and fruit, if the plants have fruit), to our AAMGO helpline so we can try and confirm the identification for you. You can find our Gardening Questions form on our website, <https://txmg.org/hcmga/>. It is also a good idea to report gingerleaf in an email to the Texas Invasive Species Institute, invasives@shsu.edu. Provide your address and/or zip code in your email and attach photos if you have them.



Spotlight Native Plant: **Obedient Plant**

Article and photos by Becky McGraw-Hall, Master Gardener

The Fall Obedient Plants (*Physostegia virginiana*) in my yard are alive with bees and butterflies this time of year. They are covered with masses of pinkish-lavender tubular shaped blooms on spiky snap-dragon-like stems. They don't produce a discernable scent, but that doesn't deter the pollinators. Known for producing an abundant amount of nectar from late summer through fall, this nectar source attracts lots of pollinators, including hummingbirds, butterflies and bees, but especially native bumblebees. I love watching the American bumblebees trying to fit their fat little bodies into the tubular-shaped blooms to reach the nectar and pollen held deep inside the flower. (Ask me to show you the video!) They bloom late July–November in southeast Texas, providing a much-needed late season food source. The flower stems open progressively from the bottom to the tip, prolonging the bloom time of each stem. These North American natives can have white or pink flower spikes, but most commonly have the above-mentioned pinkish lavender flowers.



Although multiple sources recommend full sun to part shade, I find the plants don't really like our kind of full sun, and can get sun-scald in full Texas sun. Like me, they need a break from the afternoon sun. My plants are happy in a partly shaded area where the soil stays moist and they are shielded from the worst of the afternoon sun. They are tolerant of our clay soil and will withstand periodic "wet feet," although they prefer evenly moist loamy soil. They are hardy perennials in zones 3–9. Even when not blooming, they are attractive plants. While not truly evergreen (they are an herbaceous perennial), in zone 9 the leaves stay a lush green almost year-round, dying back in the January freezes and often leafing out in late February. They have upright stems that typically reach 2–4 feet in height, although they





Spotlight Native Plant

Obedient Plant

Continued

can get floppy if they are in too much shade or the soil is too moist. The blooms also make lovely long-lasting cut flowers. But here's the rub, they tend to spread readily, or dare I say aggressively, in flower beds.

Now, I don't want to discourage anyone from growing this beautiful native perennial, but if ever there was a misnomer in the plant dictionary, it would be this. The obedient plant is NOT obedient—far from it! It has earned its nickname as the disobedient plant.

Obedient plants were named so because if one pushes an individual flower on the stem, it tends to "obediently" stay in that new position, at least temporarily. The plant itself, like other members of the mint family, tends to spread by rhizomes, which can form dense colonies crowding out adjacent plants. However, the rhizomes are shallow and are easily pulled in moist soil to limit its aggressive growth. This habit makes it a wonderful choice for filling large, vacant garden spaces or for naturalizing in a large bed or meadow. And it is also easily contained in a planter or pot buried or placed within a bed. There are also natives, such as 'Miss Manners' and 'Pink Manners' that are reportedly more clumping than spreading due to shorter rhizomes which spread less aggressively, but I have no experience with these. Fall obedient plants also spread by seed, so deadheading your plants will help limit any unwanted spread.



Fall obedient plants are an excellent addition to a pollinator garden, especially in moister areas of the garden or in rain gardens. Make sure you give it plenty of room to spread, or keep it contained in a buried pot. It makes a great companion plant to other strong native species that won't get pushed out by the rhizomes and that enjoy a similar habitat, including swamp milkweed, ironweed, goldenrod, asters, purple coneflower, and Joe-Pye weed. Plant them and enjoy the bees!

References:

- <https://www.npsot.org/posts/native-plant/physostegia-virginiana/>
- <https://txmg.org/grayson/screenshot-2024-03-28-at-5-22-43-pm/>

Spotlight Vegetable:

Beets (*Beta vulgaris*)

Article by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener



Beets are one of my favorite cool season root vegetables. They can be grown in fall and early spring in Harris County. They are native to parts of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

Varieties

I have grown the Detroit Dark Red and also a golden beet variety that was very tasty. Other recommended varieties include Chioggia, Pacemaker II, Red Ace, and Ruby Queen.

Growing

Each beet seed can produce 2–6 plants. Seeds should be spaced 1–2 inches apart and thinned to 2–3 inches apart once the plants reach 3–4 inches in height. Plant seeds 3 weeks apart for a continuous supply. Water well each week if there is no rain.

Beets can tolerate partial shade, but need deep, well-drained soil for their long roots. For best results, be sure your soil is not deficient in boron by conducting a soil test. Dr. Masabni from Texas A&M states that the soil “should have adequate organic matter to prevent it from crusting because crusty soil causes beet roots to be tough.”

Diseases are most severe in cloudy, damp weather, so check your plants daily for any fungus issues during those conditions.

Harvesting

Most varieties are ready for harvest after 7–8 weeks. Cut off the root, and store the washed root ball in the refrigerator in plastic bags for 1–2 weeks. The tender greens can be washed and saved in the refrigerator in plastic bags for 1–2 days only.

Uses

Beet roots can be eaten raw, julienned into salad, or pickled. The greens can be substituted for Swiss chard or spinach.

I’ve had most success roasting beet roots with other root vegetables, with just a little olive oil, salt and pepper. I also have great memories of eating my grandmother’s pickled beets. They were small, round and homegrown, and I’ve never found any that tasted as good as hers.

Spotlight Vegetable:

Beets (*Beta vulgaris*)

Continued

Benefits

Beets are very nutritious and contain folate, manganese, calcium, and potassium; and the greens are a good source of lutein. Beets add color and texture to your dish with an earthy flavor. A word of warning: beets have the highest sugar content of any vegetable.

Lagniappe (a little something extra)

I've been thinking about beets for almost 2 months while preparing to write this article. Sonny and Cher's "The Beat Goes On" and The Go-Go's first and biggest hit, "We Got the Beat" have been running on repeat in my head—only with "beet" in my version of both songs.

The day I wrote this article, I visited Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens (my happy place), and saw the still life painting in the Chillman Parlor on the first floor. It is a magnificent painting and there's a beet in it!!

Then at the grocery check-out, I looked up and the sign above the lane had a beet on it. I don't think those were coincidences.

If you've never been a fan of beets, I hope you will give them a try. Maybe you could sing "we got the beet" to your family as you serve them a bowl full of beets.



Still Life with Vegetables, 1826, by James Peale (American, 1749–1831). The Bayou Bend Collection, museum purchase funded by the Theta Charity Antiques Show in honor of Mrs. Fred T. Couper, Jr. www.mfah.org.

Resources:

- <https://agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/how-to-grow-beets.pdf>
- https://extension.usu.edu/news_sections/home_family_and_food/beet-benefits





Spotlight Recipe:

Layered Roast Beet and Orange Salad

Article and photos by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener

This edition's spotlight recipe is Layered Roasted Beet and Orange Salad, first published by Lisa Leake on *100 Days of Real Food®*. Here is a refreshing way to serve beets, oranges and spinach. I first ate a beet salad at Fratelli's Restaurant in Spring Branch and it was love at first bite! Their version includes strawberries, arugula and a balsamic reduction drizzled on top.

