



# INSIDE DIRT

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### President's Message

David Bickerstaff, Master Gardener

Welcome to spring! Daylight savings is near so we will have more daylight to dig in the dirt! Gardeners may be eager to jump the gun on some yard and garden chores which might be better delayed to later in spring. For example, many folks will apply



fertilizer in early spring to try and force the grass to green up early. However, based on latest research, turfgrass experts recommend delaying fertilizing warm season lawn grasses (St. Augustine and Bermuda) until April, and to wait to fertilize Centipede until May. Spring green-up results from nutrients that were stored by the grass last fall (hence the importance of fall fertilization). Pushing the lawn too hard in the early spring could result in a weaker root system going into the summer. Tall fescue is an exception and should be fertilized now.

Based on data from the past 30 years, our expected last day of frost is around March 30<sup>th</sup>. Even though we have had a mild winter this year, you should follow the frost guidelines for planting certain vegetables or run the risk of having to replant.



A question that I am often asked is “What do I need to supplement my soil to grow a better lawn or garden?”. There is only one accurate answer, you should to have a soil analysis performed. Without this analysis you are potentially throwing money away on fertilizer and other supplements. The process is easy and inexpensive. You can pick up a form and a soil bag at the County Extension Agent’s office or contact a Master Gardener. You will receive a detailed analysis of the soil including recommendations to improve the soil. You can send samples (in separate bags) from your yard and garden.



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Are you a teacher? A member of a club? Our Master Gardeners are available to speak with your group on several interesting horticultural and gardening topics at no cost. We can also help a school establish a program to educate your students. Give us a call (see contact details at the end of this newsletter).

Our members are busy growing plants for our plant sale (April 27<sup>th</sup>) in the greenhouse (on the grounds of [Trinity Valley Community College](#)), tending to our [DREAM Garden](#) (located on the grounds of the [East Texas Arboretum](#)) which is showing signs of spring. Our new Harvest Garden is under construction and will open during the summer. The members are also speaking at various community events and writing articles for publications across Henderson County.

Happy Gardening!

David Bickerstaff, President HCMGA



Erlie Cheer  
From the Dream Garden



Plant Sale: **April 27, 2019.**  
Visit the [plant catalog](#) to see what will be available for sale!

### LIBRARY SERIES: Open to the public

**Tuesday, March 19, at 5:30 pm**

Master Gardener Intern Cindy Oliver will present *Cut Flower Gardening - Warm Season Annuals.*

**Tuesday, April 16, at 5:30 pm**

Master Gardener Intern Delbert Hirst will present *How Site Analysis Shapes Your Design.*

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Library series meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month at the Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library, 121 S. Prairieville, Athens.

For details on these presentations, Turn to page 6, or visit us at <https://henderson-co-tx-mg.org/welcome/events/learn-at-the-library-series/>

### 2019 HCMGA Meetings

**When:** Noon (luncheon), 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month

- March 20<sup>th</sup>
- April 17<sup>th</sup>
- May 15<sup>th</sup>
- June 19<sup>th</sup>
- July 17<sup>th</sup>
- August 21<sup>st</sup>
- September 18<sup>th</sup>
- October 16<sup>th</sup>
- November 20<sup>th</sup>
- December 18<sup>th</sup>

**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](mailto:CMGA@gmail.com)
- Visit: [txmg.org/hendersonmg](http://txmg.org/hendersonmg)

**For more events, see the calendar on page 7**

## 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, Master Gardener



The Harvest Garden is beginning to take shape! The fence was recently installed, jumping off the pages of a plan into reality. It's exciting to see the determined size of the garden in 3-D. No need to rely on marking paint and imagination.

The installation of the grape trellising has begun. End posts will be concreted in and trellising wires strung. We will wait on the irrigation system before planting. A mixture of muscadine and wine grapes will be selected. Shery Damuth, Area Manager of Grapes at the Harvest Garden, will give a presentation at that time to teach grape selection and how to install a grape trellising system from scratch.

Henderson County Master Gardener Association would like to thank [Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative Charitable Foundation](#) for the \$1,000 grant. We hope your gift allows the community to benefit abundantly through the educational programs offered at the Harvest Garden through the years.

Stay tuned as we build a Harvest Garden!



