



INSIDE DIRT

President's Message

David Bickerstaff, Master Gardener

Happy 2019 to everyone! We hope you had a blessed holiday season. I am honored to represent the HCMGA as its 2019 President. I continue to be impressed with the work done by our group and believe that we accomplish more than larger groups across the state. This could not be done without a passionate and energetic group of master gardeners. 2019 should be another great year for HCMGA!



Our goals for 2019 are as follows:

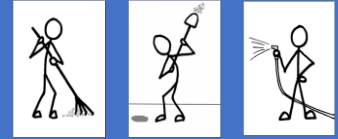
- Construct and host a grand opening for the Harvest Garden located at the Henderson County Regional Fairpark Complex
- Complete planning and host the Earth Kind® Advanced Training Program for Texas Master Gardeners
- Complete improvements to our greenhouse on the campus of Trinity Valley Community College
- Complete improvements to the DREAM (Develop, Research, Educate, Apply, Maintain) garden located at the East Texas Arboretum
- Apply and receive a grant(s) to supplement our project funding
- Achieve a 15% net increase of HCMGA active members

During the winter months you may be relaxing and planning your spring garden. The HCMGA is busy during the winter months preparing for a new series of educational events for the public, building our new Harvest Garden and many other projects.

During 2018 our group of 50+ active certified master gardeners plus our class of 2018 interns worked approx. 6,800 volunteer hours and traveled over 37,000 miles to meet our mission of *increasing the availability of horticultural information* and *improving the quality of life through horticultural projects*.

I want to thank the 2018 board members for their leadership and a job well done. Special thanks to Yvonne Sparks, Immediate Past President.

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We are sad to have the passing of one our founding members, Wayne Stafford. Wayne will be missed and please read more about Wayne in this edition of Inside Dirt.

We appreciate Spencer Perkins, our advisor and the Texas AgriLife Extension Agent for Henderson County. Thanks also to the team supporting Spencer at the extension office- Ariel Conway, Carolyn Tyler, Kate Marshall and Angela Hemphill. This team is fantastic, and we appreciate their support!

We also certified six new Master Gardeners from our Intern Class of 2018:

- Shery Damuth
- Susan Skomma
- Sherri Doss
- Sherry Sorrell
- Christy Graham
- Barbara Thompson

This group of enthusiastic volunteers achieved the minimum 50-hour commitment and in fact we had many that achieved over 150 hours of service to the HCMGA! Many have already moved into various leadership positions.

A special welcome to our new Master Gardener class of 2019:

- Rachel Bayless
- Rita Hammond
- Carl Beck
- Delbert Hirst (Dub)
- Cynthia Beck
- Cindy Oliver
- Larry Beier
- Paula Patterson
- Cindy Carter
- Barbara Whitfill
- Joseph Cerveny
- Judy Colvin
- Rebecca Chapa
- Ellen Sokolovic

This class of 14 has completed a 50+ hour training course and passed their final exam. They are now officially interns and will spend the next year achieving 50 hours of volunteer service to receive their *Texas Master Gardener* certification. They will take on the planning and execution of our fall conference fund raiser this year.

Finally, one huge thanks to my wife for supporting me and participating behind the scenes! As you can see in the picture, she is definitely my better half!

Enjoy reading this issue of *Inside Dirt* and we look forward to continuing to provide you with gardening advice throughout the year!

David



Get through the winter by attending the Library Series. Hang with other master gardeners.

2019 HCMGA Meetings

When: Noon (luncheon), 3rd Wednesday of the month

- January 16th
- February 20th
- March 20th
- April 17th
- May 15th
- June 19th
- July 17th
- August 21st
- September 18th
- October 16th
- November 20th
- December 18th

Where: [Richard M. Hart & Johnny Morris Conservation Center](#)

Address: 5601 Country Road 4812
Athens, TX 75752

For more information on how you can become a Master Gardener:

- Call: (903) 675-6130
- Email: CMGA@gmail.com
- Visit: tcmg.org/hendersonmg

For more events, see the calendar on page 5

HCMGA Projects

- **Children's Garden:** HCMGA is available for consultation on school or teaching gardens.
- **DREAM Garden:** (Demonstrate, Research, Educate, Apply, Maintain) The HCMGA maintains a cottage-style ornamental garden at the East Texas Arboretum in Athens.
- **Fall Conference:** The largest fundraiser for HCMGA, this conference includes a guest speaker, possible raffles and/or auctions and a dinner.
- **Greenhouse:** The HCMGA maintains a greenhouse located at Trinity Valley Community College. This greenhouse allows us to propagate and grow plants that are sold at our annual spring plant sale.
- **Harvest Garden:** The HCMGA's newest project, the Harvest Garden, is a teaching garden on growing fruits and vegetables with hands-on demonstrations. It is located inside the Regional Fairpark Complex.
- **Library Series:** Educational presentations are hosted by the HCMGA on the third Tuesday of each month. These programs are open to the public at the Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library in Athens.
- **Plant Sale:** The HCMGA hosts an annual plant sale in the spring which is open to the public. Master Gardeners propagate and grow different varieties of plants and trees. This event is a major fundraiser for the organization.
- **Summer Series:** Workshops are provided in the summer months to share expertise and educate the public on various gardening topics.

Planting A Harvest Garden

By Lydia Holley



Henderson County Master Gardener Association's newest project, the Harvest Garden, is starting to see some progress. For months, County Extension Agent Spencer Perkins and Master Gardeners hoped, dreamed, discussed, planned and prepared for a demonstration garden that would show the public how to grow fruits, vegetables, grapes and berries.