This salad contains 4g protein, 3g fiber and almost half your daily requirement of Vitamin C per serving. If you don't particularly like red beets, then try golden beets for a milder flavor, or use avocado instead.



Jo Ann's roasted beet and orange salad

Layered Roasted Beet and Orange Salad

INGREDIENTS

- 2 large oranges (peeled)
- 2 medium red beets (roasted, peeled, and trimmed)
- 3 ounces goat cheese log (stored in the freezer)
- 1 handful fresh spinach leaves
- 4 chives (chopped)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil Salt (to taste)



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Roast the beets loosely in foil for 45–75 min at 400 degrees. Peel and trim, then put aside.
2. Place the goat cheese in the freezer for 30–40 minutes before you start the salad prep.
3. Cut the oranges and the beets into about 12 thin slices, placing them on separate plates (to avoid the transfer of the beet juice).
4. Thinly slice the almost frozen goat cheese log into 12 pieces.
5. Layer the slices on a platter in this order: orange, beet, goat cheese, 1 or 2 spinach leaves. Repeat until all ingredients have been used.
6. Sprinkle the chives on top, drizzle with olive oil, season with salt, and serve.



IPM Spotlight:

A Strategy for Roses

Article and photos by Michael Herman, Master Gardener

Roses are a sensation in every garden, but they present real challenges everywhere they are grown. Whenever a possible disease or insect infestation arises, the first reaction is often, "What can I spray on it?" or "How do I get rid of this right now?" But these really are not the right questions. Instead, roses offer a good example of the importance of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to promote plant health and minimize opportunities for disease beforehand, as well as the need to temper expectations when battling disease with chemical treatment.

A good illustration is how to deal with one of the most common rose afflictions, Black Spot fungus (*Diplocarpon rosae*), a soil-borne fungus that is particularly difficult in Houston's hot and humid climate. Common symptoms include rounded black spots and black discoloration of the leaves, accompanied by yellowing, wilting and leaf drop. Also, Black Spot often shows up as the black or purple lesions on the rose canes or stems. While this disease usually does not kill the plant or reduce flowering, it does result in a worrying and unattractive problem that most gardeners want to avoid and remedy.

The basic preliminary [concepts of IPM](#) require gardeners to scout and monitor the roses for disease like Black Spot, to learn to identify the disease and the damage it causes, and to determine a proper threshold to take action. Correct identification is often difficult, and a gardener may want to confirm a tentative



diagnosis by submitting samples of the affected rose leaves and stems to the [Texas A&M Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab](#). Another resource is the [Houston Rose Society](#), which offers consultations through a link to "Consulting Rosarians."

One thing to realize about Black Spot and other types of fungal diseases is that they are endemic and recurring. They will never be eliminated completely. That means it is important to apply the cultural practices of IPM to manage the rose bed in a way that maximizes the overall health of the roses and minimizes the opportunity for diseases like Black Spot to thrive. Proper irrigation is especially important for minimizing fungal disease. Specifically to avoid or reduce Black Spot, the [Missouri Botanical Garden](#) and



IPM Spotlight:

A Strategy for Roses

Continued

Clemson University Cooperative Extension

advise watering rose bushes in a way that keeps leaves as dry as possible, such as using drip irrigation at the plant base, avoiding sprinkler systems that spray the leaves, and watering early in the day so that water has a chance to dry before nightfall. This is to avoid splashing fungal spores onto leaves and stems. There are also more long-term cultural considerations, such as planting varieties that are resistant to Black Spot and other fungal diseases or moving rose bushes to a better location where the roses receive more sunlight or where the soil does not remain as wet during periods of heavy rain.

Once a disease like Black Spot is affecting the plant, the first step is the physical IPM step of removing diseased leaves and canes or stems and disposing of them outside the garden. This includes infected leaves that may have fallen from rose bush, which will disperse fungal spores in the soil nearby if not removed. Taking these steps removes the fungal spores that will otherwise continue propagating in the rose bed.

Depending on the degree to which Black Spot spreads through a rose bed, chemical control often involves using fungicides. The [American Rose Society](#) provides detailed information on using specific fungicides or similar organic oils (like neem) to treat fungal diseases in roses. This website highlights that there are two categories of fungicide: contact and systemic. As the names suggest, the mode of action by which contact fungicides work is to make

contact with the plant tissue to prevent fungal spores from replicating or gaining a foothold on the plant. Both neem oil and copper products are contact fungicides. Systemic fungicides work by being absorbed into the interior systems of the plant, either as a spray to the plant and surrounding area or through application to the root area, and then preventing the fungus from functioning on the plant surface.

There are several important points to keep in mind when using fungicides:

First is to know the limits of what you can expect to occur when using a fungicide. A [Mississippi State University Extension Service](#) article on application of fungicides generally describes this tempering of expectations:

Fungicides work best as protectants. This means it is best to apply fungicides before a plant is exposed to a pathogen. After a plant has become diseased by an infecting pathogen, applying the correct type of fungicide may stop the spread of the disease or even put it into remission, but the plant will stay diseased. In the right environment, the disease will reappear. It is important to learn how to apply fungicides properly to prevent and limit disease.

The American Rose Society makes a similar point when it notes that very few products have any "curative" effect on fungus. Instead, these products usually prevent the fungus



IPM Spotlight:

A Strategy for Roses

Continued

from gaining an initial foothold and limit the fungus' spread to uninfected tissues.

For Black Spot fungus, that means that it is essential to remove physically all the leaves and canes that present signs of the fungus because application of a fungicide to those diseased parts will not kill the fungus already present but will only offer protection to the still uninfected parts.

The second point is that fungicides require repeated applications. In part, that is because contact fungicides wash off during rainstorms, do not move to new areas of plant growth, and generally work because they come into direct contact with the area where a fungal spore could locate, which will change as the plant grows. The American Rose Society encourages alternating between fungicides with different modes of action (i.e., between contact and systemic fungicides) and even mixing two different fungicides in the same tank for spraying together. This repeated application responds to the fact that fungal spores will always be present in the soil and in neighboring plants. There is no chance for a "one and done" approach.

Third, it is very important to apply fungicides at the right time and in the right amounts. For example, as the Mississippi State publication notes, applying copper fungicide sprays when temperatures are over 85 degrees can result in burning to the leaves or stems. The same is true with application of neem and other oils

whenever the sun is shining brightly, because the oil can scorch the plant as it heats up. Neem and other oil-based products are best applied early in the morning.



The last point incorporates these same basic points: always follow the instructions on the label of any fungicide product. The instructions will include, among other things, safety precautions for applying the product (such as the need for safety glasses or coverings for skin if irritation is likely); cautions for secondary effects from the inadvertent application of spray to neighboring plants or animals; proper quantities to use to avoid destructive consequences for the plants receiving the application; and standards for the frequency of application to ensure that the fungus is treated effectively and without promoting resistance.