*New Harvest Garden Fence Installed*



# Pollinator favorites

By Janelle Cole, Master Gardener

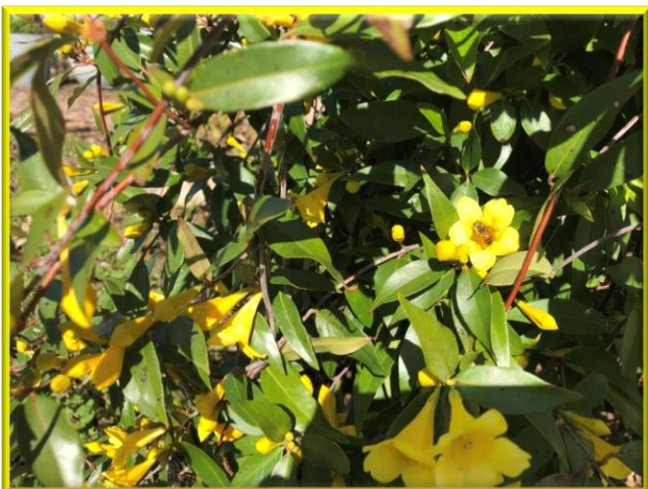
There are so many plants out there that do so many different things: bring color to your yard, attract pollinators, or simply make you smile! But where does one start when trying to figure out what to purchase for a new garden? The question you need to ask yourself is what is your focus for your garden? If your answer is to provide nectar and pollen for pollinators, look no further!! I am going to share my favorite 5 pollinator friendly plants.

Understand that if you plant pollinator friendly plants you will have pollinators. These pollinators might even eat part or most of your plant, but that is ok, they will come back. Which pollinators would you like to invite? Maybe hummingbirds, honeybees, butterflies, or even bats! The plants I am going to highlight will mostly focus on the honeybees and butterflies, but if you do a little more research you will find many other plants that will bring in a greater variety of these lovely insects to your garden!



My first favorite is African Blue Basil. I was introduced to this plant about three years ago from a friend, and I have loved it ever since. This plant is sterile and will die back every year. So if you grow to love it like I have you will have to either buy it every year, or take clippings to propagate it and overwinter the clippings inside. This plant grows to be quite large if given the space. I planted 3 about 12" apart and I ended up with about a six-foot-wide area of these blue/purple basil flowers and more bees than I could count. This was by our kitchen door and not one bee stung us as we walked by. This plant buzzed from all the bee activity!

Passion Vine is my number two favorite. As a family that is passionate about having kids in the garden and seeing nature with their own eyes, we treasure Passion Vine! Any visitors to your yard will get to see butterflies laying eggs, tiny caterpillars hatched, large caterpillars making their chrysalis, and finally butterflies hatching from their cocoon. This plant shows the entire life cycle of the Gulf Fritillary Butterfly and we just love to see the gorgeous flowers and these butterflies all summer long!



Carolina Jasmine is another family favorite simply because of its' timing. These blooms arrive before just about any other flowers in our yard. We love the yellow blooms for their color and their announcement of the coming spring. The honey bees love this plant as an early food source. While I have not propagated it, this plant is an aggressive grower. It is not invasive, not taking over, but it has gotten wider and stronger over the three years we have had it by our front porch. We have offered a trellis to help encourage it to grow up and not all over the ground. If you want to add some early color this plant may be just what you need!

On a list of top 5 pollinator plants, we cannot ignore the Salvia, but which one would be the favorite? Too many to list. If you grab a salvia, as long as you skip the red (unless you are targeting hummingbirds) you cannot go wrong. Any white or purple variety will be a quick favorite for the honey bees and butterflies! What I love most about salvias is that they are native and drought tolerant. So, in our hot dry summers, these plants continue to grow and thrive. Another great feature of these plants is that you can split them down the middle of the root ball, or dig up new growth and spread it around your garden or give to your friends! I do not think that anyone can have too many salvia plants in their yard! They are just lovely!



My fifth and final plant for this list, which could go on and on, is Coreopsis. I have had this in my yard before, but this year it was front and center in my pollinator garden. In about late September and early October this plant was covered with so many butterflies I could not count them. Every day we would be amazed at the number of butterflies in our garden, but specifically on this plant. I have not seen sprouts yet, but I know it reseeded with lots of fallen blooms, so I am looking forward to having it re-appear soon! This is a plant that I will purchase if I need to, it became that much of a favorite.