When this article goes to print, the fence should already be erected around the space designated for the Harvest Garden, located inside the Henderson County Regional FairPark Complex. You will notice the fenced-in area is approximately the same size as the average suburban lot. This size was purposefully decided so homeowners could discern how much produce could be grown in their own back yards.

Look for future demonstrations on starting a garden from scratch. Presentations on installing an irrigation system, soil testing, building raised beds, grape trellising, and erecting a hoop house will all be given as the garden evolves. Additional demonstrations on planting, plant selection, growing, and harvesting will be given as the garden continues to grow. We hope you will join us in planting your own garden to harvest.

Learn at the Library Series

January 15th: See Page 6 for details on Master Gardener Robert Erickson's Presentation on "The History of Food".

February 19th: Master Gardener, Susan Skommessa will share on the topic of square-foot gardening. This past year she trellised watermelon, and this winter she has a greens garden in progress. Come learn from her experiments, successes, and do-overs. Learn how to set up a raised bed and garden the square-foot gardening way.

Held at Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library. **Address is** 121 S. Prairieville St. Athens TX 75751. **Time** 5:30p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Calendar of Events



Events Around Town

- **January & February (Happening now) Texas Master Gardener Association:** <https://txmg.org/> **2019 Texas Master Gardener Conference** – “Registration for the 2019 Texas Master Gardener Conference, set for April 25-27, 2019 is NOW OPEN! To register go to <http://2019tmgconference.com/>. The conference will be held at Victoria Community Center, 2905 E. North Street, in Victoria. There will be eight great speakers, five wonderful tours and three garden craft workshops in addition to plenty of good food.”
- **January & February (every Friday) – Texas Parks and Wildlife:** <https://tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/estero-llano-grande/butterfly-and-dragonfly-walk/2019-01-04> **Butterfly & Dragonfly Walk (1:30pm)** – “Suitable for all ages. About 300 species of butterflies and about 100 species of dragonflies make South Texas their home, many of which are found nowhere else in North America. Binoculars, closed shoes and a hat are suggested for participants. Meet on the deck overlooking beautiful Ibis Pond just outside the Park Store. Checklists are provided. A knowledgeable guide will lead. Free with regular park admission. Field guides and cameras make the hike even more fun!”
- **January 3rd – Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center:** <https://www.wildflower.org/events/2019-01/> **Tree Pruning Workshop (9am-11am)** – “For every tree there's a tool and for every tool there's a technique! Trees give us so much — learn how to keep them healthy and happy with proper pruning technique from a landscaping expert.”
- **January 12th – Smith County Master Gardeners:** <https://txmg.org/smith/coming-events/> **Peggy Martin Presents old garden and antique roses (11am-2pm)** – lunch provided. Anyone wanting to get tickets and pre-order roses can email master.gardener@kaufmancounty.net
- **January 12th – Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center:** <https://www.wildflower.org/events/2019-01/> **Native Fruit Trees of Texas (9am-11am)** - “Money may not grow on trees, but fruit does, and a healthy native fruit tree is really priceless. Learn about fruit trees of Texas, tree selection, harvesting and other tips for care from a landscaping expert.” **and Who's Been Here? Tracks, Scats, and Signs (1pm-3pm)** - “Learn to scope out a scene, investigate for signs of wildlife, use a field guide, and even get the scoop on poop with a lesson on (synthetic) scat.”
- **January 21st - Dallas Arboretum:** <https://www.dallasarboretum.org/visit/calendar#> **Homeschool Family Workshop (10am)** – “Get ready for nesting season by building a Blue Bird House to provide a habitat for Texas native birds.”
- **February 8 – Collin County Master Gardeners:** <http://www.ccmgatx.org/about-us/register-for-an-event.aspx?id=10503> **Grape, Berry and Fruit Tree Propagation Workshop (8:30am-4pm)** - The Landing – Myers Park & Event Center in McKinney Speakers from Texas A&M AgriLife will present information explaining propagation and proper pruning of grapes, berries, and fruit trees. Dr. Greg Church, certified arborist and former Collin County horticulture agent, will speak on proper pruning of fruit trees. We will visit the Myers Park grapevine area during the workshop. The workshop fee is \$35.00 and includes snacks, beverages, and a box lunch. Registration deadline is February 1, 2019.

- **February 21st – East Texas Arboretum and Botanical Society:** <http://www.easttexasarboretum.org/events.html> **Owl and Bat House Workshop** – While there, visit the HCMGA’s DREAM garden.
- **February 23-28 - Dallas Arboretum:** <https://www.dallasarboretum.org/visit/calendar#> **Dallas Blooms: Life’s a Picnic** – *“Experience 500,000 blooming bulbs and an AMAZING picnic themed topiary.”*
- **February 28th - Texas Master Gardener Association:** <https://txmg.org/> **2019 Texas Master Gardener Conference** – End of registration for the 2019 Texas Master Gardener Conference, scheduled for April 25-27, 2019



Master Gardeners Remember Wayne Stafford, by Yvonne Sparks



Wayne was a proud member of the first MG class in Henderson County in 2000. He maintained his continuous MG membership since 2001. He was in the first class to be certified as Master Gardeners in Henderson County. Wayne wasn’t just a Master Gardener getting his required hours, he was an active and valuable member of HCMGA.