Ultimately, whether avoiding or treating Black Spot on roses or dealing with other fungal issues in lawns or plants, an effective IPM strategy is a repeating cycle of strategies, first to promote plant health and avoid disease as much as possible, then moving step-by-step to interventions that, like fungicides, can often only accomplish mitigation, giving plants a chance to recover in a healthier environment and, hopefully, flourish.



Wildlife Spotlight: Green Anoles v. Cuban Brown Anoles

Article and photos by Debra Caldwell, Advanced Master Gardener: Entomology

Ecologists know that two species can't occupy the same niche at the same time—they can't live in the same space, eat the same food, and use the same resources. One species will survive and the other will disappear. So, what happened when invasive **Cuban Brown Anoles (*Anolis sagrei*)** moved into Harris County where we already had our own native species, **Green Anole (*Anolis carolinensis*)**?

That is where resource partitioning came in. When two similar species share a niche, they may survive by using the space in slightly different ways. In our gardens, the more aggressive Cuban Brown Anoles often dominate the ground and the lower trunks and branches of trees and shrubs. Green Anoles respond by moving up—feeding and resting higher in the plants, out of the way of their pushier cousins.

Which species live in your garden? Color alone will not always tell you, because Green Anoles can be green or dark brown. Cuban Brown Anoles usually show ridges or a diamond pattern along the back, and their colors can range from brown and gray to nearly black. Males are especially flashy, with bright red-orange throat fans, called dewlaps, edged in yellow. First introduced into the Florida Keys in the 1880s, Cuban Brown Anoles have spread through the South and into the Houston area over the past forty years.

Harris County's hot, humid climate suits both species. Cuban Brown Anoles are less cold tolerant than Green Anoles, but they make up



Cuban Brown Anole

for it with bold behavior. They are more aggressive, and they will eat Green Anole eggs and hatchlings when they get the chance.

Green anoles, like true chameleons, can change color. You are more likely to see bright green anoles more often during the summer when temperatures are over 70 degrees F. A hormone called intermedin affects specialized skin cells called chromatophores which change color. Temperature is only part of the story, though; background color, stress, interactions with other anoles, and other factors may also play a role.

To impress the lady lizards, anoles do “push-ups” and puff out their dewlaps. That colorful throat flap also helps them establish and defend



Wildlife Spotlight: Green Anoles v. Cuban Brown Anoles

Continued

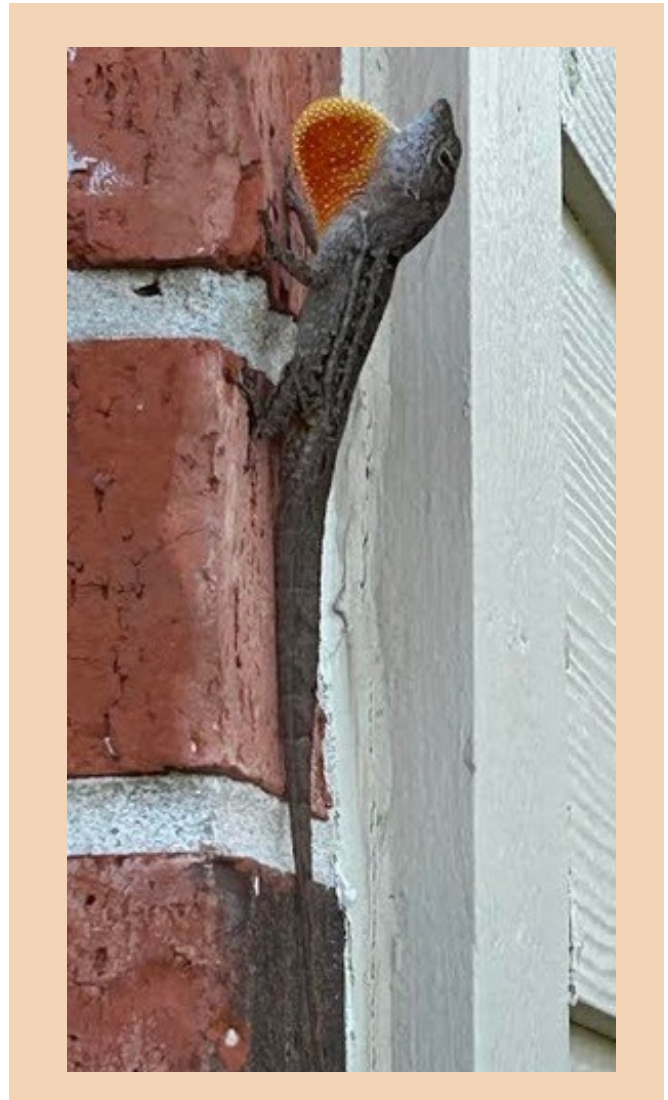
territories, and it may even startle or discourage predators. The anole in the photo was not happy with me and flashed his dewlap to say, “Go away!”

In our area, breeding season begins in March and can continue into November. Green Anole females lay single eggs in moist soil or leaf litter, while Cuban Brown Anoles may lay several eggs at a time. After about six weeks of incubation, tiny anoles hatch into a dangerous world. Larger anoles, cats, birds, snakes, and other predators all pose a threat. In captivity, an anole may live up to seven years, but in the wild, most are lucky to survive a year or two.

If you spot an anole with a very short tail, it may have escaped a close call. Anoles can use a defense called caudal autotomy, in which the tail breaks away so the lizard can flee. The detached tail keeps wriggling on the ground, distracting the attacker while the anole runs for cover. A regenerated tail contains cartilage instead of bone and may look discolored.

Our little garden neighbors may occasionally eat a beneficial insect, but they also help control pests such as grubs, grasshoppers, slugs, and cockroaches. In the photo, a Green Anole captured and tried to swallow a huge cockroach in an epic backyard battle.

Can we attract Green Anoles while discouraging invasive Cuban Brown Anoles? Unfortunately, not with any simple garden trick.



They need essentially the same resources, so the best approach is to build an anole-friendly habitat and accept that both species may use it.

If you want to make your yard more welcoming to anoles, think in layers: places to climb, places to hide, sunny spots to warm up, and plenty of tiny prey to hunt.





Wildlife Spotlight: Green Anoles v. Cuban Brown Anoles

Continued

Grow shrubs and trees to provide more habitat for Green Anoles, such as American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) and Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*). Fences covered with vines are attractive to

them as well. One way to discourage Cuban Brown Anoles would be to reduce low-growing plants and ground-covers, but that is not a very satisfying solution for gardeners who value layered, wildlife-friendly plantings.

Shelter and Basking

Like other reptiles, anoles cannot maintain a high body temperature metabolically. Flat stones in morning sun give them places to bask and warm up for the day. Groundcovers, loose rocks, old logs, bits of wood, mulch, and leaf litter provide shelter, hiding places, moist soil, and egg-laying sites.

Water and Food

Anoles usually will not drink from a bowl or standing water. Instead, they lick droplets from leaves. Watering or misting plants in the morning can provide a drink while giving foliage time to dry during the day.