My final thoughts are this, pick perennials when you can to save time and money. Look for native drought resistant plants that will require less time and attention from you. Keep an eye on your plants the first year, and you may need to water if we have severe dry spells, but overall get them established well so you will get to enjoy them year after year!! Pollinator gardens are the most enjoyable gardens as you get to watch those lovely butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds visit daily! This is a super simple way to give back to those hard-working pollinators as well!

### Looking for Natives plants but not sure where to find them?

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? Start by visiting the **HCMGA Plant Sale on April 27<sup>th</sup>**. Experienced Master Gardeners can direct you to the natives, as well as answer all your questions. In addition, 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. 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://agrilifeextension.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/>



Henderson County Master Gardener Association Presents

## Learn at the Library Series

### **MARCH** 19<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm: *Cut Flower Gardening – Warm Season Annuals*

As part of the Henderson County Master Gardener Association **Library Series**, Master Gardener Intern Cindy Oliver will present “*Cut Flower Gardening – Warm Season Annuals*”. Her presentation will be held on **Tuesday, March 19, at 5:30 pm** at the

Ms. Oliver has always loved flowers in and around her home. She started R/C Flower Farm in 2016 and is a member of the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers. She has been active in the local Farmers Market since 2017.

### **APRIL** 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm: *How Site Analysis Shapes Your Design*

Master Gardener Intern Delbert Hirst is a graduate of Texas A&M in Landscape Architecture and is certified in permaculture. He worked for a landscape architectural firm in Arlington for 40 years. He loves organic gardening and uses native plants in his landscape designs.

Born in Snyder, Texas, Delbert is married to Karen Hirst, an interior decorator. He has two step-children, Ashley and Austin Sims. Their acreage is named “Mossbridge Farm”, where they have two miniature toy schnauzers, laying hens, Welsh Harlequin ducks and two Airbnb cabins for rent.

In April, Delbert will teach at the HCMGA Library Series, which is held at the Athens Library. His topic is *How Site Analysis Shapes Your Design*. He says of Site Analysis, “This is usually one of the first step in the process of coming up with a design. By doing a good site analysis, a lot of problems and mistakes can be avoided and a better design will result.”

Join us in April, as Delbert takes us through the process of site analysis, the first step in successful landscape design.

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**Location & Time:** All presentations are free, open to the public, and held at the Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library, 121 S. Prairieville, Athens. Presentations start at 5:30 pm sharp. For more information, please call (903) 675-6130, send an email to [hendersoncmga@gmail.com](mailto:hendersoncmga@gmail.com) or visit our website: [txmg.org/hendersonmg](http://txmg.org/hendersonmg).



# Calendar of Events

## April

4/4 - Henderson County Beef Cattle Committee  
Cow-Calf Clinic  
4/15 - HCMGA Board Meeting  
4/16 - Library Series  
4/17 - HCMG Monthly Meeting  
4/24 TMGA Leadership Training, Victoria TX  
4/25 to 4/27 - TMGA Conference, Victoria TX  
4/27 HCMGA Plant Sale

## March

3/01 – Dues Due - Last day!  
3/10 – Daylight Savings Time (Spring forward)  
3/13 – 3/15 Advanced Training: Tree Care (Garland)  
3/14 – 3/15 Advanced Training: Turf Grass (Conroe)  
3/18 – 3/23 Henderson County Livestock Show  
3/18 – HCMGA Board Meeting  
3/19 – Learn at the Library Series  
3/20 - HCMGA Monthly Meeting  
3/29 - Last day to bring plants for Plant Sale to greenhouse.