Wayne was the first Website Manager and maintained the site for 8 years. He brought HCMGA into the tech age. He was the Historian for 5+ years; recording the activities through his pictures and articles. An avid photographer, he became the resident photographer of MG. Wayne and his wife, Irene, attended most of the MG events and photographed the programs and activities over the last 15 years. There were not a lot of MG events that Wayne did not attend. He was Publicity Manager and was instrumental in getting photos and articles of MG events and programs in local and county newspapers and on internet sites. He has maintained a photo library of thousands of photos of butterflies, plants, wildflower, host plants and gardens he has visited. People rarely saw Wayne without his camera.

His presentation on “Why Study Butterflies” won a 2nd Place state award for Educational Program in 2011. The following year, his presentation “Wildflowers of Post Oak Savannah” won a 1st Place state award for Educational Program.

He was a beloved and valued member of HCMGA and a wonderful man. Sharon Barrett, HCMGA Director, shared with me, “The attribute I most associate with Wayne is humility. He is probably the most sincerely humble person I’ve ever known. He rarely said the word “I”. It was always “we” when speaking of anything he had done. Irene, his wife of 59 years, and I shared a chuckle this morning at the thought that he must surely have a camera in his hands even now.”

Even though Wayne slowed down in recent years and his absence was surely felt, he will hold a special place in HCMGA. His passing on December 15, 2018 will leave HCMGA with a vacancy that will be hard to replace. The HCMGA board of directors have begun the process of submitting Wayne Stafford to receive Master Gardener Emeritus to the Texas Master Gardener Association and are considering other recognitions in honor of Wayne’s service, loyalty and participation in the MG program.



Wayne receiving his 15-year membership certificate in 2016 from President Lydia Holley.

Spencer's Corner

Preparing Your Lawn for Spring

By Spencer Perkins



As we close out 2018, it has been a year to remember with substantial rainfall. Though we went most of the summer with no rain, over half our rainfall came after September 1st, which has the ground saturated to date. Many of our warm season forages were damaged or thinned after the tough summer, leaving many areas with sun to soil contact. Given this scenario, coupled with the ground moisture present, I would be ready to fight the annual summer weeds.

It won't be too many weeks before some of the annual summer lawn weeds begin to germinate and grow. Some of the common ones are crabgrass, chickweed, knotweed and goosegrass. One of the easiest ways to take care of these weeds is to put down a preemergent herbicide that prevents them from coming up. One of

the factors to consider in using a preemergent herbicide is, of course, it must be applied before weeds germinate. If it is applied too late, and the weeds have sprouted, the chemical will not be effective and will not provide any control at all. In this part of Texas, the "rule of thumb" date for the application of a preemergent herbicide is between February 15th and March 1st. This means that if a preemergent herbicide is applied by March 1st, most years it will prevent annual weeds. But, once in a while, spring comes a little early and weeds can germinate and be up before March 1st. Therefore, I'd suggest applying your preemergence herbicides on or about February 15th.



Perhaps one of the best ways to approach total year-round lawn weed control is to apply a preemergence herbicide September 1st (to control the weeds that germinate in the fall) and then a second application February 15th (to control the spring and summer annuals).



Of course, good year-round lawn care and management practice will greatly reduce and/or eliminate the need for chemical control. I'm speaking of practices like watering, regular mowing (at correct height), routine fertilization, and insect and disease control.

Don't forget that moisture is a key to success with any preemergent herbicide. Ideally, you put out the preemergence herbicide, strictly according to label instructions, and get a 1 to 2-inch rain just as you are getting through. This is more practical and achievable with an irrigation system than trying to watch the weather and plan accordingly.

Learn at the Library Series – January's Event

Master Gardener Robert Erickson will give a presentation on the history of food on Tuesday, January 15, at 5:30 p.m., at the Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library, 121 S. Prairieville St., Athens.

In Erickson's own words, "Vegetables are essential to our daily lives but how did they evolve and where did they come from? Take an international journey as we discover how our plates became filled with green, brown, orange, yellow, and red things." This program is offered free to the public and is a part of Henderson County Master Gardener Association's 'Learn at the Library' series. For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com, or visit txmg.org/hendersonmg.

Master Gardeners Celebrate 2018

By Lydia Holley

Henderson County Master Gardener Association (HCMGA) held their annual Awards Dinner on Thursday, December 13. A presentation on the history and taxonomy of various types of Christmas trees was presented by Master Gardener Sherry Sorrell.

Fourteen members of the Master Gardener class were awarded certificates of achievement in passing the course. They also received pins indicating their introduction as interns into the Master Gardener program. These fourteen are: Rachel Bayless, Carl Beck, Cynthia Beck, Larry Beier, Cindy Carter, Joseph Cerveny, Rebecca Chapa, Judy Colvin, Rita Hammond, Delbert Hirst, Cindy Oliver, Paula Patterson, Ellen Sokolovic, and Barbara Whitfill.

Newly certified Texas Master Gardeners were given their certificates of achievement and Texas Master Gardener pin. These were: Shery Damuth, Sherri Doss, Christy Graham, Susan Skommesa, Sherry Sorrell and Barbara Thompson. They took the class in 2017 and volunteered a minimum of 50 hours to the Master Gardener program in 2018. Part of their volunteer hours were spent compiling a Monthly Gardener Guidebook. This guidebook is being offered to the public by calling the office of the County Extension Agent.

Barbara Thompson received the Intern of the Year award. Thompson has volunteered numerous hours at every project and program in the HCMGA. She volunteered regularly at the greenhouse and in the Dream Garden. The Dream Garden is HCMGA's ornamental demonstration garden located inside the East Texas Arboretum.