Reduce Pesticides and Predators

Skip pesticides whenever possible so your yard supports a healthy supply of insects and spiders—an anole buffet. Keeping cats indoors also helps protect anoles and other small wildlife.

Cuban Brown Anoles have succeeded in shouldering their way into our gardens. With layered plantings, less pesticide use, and a little tolerance for wild spaces, we can still make room

for our native Green Anoles. Hopefully, they will continue to coexist with the interlopers.



Green Anole

References:

- <https://tsusinvasives.org/home/database/anolis-sagrei>
- <https://www.anoleannals.org/2012/02/24/new-study-on-color-change-in-green-anoles/>
- <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1803026/>
- <https://txmg.org/galveston/beneficials-in-the-garden-and-landscape/green-anole/>



The Arctic Ark: Inside the Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Article by John Moss, Master Gardener

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault stands as one of the world's most ambitious and quietly essential insurance policies. It is a fortress of biodiversity carved into Arctic permafrost, designed to safeguard the genetic heritage of the world's food crops for millennia. Situated on the Norwegian island of Spitsbergen in the

remote Svalbard archipelago, the vault preserves more than 1.3 million seed samples—representing thousands of plant species and over 13,000 years of agricultural history—making it the largest and most secure repository of crop diversity ever constructed.



Location of Spitsbergen and the Svalbard Archipelago

The Arctic Ark: Inside the Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Continued

Purpose and Global Significance

At its core, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault exists to protect the foundation of global food security. Modern agriculture depends on a relatively narrow range of crop varieties, many of which are vulnerable to climate change, emerging diseases, conflict, natural disasters, the list goes on. Gene banks around the world store seeds to preserve diversity; however, these facilities can be compromised by war, mismanagement, funding shortages, or environmental catastrophes.

The Seed Vault provides what can be termed a fail-safe backup. In other words, a place where duplicates of seeds stored in national and regional gene banks can be preserved under ideal conditions. If a gene bank loses its collection, Seed Vault depositors can withdraw their seeds from Svalbard and rebuild. This system proved its value in 2015, when the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) withdrew seeds after its Aleppo facility was damaged during the Syrian Civil War. The retrieved seeds enabled ICARDA to reestablish operations in Morocco and Lebanon.



Entrance to Svalbard Global Seed Vault

The Arctic Ark: Inside the Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Continued

Location and Environmental Advantages

The Seed Vault's location was chosen with extraordinary care after essential criteria were considered and met. Spitsbergen lies far north in the Arctic Circle and so offered natural advantages, namely:

- **Permafrost:** The surrounding frozen rock helps maintain low temperatures, even in the event of a failure of mechanical cooling.
- **Geological Stability:** The region is free from significant tectonic activity.
- **Isolation:** Its remoteness reduces risks from human conflict or interference.

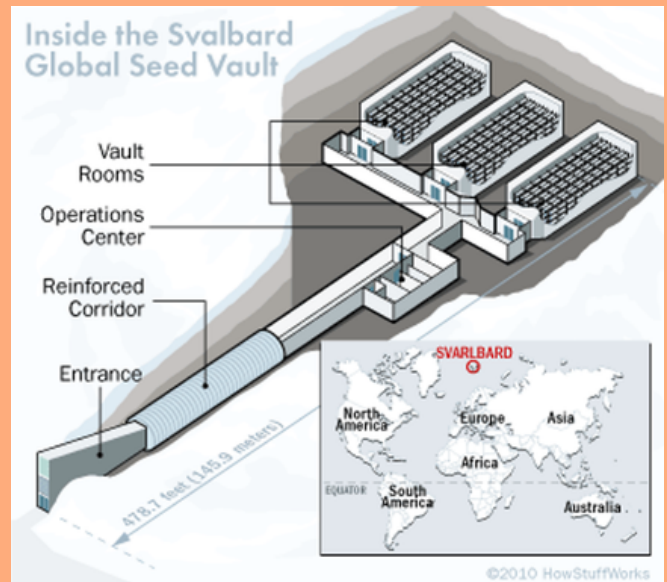
The vault is built 130 meters above sea level and deep into the Platåberget mountain, ensuring protection from flooding—even under extreme climate-change scenarios.

Inside, seeds are stored at minus 18°C (minus 0.4°F), the optimal temperature for long-term preservation. Each sample is sealed in moisture-proof packaging and placed in secure boxes. The vault can ultimately hold up to 4.5 million seed samples; current deposits exceed 1.4 million. The latest deposit was made as recently as June 17, 2026—15,000 new seed samples from Burkina Faso and Niger were added as the Seed Vault opened its door for the second time this year.

Governance and Management

The Seed Vault is managed through a tripartite partnership:

- The Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food: Owner and primary funder.



Inside the Svalbard Global Seed Vault built 130 meters (426.5 feet) above sea level & 145.9 meters (478.7 feet) deep into the mountainside.



The latest seed samples being transported through the Seed Vault exterior door on June 17th, 2026

- **NordGen (Nordic Genetic Resource Center):** Responsible for daily operations.
- **The Crop Trust:** Provides financial support and coordinates global seed-bank partnerships.

The Arctic Ark: Inside the Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Continued

Construction of the Seed Vault began in 2006 and cost approximately 45 million Norwegian kroner (about US \$8.8 million at the time). It officially opened on February 26, 2008.

Importantly, the vault operates under a “black box” system: depositors retain ownership and exclusive access to their seeds. Norway does not claim rights over deposited material, reinforcing global trust in the facility. To maintain biosecurity and for legal reasons, only vetted institutions can participate.

Historical Roots and Development

In 1984, the Nordic Gene Bank began storing seeds in an abandoned coal mine near Longyearbyen, a town of Spitsbergen about 10 km from the site of the Svalbard Seed Vault. This action demonstrated the feasibility of Arctic preservation of seeds.

Momentum accelerated after the 2001 adoption of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which established a multilateral system for sharing plant genetic resources. American agriculturist and conservationist Cary Fowler played a pivotal role in conceptualizing the vault and securing Norwegian government support. He is known as the Father of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault.



Cary Fowler photographed during the construction of the Svalbard Global Seed Bank

Security, Technology, and Operations

The vault's design emphasizes durability and simplicity:

- Minimal human presence: It is not staffed full-time; seeds require little maintenance once stored.
- Robust infrastructure: Thick concrete walls, blast-proof doors, and multiple security layers protect the facility.
- Climate resilience: Even with rising Arctic temperatures, engineering upgrades ensure stable internal conditions.

Deposits occur several times per year, with seed banks worldwide sending duplicates of their collections. Storage is free, encouraging broad participation from both wealthy and resource-limited nations. It is not a public storage facility and does not accept:

- Personal seed collections
- Home-saved seeds
- Seeds from private citizens
- Seeds from unregistered organizations

Depositors must be:

- National or regional gene banks
- Agricultural research centers
- Universities with certified seed conservation programs
- International agricultural organizations (e.g., CGIAR centers)
- Government-recognized conservation institutions

The Arctic Ark: Inside the Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Continued

Examples of institutions in the U.S. that send seeds to Svalbard include:

- USDA National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS)
- Native Seeds/SEARCH
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (for certain native species)

A Living Archive for Future Generations

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault has often been called the “Doomsday Vault,” but its mission is not apocalyptic—it is practical, proactive, and deeply hopeful. By preserving crop diversity, the vault will allow future scientists and farmers to have the genetic tools needed to adapt agriculture to changing climates, emerging pests, and evolving nutritional needs.



What it's all about—a sample of wheat seeds deposited/stored within the Svalbard Global Seed Vault

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault is one of humanity's most important scientific and humanitarian infrastructures—a silent guardian of global agriculture. Through international cooperation, cutting-edge preservation, and the stability of the Arctic

environment, it ensures that the genetic building blocks of our food supply remain safe, accessible, and resilient for centuries to come.

A look inside the vault

Only authorized personnel are allowed inside the vault. No live tours are offered, but you can take an official virtual tour by entering the following address in your browser:

<https://seedvaultvirtualtour.com/>

A somewhat “lighter” view inside can be found at the following address or just search YouTube for “Inside the Svalbard Seed Vault”.

https://youtu.be/2_OEsf-1qgY?si=fD5MXqJyoxQhjdWO

References:

1. [Official website](#)
2. [Svalbard Global Seed Vault by the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food](#)
3. [Svalbard Global Seed Vault by the Crop Trust](#)
4. [Svalbard Global Seed Vault by the Nordic Genetic Resource Center \(NordGen\)](#)
5. [Online searchable database of deposits at NordGen](#)
6. [Inside the Svalbard Seed Vault](#) on YouTube
7. [One seed at a time, protecting the future of food. Talk by Cary Fowler \(August 2009\) via www.ted.com.](#)
8. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Svalbard-Global-Seed-Vault>

Spotlight Herb:

Nasturtium

Article and photos by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener

One flower I look forward to growing in the fall garden is nasturtium. Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus* and *Tropaeolum minor*) is a pretty annual in your garden, and also a useful culinary herb.

The oil produced by the plants is like the oil produced by watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*, family Brassicaceae), hence the common name, Nasturtium. Nasturtiums were also called “Indian cress” because Spanish conquistadors brought the flowers back from the jungles of Mexico and Peru in the 16th century.

Description and cultivars

The flowers have intense colors, ranging from bright yellow, orange, red and jewel tones. The leaves can be a deep green or even variegated, and they are flat and almost round, similar to water lilies.

I've only grown the bush type (*Tropaeolum minus*), but there is also a trailing type (*Tropaeolum majus*).

The varieties I've seen most frequently in nurseries (both seed and plants) are the bush types, 'Alaska' and 'Jewel' series, both with single flowers and usually sold in a mix of colors. 'Jewel of Africa', 'Kaleidoscope Mix', and 'Vintage' are some readily available trailing types, but there are many different varieties to choose from.



From my veggie garden

Culinary uses

Both the young flowers and leaves are edible and have a peppery taste, like watercress. An article from Michigan State University Extension states that the “seeds and even the roots can be roasted and made into tea.”

The flowers are a beautiful topping for salads, egg dishes and as a garnish on main dishes, too. Flowers dusted with sugar can be used as decorations on cakes.

Landscape uses

Compact varieties are great for borders. Artist Claude Monet planted them along the pathway that led to his front door in Giverny, France. They can be stunning in mass plantings but can also be planted in containers. Trailing types can grow up a trellis or vine along the ground. Imagine filling in gaps between day lilies or roses, as one article from University of Wisconsin suggested.

Spotlight Herb:

Nasturtium

Continued

There are many uses for nasturtiums in your landscape, but they can also be grown in your vegetable garden to attract butterflies and other pollinators, and to trap aphids.

There are few pests that bother nasturtiums. Caterpillars, cabbageworm, whiteflies and leafminers can cause minor issues. An extra benefit is deer resistance.

Planting and performance

Nasturtiums grow and flower best in full sun, and are self-seeding, so give them plenty of room to spread.

Sow seeds 1/2-inch deep and 10–12 inches apart. Seedlings should come up in 7–10 days. If you soak the seed for a few hours or overnight before planting, it can improve germination.

Deadhead to prolong bloom periods and be careful not to overwater. Nasturtiums are not picky about soil and can grow well in poor soils.

Nasturtiums can grow in springtime in the northern climates, but in our part of the country they thrive in our fall and winter gardens and will bloom until frost.



From my veggie garden

I once heard Jeannette Clift George (author, playwright, actor and founder of AD Players) give a presentation at a charity event. Jeannette was very witty, and I remember she talked about the flowers that her grandmother grew and she called them “nasty urchums.” To this day, I still call them that.

Resources:

- <https://www.centraltexasgardener.org/resource/nasturtium/>
- <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/nasturtium-tropaeolum-majus/>
- <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/tropaeolum/>
- <https://extension.illinois.edu/herbs/nasturtium>

Fun Fact

Dried nasturtium seeds were used as a substitute for black pepper during World War II when real spices were hard to find.



Ask A Master Gardener Online

by the AAMGO Committee

Q:

Can you grow tea in coastal Harris County areas and if so, what kind? Thank you.

A:

Thank you for sending in your question about growing tea in our area. I'll discuss other types of tea for our area below, but I'm going to first assume you are asking about traditional tea plants or shrubs from which many of our commercial teas are harvested. The shrubs that produce tea are varieties of Chinese camellia, (*Camellia sinensis*). *Camellia sinensis*, also known as the Tea Plant or Tea Camillia, is a hardy evergreen shrub that in addition to producing leaves for tea, can have good landscape value in the right location. The shrub is also related to the winter-blooming ornamental shrubs, *Camellia japonica* and *Camellia sasanqua*, that many southern gardeners enjoy having in their landscape. Here is more information, from the North Carolina State Extension: [Camellia sinensis](#).

[HERE](#) is some additional information, from the University of Florida Extension, about growing *Camellia sinensis* (varieties *sinensis* and *assamica*) in the home landscape. In our area, you may need a large container or raised bed in sun or light shade, because tea plants don't like wet soils. Although they can take some heat, they stop growing when temperatures are below 55 degrees and above 95 degrees. They might need protection during a hard freeze, especially if in a container.

Camellia sinensis plants are becoming a little more common to see for sale in some of our local, independently owned nurseries and garden centers. However, you might want to call around first to see if they have any in stock. You can also find these plants available through mail order. As Master Gardeners we do not recommend or endorse specific vendors, so your best bet is to check directly with them.