Yvonne Sparks received the Volunteer of the Year Award. Sparks served as President of HCMGA in 2018. The membership selects the Volunteer of the Year by secret ballot.

Receiving a three-year service pin was Ted Haldeman. Five-year service pins were awarded to Robert Erickson, Shannon Greene and Marylee Haldeman.

Officers for 2019 were installed. They are: David Bickerstaff, President; Claudia Durham, Vice President of Programs and Administration; Lora Tomlinson, Vice President of Member and Community Education; Martha Rainwater, Secretary; Barbara Thompson, Treasurer; and Sara Drummond, Historian.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com, or visit txmq.org/hendersonmq.



Courtesy photo: Master Gardener class members receive their intern pins and certificates.

from left: Rachel Bayless, Ellen Sokolovic (Barely peeking out), Cindy Oliver, Barbara Whitfill, Rita Hammond, Delbert Hirst, Judy Colvin, Carl Beck, Cindy Beck, Rebecca Chapa, Larry Beier, Cindy Carter

January & February Gardening Tips

In General, Winter is a great time for cleanup. Rid your garden of wilted or dead stems and leaves, chop them up and add them to your compost pile. Turn your compost at least monthly during winter. Run your mower over fallen leaves and use them as mulch in your flowerbeds. Renew the mulch on your flower beds to ensure a 3" layer. It is much easier to do this now while plants are dormant, rather than after everything starts to sprout and bloom.

Clean, sharpen and oil your tools. Service and tune up your lawn mower and power tools. Sharpen blades. Check your irrigation system for missing and/or broken sprinkler heads. Clean the filters.



If it's been three or more years since you've had your soil tested, now would be a great time. Sample bags can be obtained from any HCMGA event.

Love veggies and herbs? Start seeds indoors for plants like Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Collards, Eggplant, Herbs, Kale, Lettuce, Peppers, and Tomatoes.

Late January and early February, plant English Peas and Garlic outdoors.

About mid-February, plant cool season vegetables, like Asparagus, Beets, Chinese Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower transplants, Collards, Kale, Irish Potatoes, Cabbage transplants, Kohlrabi, Leaf Lettuce, Mustard, Onion sets, Spinach, Radish, Swiss Chard, Turnips, Strawberry transplants

How about Flowers? In January, start seeds indoors for Begonias, Marigolds, Periwinkles, Petunias, and other summer flowers. In February, plant cool season annuals like Balsam, Calendula, Cannas, Dianthus, Larkspur, Nasturtium, Pansies, Phlox, Snapdragons, and Stock. Plant summer geophytes (bulbs and corms) such as Dahlia and Gladiolus. Both like full sun in well-prepared soils. Prune your non-evergreen ornamental grasses to a height of about one foot.

Before pruning Hydrangeas - stop! Be sure to read the section *Tips and Tricks*, in the month of August, in the HCMGA Monthly Gardening Guide. (See the next page of this newsletter for more details on this valuable resource.) It's important to know what kind of hydrangea you have, as that will impact when you prune. In addition, February *Tips and Tricks* has extensive detail on pruning Clematis – and February is the month for that!

Do you care for your trees and shrubs - or are they just there? Refresh the mulch around your shrubs. With the leaves off the trees, examine and evaluate your landscape. Notice the “bones” of your design and plan for any changes. You may move existing trees and shrubs to a different location in the landscape. In February, prune your summer-flowering trees and shrubs before the buds begin to swell for spring. However, and very important, do not prune spring-flowering shrubs until after they bloom. (See *Events Around Town* on page 4 of this newsletter for details on the **Tree Pruning Workshop** on January 3rd.)



Prune Roses around Valentine's Day. In addition, add new Roses to your garden this month. (See *Events Around Town* on page 4 of this newsletter for details on buying Roses at the **Peggy Martin Presents Old Garden and Antique Roses** event on January 12th.) February is also the month to prune your Crape Myrtles. Be kind to them. Prune your Crape Myrtles – don't butcher them.

In February, plant bare-rooted fruit and nut trees: Apple, Blackberries, Blueberries, Fig trees, Japanese Persimmon, Pear, and Plum trees. Prune your established fruit trees. Did you know that Apricots, Peaches and Plums need pruning annually? Fertilize fruit trees with a high nitrogen fertilizer. Plan your spray schedule for the year. (See *Events Around Town* on page 4 of this newsletter for details on the **Native Fruit Trees of Texas** event on January 12th and **Grape, Berry and Fruit Tree Propagation Workshop** on February 8th.)



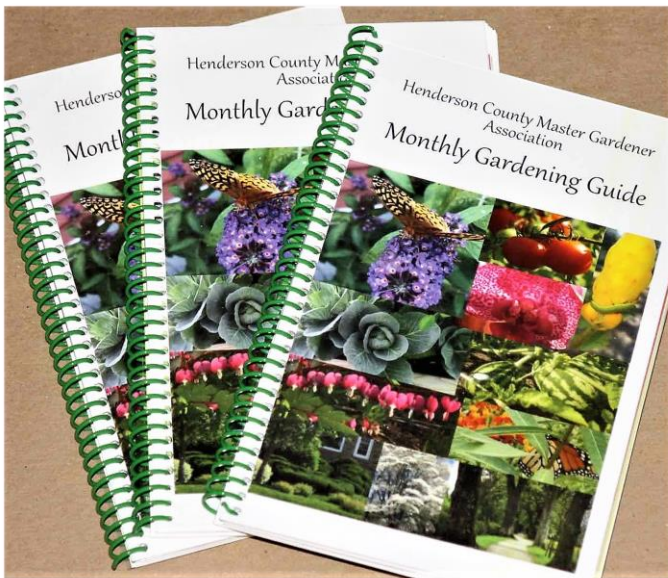
Congratulations Are in Order

By Lydia Holley

Each December, interns that meet the necessary requirements are certified as Texas Master Gardeners. In 2018, six interns achieved Master Gardener status:

Shery Damuth	Susan Skommesa
Sherri Doss	Sherry Sorrell
Christy Graham	Barbara Thompson

Congratulations and good job!