Camellia sinensis

<https://www.lsuagcenter.com/profiles/rbogren/articles/page1578674732707>

Because *Camellia sinensis* can struggle in excessive heat, humidity, and wet soils, local growing conditions might create some obstacles in our being able to successfully harvest healthy and good quality tea leaves. At the present time, it is not a plant that we are advising homeowners to grow here unless they understand that it will be a bit of an experiment. Here are two additional references for growing tea shrubs:

- [Plant of the Week: Camellia sinensis](#) - University of Arkansas Extension Service
- [Homegrown Teas](#) - article from the University of Florida Extension Service



Ask A Master Gardener Online

Continued

The Homegrown Teas publication above is also a very good introduction to other plants that make nice teas and will grow in our area. Our native yaupon trees and shrubs produce leaves that will make a caffeinated tea. We can also grow roselle, ginger, and a variety of other herbs that make nice caffeine-free herbal tea blends, including lemon balm, lemongrass, *Monarda citriodora* (sometimes called lemon mint), lemon verbena, a variety of mints, and pineapple sage. Here are a few more resources:

- [Making A Tea/Coffee Substitute from Yaupon Leaves](#) - Texas AgriLife Extension/Texas Parks & Wildlife Master Naturalists - Longleaf Ridge Chapter
- [Yaupon Holly Tea](#) - University of Florida Extension
- [Herbs for Harris County](#) - Harris County AgriLife Extension

Best wishes, and if you have further questions, please contact us again.

Q:

I planted some Rattlesnake Master, Gulf Muhly Grass, Coreopsis, Gaillardia and milkweed. As an afterthought I plugged the bed with Frog Fruit. What a mistake! By spring, the Frog Fruit had formed a thick mat choking out all the milkweed. My husband and I managed to hack and dig out the Frog Fruit and salvage most of the other plants. I then planted more Rattlesnake Master, Gulf Muhly Grass, and milkweed. I lifted a few weeds - mostly nut sedge, spiderwort, an unknown grass - but nothing serious.

Unfortunately, I ran out of time and failed to cover the bare ground with mulch. During the summer heat, I was unable to work in the bed and now that bed is overrun with weeds! Mostly, my concern is that I have no idea what caused the situation I now have. I can't believe it's just the rain and/or the heat! I lack a background in soil science so I'm at a loss. Without an understanding of what caused this mess, I'm just not sure where to go from here. Dig up all the plants? Remove the top 12" of soil? Cover the whole area with black plastic? I'm adverse to using herbicides, but this situation is sorely testing my resolve. I wonder if I should just empty my 10-year old jug of Round Up on it and call it a day.

BTW, I am older and have back and knee issues, and am unable to work in the sun or heat over about 85 degrees, so it may be a while before I can get back out there.

Any insight, direction, theories, or suggestions you might have are most appreciated. Thank you.

A:

Thank you for your question. My heart goes out to you as you struggle with weeds in the garden. Many of us who are older gardeners also struggle with back and joint issues. Add the brutal heat and humidity this time of year and gardening can become a nightmare!

You have a perfect habitat for weeds. Sun, heat, soil, and rain combine to help the weeds out-compete less aggressive plants. There are short-term and long-term solutions:



Ask A Master Gardener Online

Continued

1. Pulling and cutting weeds is often the first step in control. Unfortunately, some, like nutsedge, leave “nuts” (tubers), rhizomes or other parts in the ground and quickly regrow. If this is physically too much and you can’t hire someone to do the work, you might contact the local Agency on Aging. I don’t know how much help they can give but they may be aware of resources. Here is a link to the Houston/Galveston Council <https://www.h-gac.com/area-agency-on-aging>.

2. Mechanical barriers such as weed cloth and mulch help to prevent germination and smother weeds. These are short-term solutions because weed cloth eventually breaks down and organic mulches (which we recommend) decompose. They can give you some relief from weeds for a year or two until they might need to be replaced. [HERE](#) is a guide to mulch from EarthKind Landscaping.

3. Solarization and occultation are both non-chemical methods for killing weeds and preparing garden beds, but they use different materials and methods. Solarization uses clear plastic to bake the soil with the sun’s heat. Summer into fall is the perfect time to use solarization because of the sun’s intensity and high heat. You would need to mechanically cut or pull weeds first, however, if they are tall. [HERE](#) is a publication with more information. Occultation uses black or opaque plastic to keep sunlight from reaching plants. In the heat of summer, it should kill weeds and possibly sterilize some of the weed seeds as well.

4. As you mentioned, using an herbicide like glyphosate (Roundup) will kill everything in the spot and give you a clean slate. Keep in mind that it will also kill all plants like grass if it comes into contact with them. This is one of the easier methods physically, but of course we have concerns about using herbicides in our gardens. It will kill the green part of nutsedge, but the weed will probably grow back from the “nut.” There are specific products that are designed for nutsedge if it does show its ugly little head again. If you do choose to use herbicides, please carefully read and follow directions on the label and use all recommended precautions and protective equipment.

It helps to know the enemy as you battle weeds. [HERE](#) is a Galveston Master Gardener guide to some common weeds in our area. If you can identify them, you will have a better idea about when they grow and how you can combat them effectively.



A raised bed being solarized

<https://agriflifeextension.tamu.edu/asset-external/soil-solarization/>



Ask A Master Gardener Online

Continued

As we get older, I believe we need to think about long-term solutions so we can continue to garden but accommodate for our stiff joints and aching bones. [HERE](#) are some tips for accessible gardening. One way to rise above your current problems might be to build a raised bed. [HERE](#) is a publication from EarthKind landscaping with information about raised beds. I put down cardboard at the bottom of my newly built raised beds to kill existing plants (occultation) and then filled the beds with soil. In addition to making the soil and plants easier to reach, I have more control over the soil mix. For growing native plants, for example, you might want a 'leaner' soil that drains readily. Of course, new weeds will grow in the raised beds, but you can prevent them from ever getting started by pulling, mulching, and planting thickly to keep them under control.

Another solution is to grow plants that don't need as much babysitting. As you discovered, frogfruit is happy to grow all over your yard and could provide green in areas that you don't want to tend. Hydrozoning is often used to conserve water, and we can apply the concept to our gardens to reduce maintenance. The idea is to group plants with similar water, sun, and soil needs together into distinct zones. Put the prima donnas that require fussing near the house, plants that require some tending nearby, and plants that don't require much work (or water) in the back corners.

I hope this information is helpful and you can get the weeds under control. Kind regards, and please contact us again if you have additional questions.



Texas Frogfruit

<https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/plant-library/texas-frogfruit/>

Have a garden question?

[Click here](#)

Meet a Master Gardener

Michael Herman



Michael Herman was our Master Gardener of the Month for July 2026. He is a new Master Gardener from the intern class in the Fall of 2025. Since that time, he has participated in the spring plant sales. He is also an active researcher in Ask A Master Gardener Online. About AAMGO, Michael says, "This is my favorite activity. Answering the public's questions in AAMGO makes me improve my research skills and learn more about all aspects of horticulture to give accurate, science-based answers—which is exactly why I became a Master Gardener." Michael puts his research to use as one of the coordinators for HCMGA activities at Hermann Park's McGovern Centennial Family Garden, where you will find him almost every Thursday helping to organize and care for the herb and vegetable gardens and planning educational activities for the public.

Before joining the Master Gardener program, Michael already had 25 years of experience as a coordinating gardener for the Urban Harvest Community Garden at Nellie Keyes Park in the Rice Military neighborhood. The Nellie Keyes Community Garden is a cooperative garden, where neighborhood volunteers work together, decide together, and harvest together to build a feeling of inclusive community in a frequently changing neighborhood. According to Michael, his colleagues at the community garden have already commented on how his participation in HCMGA is bringing new knowledge and new techniques into their collective work.

Aside from gardening, Michael's interests include Spanish language and literature, which he pursues with the native-speaker guidance of his spouse, Angel, and service to the community in legal matters, mainly through the Houston Bar Association. Before retiring, Michael was a corporate tax lawyer in New York before returning home to Texas and dedicating more than two decades to public service as an Assistant Federal Public Defender in the Southern District of Texas, Houston office.

Meet a Master Gardener

Jennifer Bennett

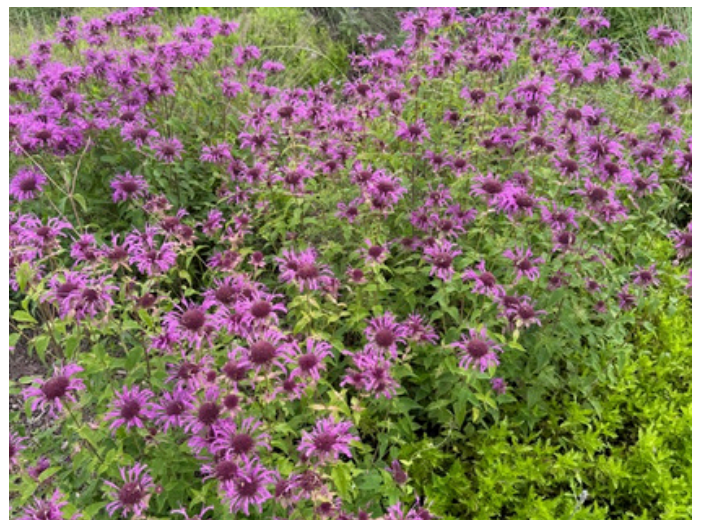


I joined the HCMG in 2024. I really had no idea what I was getting into but learning more about gardening and meeting fellow gardeners sounded fun. I had helped to build the garden at my kids' school and loved watching them and their friends enjoy learning about it. After completing the Master Gardener classes, I wasn't sure where to start when it came to volunteering. I decided to first spend a morning at Centennial Gardens in Hermann Park. There I met a couple of awesome Master Gardeners who did not mind me following them around the garden to get a feel for how to answer questions from the public. I had a great time. Not only did I learn a lot but I met lots of interesting people. I also joined the AAMGO (Ask a Master Gardener Online) Committee. I love doing research and that turned out to be a great fit for me. I next started editing for the Urban Dirt. Eventually, I ended up filling the role of Urban Dirt Coordinator. It's been a lot of fun. I've gotten to know lots more people and been able to flex my creative side a little more. Each time we put out a new issue, it's been the result of lots of different

people contributing their talents and time to make something special for others to enjoy and hopefully learn a little something from.

In real life, I spend most of my time managing the law practice that my husband and I have, our two dogs, and the numerous household projects I like to do. I'm happiest when I'm outside playing and working in the dirt. When it's too hot or rainy, I'm usually inside with a paint brush.

Next month, I'm taking the Entomology course and hoping to get my advanced certification. I'm also taking a Landscape Design course with Texas Agrilife in College Station. I've started a native plant garden in my front yard and I'm very interested in permaculture. This past summer has taught me that we need to be smarter about working with this intense heat and erratic rainfall to find ways to benefit both us and our planet.



First Tuesday Meetings



In July, we learned about the RHS Chelsea Flower Show from our own Valerie Depew, Master Gardener and First Vice President. Valerie shared many fabulous photos of gorgeous flower displays and gardens. But the Chelsea Flower Show is about much more than that. Five gardening ideas that Valerie brought home from her trip include: seeing value in overlooked places; design gardens for people (the other benefits spill over)—one garden catered to alzheimer’s patients with particular attention to their needs and sensory responses; small spaces matter (another garden was created on a small apartment balcony); wildlife gardening is foundational; and garden with a purpose, garden for fun!



In August, we welcomed Kari Hernandez, Curator from the Mercer Botanical Center. Kari manages the plant collections in the herbarium at Mercer. There are 50,000 specimens in their library. Currently, Kari and her staff are working on digitizing their vouchers for each plant. A voucher is a sheet of paper with a preserved plant specimen. Each voucher contains detailed information like where the plant was found, when it was found and by whom. It is a primary date source equating to its proof of existence. Kari taught us about taxonomy and the evidence of “type” specimens. This data helps scientists to describe new species, understand plant relationships and analyze DNA.

Upcoming First Tuesday Meetings:

September 1

“Building a Network of Resilient Watersheds”
Tiernan Pytlak, Applied Environmental Scientist,
Bayou Preservation Association, Inc.

October 6

“Zoological Horticulture”
Brandon Hubbard
Manager, Horticulture
Houston Zoo

**Open
to the
public!**

November 3

“Doug’s Favorite Fruit Tree Tips”
Doug McLeod, Harris County Master Gardener
Meeting at Genoa Friendship Gardens

December 1

“Citrus Problems”
Janis Teas
Citrus Health Inspector
Texas Department of Agriculture



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

Visit our Ask a Master Gardener table in the **Family Garden** on the first Saturday of each month!

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.

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 individual 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, **September through October**, 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Admission to the Exhibit Gardens is free. Register at the Welcome Table
to receive additional monthly notices for children and family events.

- 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 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



When I wrote this column for July and August, I was hoping for a couple of rain free days. But I didn't really want this many! August has been very dry. 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.

A couple of reminders. September can be a busy month for hurricanes. Check for branches that need to be trimmed. And it isn't too soon to think about freeze precautions.

Perennials and Ornamental Grasses

- Some spring flowering perennials can be divided in September (daylilies, calla lilies and irises). Others should wait until it is a bit cooler in October (shasta daisy, gaillardia, cannas).
- Continue to cut back flower stalks and old faded flowers to keep perennials looking nice.
- By October, when the weather cools a bit, plant new perennials and fertilize the new plantings with 1/2 strength soluble fertilizer. Marigolds, chrysanthemums or perhaps Texas Superstar Mari-mum (*Tagetes erecta*) are nice fall choices.

Roses

- Roses (other than once blooming) that were not pruned in late August should be pruned in early September. 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.
- No fertilizer should be used after early October (Two months before first frost).

Annuals

- In September, start seeds for cool season annuals (like snapdragons, stock, calendula, alyssum). They will typically be ready for transplant in October (6–8 weeks). You can start the hardening process once two sets of leaves appear. Note these can also be direct seeded in October.
- You may want to wait until November for pansies and violas although some sources include them in October plantings.
- Plant bluebonnet, Indian paintbrush seed in early fall. Scarified bluebonnet seeds germinate more quickly (be careful not to damage the seed inside the shell when you scarify). Mix fertilizer into soil before planting. Rake the seeds gently into the ground.
- Biennials like poppies, larkspur, bluebonnet seeded in October will germinate, spend the winter as a small plant, then in spring grow and bloom.
- Lightly fertilize annual beds in October to give warm season annuals a boost and get cool season annuals off to a good start.