Interns are required to volunteer a minimum of 50 hours to the projects and programs of Henderson County Master Gardener Association after taking the Master Gardener class and passing the final exam. In the past, interns coordinated a program free to the public. They chose the specific horticultural topic, the speaker(s), the place, the time/date, etc., all within a certain budget. This year, due to our fundraiser being moved to the fall, these interns were tasked with compiling a monthly gardener guidebook. This guidebook is specific to East Texas and can be purchased for \$15.00 by calling (903) 675-6130.

In addition to volunteering at Henderson County Master Gardener's various programs and projects, these six new Master Gardeners have accepted

positions with the Association: **Shery Damuth** was on the Audit committee in 2018 and will be on it again in 2019. She is also on the Advanced Training committee and is the Area Manager of the Harvest Garden for grapes and fruit trees. **Christy Graham** is working with the Children's Garden program. **Susan Skommesa** is Editor of the Henderson County Master Gardener e-newsletter, *The Inside Dirt*, and is a part of the Website committee. **Sherry Sorrell** was on the Hospitality committee in 2018, is on the Advanced Training committee and is the Area Manager of the Harvest Garden for the hoop house. **Barbara Thompson** put this year's Master Gardener Handbook together, will be the Treasurer In 2019, and assists in the Greenhouse.

2-gallon roses - \$18.00
Peggy Martin * Plum Perfect * Ducher *
Julia Child * Mrs Anthony Waterer

Peggy Martin presents
old garden & antique roses



Saturday,
January 12
11 am - 2 pm
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1906 Fair
Street
Kaufman,
Texas

Tickets \$35.00
Limited seating
available
Lunch provided

469-371-4542



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AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

PRE-ORDER TICKETS & 2-GALLON ROSES AT
MASTER.GARDENER@KAUFMANCOUNTY.NET
OR SEND A CHECK TO KAUFMAN COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS
2471 N. STATE HIGHWAY 34, KAUFMAN, TX 75142

Educational programs conducted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, national origin, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is an equal opportunity employer and program provider. Individuals with disabilities who require auxiliary aid, service or accommodation in order to participate in Extension sponsored meetings are encouraged to contact the County Extension office at (972) 932-9069 at least 2 weeks in advance to determine how reasonable accommodations can be made.

Sp Adobe Spark

Email Jim Burt to order tickets and to pre-order roses, at: master.gardener@kaufmancounty.net

Bugpocalypse

By Lydia Holley

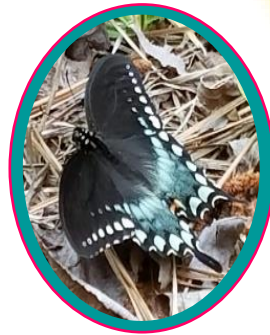
There is something going on in the world of bugs. Actually, there is something going wrong in the world of bugs. Which means, something is going wrong in the world.

Studies are beginning to show the bug population is dropping so low, scientists are now calling it a “bugpocalypse” or “insect armageddon”. The problem is worldwide, and studies are pouring in. It started with a Denmark study of tracking the splats on a windshield. The studies then increased in size and scope. A study done in conjunction with Aarhus University, the University of Copenhagen, North Carolina State University and the Natural History Museum of Denmark in a German nature reserve showed decreases in flying insect populations by 75 percent over 27 years. The Krefeld Society in Germany announced that in one reserve, insects had decreased almost 80 percent over 24 years. A study in the El Yunque rain forest in Puerto Rico found a shocking difference in 36 years: whereas once 473 milligrams of bugs were caught, now the catch rate was only 8 milligrams.

Fish, birds, frogs, lizards and other animals that rely on insects for food has declined, also. One study found that some of these species have declined on average by 45 percent. Eighty percent of the partridges have disappeared from French farmlands. Over the past 30 years, farmland birds in Europe have decreased by 50 percent. Nightingales dropped 50 percent while turtledoves dropped 80 percent. The Puerto Rican tody, a bird, has declined by 90 percent. These birds eat mostly insects as their food source. In contrast, the ruddy quail dove had no population change; it eats fruits and seeds.

So what is happening to our bugs? No one knows, of course. Most scientists believe a number of factors come into play. Some are beyond our control. But there are some things the average gardener can do to help out.

The first thing is to realize you do not have to kill a bug just because it is eating your plants. The second thing is to stop using chemicals in your garden. Try to provide a haven for frogs, lizards, caterpillars and insects. The third is to plant native plants. A recent

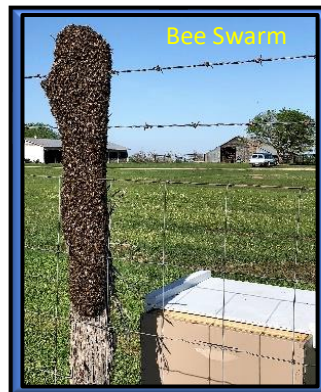


study on Carolina chickadees showed that bird populations dwindled unless landscapes had at least 70 percent native plant biomass. The scientists felt Carolina chickadees made a good representation for most insect-eating birds.

If you think about it, increasing native plants makes sense. Insects need plants to eat; they choose native plants. In order for them to sustain their populations (and to have enough insects to sustain birds, fish, frogs, lizards, and other populations), native plants are imperative. Of course, planting native plants only helps if you do not use chemicals which hurt the insects you are trying to attract, and do not kill insects which may need your plants to survive.

According to an article published at smithsonianmag.com, homeowner Debbie Hollander is convinced. Her yard was a part of the Carolina chickadee study. A bird lover, Hollander was excited to see a nest in her yard. Excitement turned to dismay when only one chick of four survived to fledge. The next year, she had no nests in her yard. "I always knew that native plants were important, but actually seeing these scientists walking around and counting caterpillars on the leaves really brought it home to me," says Hollander. "I would never, ever plant anything now that's nonnative." (Adam Cohen, *Ecologists Have this Simple Request to Homeowners—Plant Native*, 10)

To the world of bugs - and for the world in general - your actions could mean a world of difference.



Where Are All the Natives?

Filling your garden with native plants may seem like quite the challenge. Which plants are native? Where do you find them? How do you care for them? On page 9, there is a project by the graduating class of interns that just may help. The HCMGA Monthly gardening Guide has an article on Earth-Kind from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. In that article are listed many native grasses, groundcovers, perennials, shrubs and trees of all sizes, as well as vines. In addition, the index lists about 325 plants, trees, shrubs, and vines, by both their common name, as well as their scientific name. The natives all have stars next to them. Here are a couple more awesome resources:

- Native Plant Society of Texas: <https://npsot.org/wp/>
- Ladybird Johnson Wild Flower Center: <https://www.wildflower.org/magazine/landscapes/natural-accents> - click on "South Central Plains"
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/> and <https://agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/solutions/best-plants-trees-grow-texas-landscapes/>
- Texas A&M Agriculture Program: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamentals/nativeshrubs/>
- Texas A&M East Texas Gardening: <https://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu/east-texas-home-gardening/plants-for-east-texas/>

Three Great Plants for Texas Gardens

by Judy Haldeman

If you are reevaluating your garden this winter, now is the time to consider some Texas natives or Texas Superstar plants. We have several of these proven winners in our gardens and been impressed with their beauty and resilience.

One of these is *Guara lindheimeri*. Often the scientific name of a plant includes the “discoverer” of the plant. Jacob Lindheimer (1801-1879) is often called the “Father of Texas Botany” because of his work as the first permanent-resident plant collector in Texas. He is credited with the discovery of several hundred plant species and his name is used to designate forty-eight species and subspecies of plants. Many of those plants contain the name *lindheimeriana* or *lindheimeri*. This guara, often referred to as “Whirling Butterfly”, is a Texas native that grows best in sandy, loamy, well-drained soil in full or partial sun. It tolerates heat, humidity, and some drought. If it is grown in rich soils, it can become leggy and floppy. There are no serious insect or disease problems, but can develop root rot in heavy or poorly drained soils. It’s a clump forming perennial that can grow to 5 feet tall. Ours are several years old and are a bit over 3 feet tall. What we like about this plant are the small white flowers that sway in the breeze. It reminds me of a dance of excited butterflies. It blooms spring to fall. We have both the white and pink varieties, but my favorite is the white because of the contrast with existing flowers of reds, blues, and yellows. It attracts butterflies, bees, and other pollinators.

Another favorite in our garden is Gregg’s Mistflower, *Coccoliniium greggii*. The scientific name *greggii* is in honor of Josiah Gregg (1806-1850). He was born in Tennessee and in the summer of 1841 and the winter of 1841-42 he traveled through part of east Texas, from the Red River valley, to Nacogdoches, Galveston, and Austin. He found and collected plant specimens throughout much of Texas, Mexico, and, eventually, the American west. The American Botanical Society added the Latin name “greggii” in his honor to twenty-three species of plants.



Gregg’s mistflower is native to Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. This perennial herb will grow in full sun to part shade. The average height is 2 to 3 feet, with a spread of 2 to 3 feet. The light purple or violet flowers bloom from March to November. Although its water use is classified as medium, it will tolerate dry soil. It can also be used as a ground cover. Bees and butterflies, especially the Queen Butterfly in fall, are drawn to the fragrant flowers. Although we have never had a problem with deer munching on our plants, some sites say deer will browse it. It is among our favorite plants because it is one of the very few plants on our farm that the leaf-cutter ants ignore. Gregg’s mistflower can be



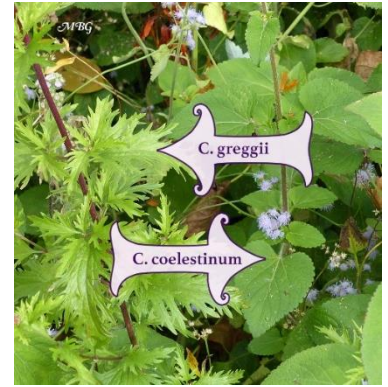
propagated by sowing seeds directly after the final frost or by softwood or semi-hardwood cuttings in summer and fall.