Gardening Calendar

Continued

Bulbs

- Refrigerate tulips and hyacinth bulbs by late September to give adequate chill time for December planting.
- Plant bulbs (except tulip and hyacinth which are in your refrigerator waiting for December). A general guide is to plant at depth 2–3 times the diameter of the bulb (so a 2-inch diameter bulb would be planted at a depth of 4–6 inches). Mulch and water when you plant.
- In October, divide spring to early summer blooming bulbs (daffodils, paperwhites, amaryllis, columbine, purple coneflower, etc).

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 in September should give a nice show with colorful new growth in cooler weather.
- 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.

Lawns

- Apply pre-emergent herbicides in early to mid-October.
- Winterize your lawn in September or early October.
- Watch for brown patch (circular brown areas with yellowing grass at the outer edge of the circle). Milder temperatures and rainy weather encourage brown patch.
- If needed, plant sod in dead areas giving it time to establish before winter.

Trees

- “The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second-best time is now.”—Chinese proverb. October, in our area, is prime time for planting woody ornamentals, shrubs, trees, vines, groundcovers, and many types of annuals and perennials.
- Light pruning of lower branches and some inner branches may be needed to let the sun through to lawns and plants below the trees.

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.
- See the following link for recommended plantings times: [Harris County Veg Planting Guide](#)

Works Cited

1. A Garden Book for Houston. 2nd ed., River Oaks Garden Club, Houston, TX, 1968.
2. Groom, Dale, and Dan Gill. Texas Gardener's Handbook. Cool Springs Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2012.
3. Richter, Robert. Month-by-Month Gardening Texas. Cool Springs Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2014.
4. [Weather.gov/wrh/climate](https://www.weather.gov/wrh/climate)

Ask A Master Gardener In-Person Events

Saturday, September 5, 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Urban Harvest Farmers Market
2752 Buffalo Speedway, Houston 77027

Saturday, September 5, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
McGovern Centennial Gardens - Family Gardens
1500 Hermann Dr, Houston 77004

Saturday, September 5, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Mercer Botanic Gardens
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble 77338

Saturday, September 12, 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Tomball Farmers Market
205 West Main St, Tomball, 77375

Saturday, September 12, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Grand Parkway Farmers Market
Church of the Holy Apostles
1225 Grand Parkway South, Katy, 77494

Saturday, September 12, 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.
River Oaks Elementary School Nature Center
2008 Kirby Dr, Houston 77019

Saturday, September 19, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Mercer Botanic Gardens
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble 77338

Saturday, September 26, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Memorial Villages Farmers Market
10840 Beinhorn Rd, Houston 77024

Saturday, September 26, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Houston Botanic Gardens
One Botanic Lane, Houston, TX 77017

Saturday, September 26, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Lake Houston Summerwood Market Club
16136 Hunters Lake Way, Houston 77044

Saturday, October 3, 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Urban Harvest Farmers Market
2752 Buffalo Speedway, Houston, 77027

Saturday, October 3, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Mercer Botanic Gardens
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble 77338

Saturday, October 3, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
McGovern Centennial Gardens - Family Gardens
1500 Hermann Dr, Houston 77004

Saturday, October 3, 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. River
Oaks Elementary School Nature Center
2008 Kirby Dr, Houston 77019

Saturday October 3, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. 2026
Lonestar Safety Fest Typhoon Texas
555 Katy Fort Bend Rd, Katy 77494

Saturday, October 10, 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Tomball Farmers Market
205 West Main St, Tomball, 77375

Saturday, October 10, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Grand Parkway Farmers Market
Church of the Holy Apostles
1225 Grand Parkway South, Katy, 77494

Saturday, October 10, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Lake
Houston Summerwood Market Club
16136 Hunters Lake Way, Houston 77044

Saturday, October 17, time TBD
Christ The Good Shepherd Fall Festival
18511 Klein Church Rd, Spring 77379

Monday, October 19, 8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m..
Genoa Friendship Garden
1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston 77034

Saturday, October 17, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Mercer Botanic Gardens
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble 77338

Saturday, October 24, 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Memorial Villages Farmers Market
10840 Beinhorn Rd, Houston 77024

Saturday, October 24, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Houston Botanic Gardens
One Botanic Lane, Houston 77017



GREEN THUMB

2026 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, 10 A.M. - 11:30 A.M.

HOUSTON CITY COLLEGE @ HOME GARDENING SERIES

Register in advance to get the link: hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register

January 12 - Fruit Trees & Berries
February 9 - Spring Vegetable Gardening
March 16 - Weeds in the Garden
April 13 - Texas Superstar Plants
May 11 - Integrated Pest Management

June 8 - Enemies in the Garden
July 13 - Fall Vegetable Gardening
August 10 - Introduction to Permaculture
September 14 - Hooked on Herbs
October 12 - Garden Myths

THIRD TUESDAY, 11 A.M. - NOON

HARRIS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY ON YOUTUBE

No reservation needed – just visit <https://bit.ly/4jo8lWw>

January 20 - Fruit Trees & Berries
February 17 - Spring Vegetable Gardening
March 17 - Weeds in the Garden
April 21 - Texas Superstar Plants
May 19 - Integrated Pest Management

June 16 - Enemies in the Garden
July 21 - Fall Vegetable Gardening
August 18 - Introduction to Permaculture
September 15 - Hooked on Herbs
October 20 - Garden Myths



VIEW PAST RECORDINGS AT <https://txmg.org/hcmga/green-thumb-series/>

What is 4-H?

Texas 4-H, a part of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and led by community volunteers, is the largest youth development program in Texas with **600,000+ participants** annually. Youth participate through local community clubs across all 254 counties in Texas. Our goal is to foster engaging youth to reach their fullest potential while advancing the field of youth development, in a world where youth and adults learn, grow, and work together. The name represents the four-fold focus: Head, Heart, Hands, and Health. The motto is **"To make the best better."** and the slogan is **"Learn by doing."**

Investing in Texas Youth

- **\$2.7 Million+** awarded annually to 220+ 4-H members
- Scholarships range **\$1,000–\$30,000 each**
- Multiple opportunities to receive scholarship awards

Benefits of Joining 4-H

- **4×** more likely to give back to their communities
- **2×** more likely to make healthier choices
- **2×** more likely to report feeling confident
- **3×** more likely to engage in community service

Explore Texas 4-H Projects

Youth have the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of projects. Either with their club, or self guided, there is something for everyone!

-  Agriculture & Livestock – animals, gardening, responsibility
-  Family & Community Health – nutrition, fashion, wellness
-  Leadership & Citizenship – public speaking, volunteering
-  Natural Resources – wildlife, fishing, shooting sports
-  STEM – robotics, photography, energy, coding

Grow with Texas 4-H!



Join 4-H Today! Contact us at 713-274-0950

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.

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)	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)



Plants grown over winter may require protection during freezing weather.

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



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

Enjoyed this newsletter?
Check out the Urban Dirt
Index [here](#) to discover our
past issues with loads of
gardening content!

Please help
Harris County
Master Gardeners
continue providing
gardening education
with a donation



THANK YOU!