Gregg’s Mistflower is often confused with Blue Mistflower, *Conoclinium coelestinum*. The blue mistflower is often referred to as wild ageratum. Easily grown in average, medium to wet, well-drained soils in full sun to part shade it prefers moist, fertile, humusy soils which do not dry out. Because it is native to Missouri, it is more cold-tolerant than Gregg’s mistflower. It, too, is readily available at nurseries. The blooms of the blue mistflower are more lavender than blue. The Native Plant Society of Texas says that *Conoclinium coelestinum* is better adapted to East Texas

into the eastern edge of the Hill Country and that *Conoclinium greggii* grows best in western Edwards Plateau, the Trans Pecos area and further west, but we have had no problems growing it in east Texas.

The flowers of these plants resemble each other, and both attract butterflies. The main difference—besides the name—is the leaf. Gregg’s Mistflower is “frillier-leafed”. Both are worth trying in your garden, just be sure you are buying the plant you want. The names are often interchanged by people who are unfamiliar with the scientific nomenclature.

Another Texas Native we have growing in our various gardens is the “Henry Duelberg” Salvia. This plant was found by Greg Grant, Texas A&M AgriLife horticulturist for Smith County. Grant was looking for native varieties of *Salvia farinacea* in rural Texas, specifically along rural roads or in untended cemeteries. He discovered this perennial



native plant of South and Central Texas during one of his searches. It has been designated a Texas Superstar® known for its low maintenance and heat, drought and humidity tolerance. It grows three feet high and wide. The butterflies are attracted to the medium dark blue spikes that grow on tall stems from spring to fall. It is more “open” than the hybrid salvias bred specifically for dense compact flowering. We like the more open look of this plant. It grows thicker and will flower better in fall if it is cut back in mid-summer. This deer-resistant plant is hardy up through Zone 7. An added bonus is that it is virtually disease and pest free. It can develop fungal problems if the soil remains wet for long periods. It is another plant in our garden that the leaf-cutter ants ignore! And the name of THIS plant? Grant found this plant at the gravesite of Henry Duelberg and named it in his honor. Mr. Grant also discovered and named the white flowered

Augusta Duelberg salvia he found nearby on Augusta Duelberg’s gravesite. We, and the butterflies, enjoy both of these salvias.

Maybe it’s time you consider one of these three plants. The Henderson County Master Gardener Plant Sale in April should have these available.

DID YOU KNOW?

The first greenhouses in history were built in Rome in 30 A.D. under the orders of Emperor Tiberius. He wanted to eat a cucumber a day! In 1737, Andrew Faneuil built the first greenhouse in North America, in Boston. (Coopers, David E. *A Philosophy of Gardens*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006.)

In 1637, a virus changed the color of tulips in Holland. Consequently, people believed a new type of plant had been discovered, leading to a vast tulip craze. As a result, one of the bulbs went for “a load of grain, 1,000 pounds of cheese, 12 sheep, 10 oxen, 5 pigs, 4 barrels of beer, 2 tubs of butter, 2 hogsheads of wine, a suit of clothes, and a silver cup.” (Turner, Tom. *Garden History: Philosophy and Design, 2000 BC–2000 AD*. New York, NY: Spon Press, 2005.)

The largest flower in the world is the *Rafflesia arnoldii*, or “corpse flower.” It gets its common name from the odor it emits; it smells like rotting meat or dung. *Rafflesia arnoldii* is named after Sir Stamford Raffles and surgeon-naturalist Dr. James Arnold, who discovered it in 1818. *Rafflesia arnoldii* is found in the rainforests of Indonesia. It can grow to more than 3 feet across and weigh as much as 24 pounds. It is a very rare plant, and near extinction. It has neither leaves, roots, or stem, and is a species of flowering plant in the parasitic genus *Rafflesia*. Look this one up to see the picture of this other-world plant.

Henderson County Master Gardeners

The master Gardener program is a volunteer development program, offered by Texas AgriLife Extension Service, that disseminates horticultural information to individuals and groups in Henderson County. The mission is to develop and cultivate community projects related to horticulture. We are a group of volunteers who share a love of gardening and are eager to learn and share our knowledge.

Cannas: Stunning Beauty, Ease of Care

by Susan Skommesa, Henderson County Master Gardener



The jewel of any garden, the tall Canna Lily (Canna L.), can stand six to nine feet tall. The broad leaves reach ten or more inches long, adding to its majesty. Vivid flowers can nestle within foliage, creating a cup effect, or rise up on long stems to stand out in brilliant oranges, reds, and yellows. Even white can be found in the Canna 'Ermine'.

The leaves alone are stunning. Long and broad, with a range in color that sweeps through the green spectrum, and on into deep purples. Variegated combinations range from kelly green with dark green veins, to a variety of green shades with purple edging and veins. The Canna 'Cleopatra' leaf is half purple and half green, and the colors swirl around each other in yin-yang curves.

Unless you have a Canna garden, or in my case, an island of Cannas, you'll want to be careful where you place them. The tall Cannas need a back-row seat. The medium or dwarf Cannas have more flexibility for placement, though the dwarf still stands at 3 feet tall.

Cannas love Northeast Texas weather and most of our soils. The only difficult soil for the Canna is sandy soil, which can be rectified with much compost. Though Cannas love sun, the stand that adorns my front yard gets dappled sun, which doesn't seem to inhibit growth or flowering. Heavy mulching is recommended to keep weeds out and moisture in. Unless we are in our rainy season, watering once a week is enough to keep these beauties satisfied.

Cannas propagate themselves quickly. The plant grows along rhizomes, which are underground root-like structures from which shoots emerge. Rhizomes make thinning a breeze. Simply cut the rhizome between plants. The best time for this is after the first freeze when the stalk dies. If you are not relocating your thinned plants, they make great gifts. Winter cleanup is simply cutting the dead stalks off, and mulching deeply to protect the roots from freezing. Chopped up stalks make great compost. In Northeast Texas, rhizomes can be left in the ground during the winter.

The ease of care, quick multiplication, and stunning beauty earn the Canna a treasured spot in my gardens. This year I have thinned my collection, and will donate about twenty-five plants to the Henderson County Master Gardener's Spring Plant Sale. This yearly event will be held on April 27, 2019 at the Athens Senior Citizen Center, located at 3356 Hwy 31, Athens, Texas 75751. It's not too early to add the HCMG Spring Plant Sale to your calendar, as you will find many new treasures to enhance your garden.

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Texas master gardeners



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Tis the Season of Dreaming About Seeds

Robert Erickson, Henderson County Master Gardener

It is winter and a traditional time for gardeners to dream about the plants they will grow when spring arrives. This also means we scour through seed catalogs and, more often today, hunching over an on-line catalog. Before the Internet, gardeners frequently got dozens of catalogs proudly offering a wide variety of seeds which promised a beautiful and tasty garden. With the Internet, there are literally hundreds of seed companies, large and small, available to take your money for a few seeds. The jargon of the business has become so complex that many people are confused about what they are reading about. This is a brief discussion about some of the terms and issues that are often confusing and arguable. Let's jump right into the middle of the debate by discussing the differences between regular, heirloom, hybrid, and organic seeds since they are usually sold at different price levels.



First off, seeds are seeds! They are the progenitor of plants; aka the seeds of life. You plant them and things will grow. The real question at the heart of the discussion is "Yes, but what will they produce?" And the answer to this is, "It depends."

For all practical purposes, every single seed we plant is a hybrid. As I have been researching the history of our food plants, it becomes obvious that what we eat today is similar but also very different from what our ancestors ate 100 or 1000 years ago. The core of the genetic plant is the same but they have mutated over generations through cross pollination and selective breeding. Cross pollination occurs naturally and, more recently, intentionally. Mother Nature keeps her garden strong and healthy by cross pollination to ensure the strongest

and healthiest plants survive and prosper. Humans cross pollinate and selectively breed plants to develop the most desirable characteristics of the species.

The most vivid example I see is the beloved tomato. Most people fail to realize that the tomato is native to the New World, specifically, central and south America. It was a shrubby plant with a pea-sized fruit about the size of your little fingernail. It was totally unknown in Europe until the Spanish explorers brought them to Europe in the 16th Century. The earliest proponent of tomatoes as a food were the Italians, who got their strains from the Spanish. Virtually every variety of tomato we have today originated from those original seeds and plants. Since then tomatoes have been cross pollinated and selectively bred by virtually every culture in the world. Yet 95% of the basic genetic core of the plant is common with the original pea-sized tomato plant originally brought back by the Spaniards. As a result, we have cherry tomatoes as well as four-inch diameter, one-two pound slicing tomatoes. They come in red, orange, yellow, pink, green, and now black (actually a dark purple). They are all hybrids of the original.



Now we get to the more sophisticated elements and arguments. What we usually see in the market labeled as “hybrids” are recent developments. These are often referred to as F1 Hybrids, meaning filial hybrids or first-generation hybrids. Many of these are recently developed versions trying to develop into new products in an already busy marketplace. Some will be accepted and continue; others will not be able to repeat their original strain.

But many people prefer one variety of a food for whatever reason but most often taste. These are often called heirlooms. This simply means that the particular variety has been around for a long time. However, there is no consistent definition of what length of time this means. Some use it to refer to varieties over 50-years old. Others claim a longer heritage while others use the term for more recent developments. The only common meaning to the word “heirloom” is that the variety has been accepted and reproduced for a number of generations successfully.

For tomatoes, the oldest documented “heirloom” tomato developed in the US is the Paragon, developed in the late 1800s. Yet there are strains pre-dating this but without clear documentation. These include the Brandywine lines which may go back to the 16-1700s. It is unknown when they were first developed but the lines were carefully nurtured and bred through generations of family-farmers who saved seeds for future generations. Some of the Italian lines are perhaps even older but also with limited documentation.



This leaves us with the last two designations and perhaps a third one. This vague third designation is “open pollinated.” It simply means that the plants can be pollinated openly by natural sources by any closely related plant. In short, they are susceptible to being cross pollinated and those offspring may be a new hybrid. Regular seeds are supposedly the variety stated on the package but may also have been pollinated by unknown varieties. We have all tried to grow tomatoes promising four-inch slicing tomatoes and ending up with two-inch tomatoes. This may be the result of mislabeling but it may also be because of natural cross pollination in the field where they were grown.

Organic seeds are grown in stricter environments relating to chemicals and such but they have also been grown with an eye on the distance from other potential pollinators. This separation distance varies for different plants but the distance can be as few as 25-50 feet of separation to over 500 feet to ensure the plant has a minimal chance of being cross pollinated. This, of course, requires more space and more effort to ensure the purity of the variety of the seed. In simple terms, it costs more to have pure quality seeds.

Having waded through this discussion, the short summary is that when you buy your seeds, you take your chances. The more demanding you are about the fruit you harvest, the more carefully you must be in selecting your seeds and their source.

2019 Officers



Henderson County



Henderson County Master Gardeners

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