## Events Around Town

- **March 1<sup>st</sup> - April 7<sup>th</sup> - Dallas Arboretum:** <https://www.dallasarboretum.org/events-activities/dallas-blooms/> **Dallas Blooms: Life's a Picnic** – “Experience 500,000 blooming bulbs and an AMAZING picnic themed topiary. Dallas Blooms is one of the largest floral festivals in the Southwest, with over a 100-varieties of spring-blooming bulbs exploding with color and 500,000 tulips, plus hundreds of thousands of other spring flowers that will dazzle you. This year's festival features an extraordinary, larger-than-life, picnic scene topiary comprised of a stunning 40'x40' picnic blanket, a vase of flowers, a picnic basket with pie and a giant picnic ant, sponsored by Dave Perry-Miller Real Estate.”
- **March 5<sup>th</sup> - Smith County Master Gardeners:** <https://txmg.org/smith/coming-events/> **Spring Garden Seminar at Canton (6:00 pm)** – held at: Silver Spur Resort, 13785 Hwy. 19, Canton, TX 75103. “Smith County Extension Horticulturalist **Greg Grant** will present “Heirloom Gardening in the South – Yesterday's Plants for Today's Garden”. Cultural influences in Southern gardens, proven heirloom plants and Greg's own old-fashioned garden.” Cost \$20 per person, RSVP to 903-567-4149
- **March 9<sup>th</sup> – Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center:** <https://www.wildflower.org/events/2019-03/> “**Native Plant Gardening Series: Small-lot Landscapes (9:00am-12:00pm) AND Native Plant Gardening Series: Plants I (1:00pm-4:00pm)**” - In The first class, **Native Plant Gardening Series: Small-lot Landscapes**, this class is ideal for participants designing landscapes with one acre of land or less; perfect for designing yards and gardens. In the second class, **Native Plant Gardening Series: Plants I**, students will identify and learn about a variety of plants native to Central Texas, unique growing characteristics of each, and how to choose the right ones for a garden. (See part II on March 16<sup>th</sup>)
- **March 17<sup>th</sup> – Texas Parks and Wildlife:** <https://tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/mckinney-falls/native-edibles-walk> **Native Edibles Walk (10:00am-11:00am)** - “Join us for explorations in ethnobotany! Learn the names and historic uses of common Texas Hill Country plants. This is not a harvesting hike.”
- **March 15<sup>th</sup> - Ham Orchards Ham Orchard Fruit & Berry Pruning Clinic** will be **(12:00 pm to 4:00 pm)** – Located at 11939 County Road 309, Terrell, Texas 75161 (3 miles east of Terrell on Hwy 80). *Monte Nesbitt, Extension Horticulture Program Specialist-Pecan/Fruit/Citrus with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Dale Ham, owner of Ham Orchards, will talk about how to grow stone fruit trees and blackberries, variety selection, and disease and insect management. They will also demonstrate pruning*

of trees. The cost is \$15.00 per person and there will be **2 general C.E.U.'s given to private pesticide applicators.**

- **March 15<sup>th</sup> – Smith County Master Gardeners:** <https://txmg.org/smith/coming-events/> "Trialed and Trusted Plants, Distinctly Southern." (11:30am-1:00pm) – "Plants to help your garden look like the pages of Southern Living Magazine, with Laura Campbell, spokesperson for the Southern Living Plant Collection."
- **March 16<sup>th</sup> – Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center:** <https://www.wildflower.org/events/2019-03/> "Native Plant Gardening Series: Plants II (9:00am-12:00pm) AND Native Plant Gardening Series: Installation (1:00pm-4:00pm)" *In The first class, **Native Plant Gardening Series: Plants II** this continuation of our popular Native Plants Gardening Series, dig deeper into the topic of Texas flora. Learn about native plants and where to find them as well as resources to keep growing. In the second class, **Native Plant Gardening Series: Installation** this class is ideal for those wanting to learn about site preparation, irrigation, planting best practices and mulch application for a healthy garden."* (see last class on March 23<sup>rd</sup>)
- **March 16<sup>th</sup> – Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center:** <https://www.wildflower.org/events/2019-03/> "Native Plant Gardening Series: Pest Management (1:00pm-4:00pm)" - *In this final installment of the Native Plant Gardening Series, learn to identify common beneficial and harmful insects in your garden. This class also covers pest management, treatment and safety practices.*
- **April 1<sup>st</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> Ennis Bluebonnet Trails:** <https://visitennis.org/bluebonnet.htm> "Ennis showcases over 40 miles of mapped driving Bluebonnet Trails sponsored by the Ennis Garden Club. These trails are the oldest such trails known in the state, and tens of thousands of visitors make the short trek to Ennis to view this wonderful wildflower show. The Ennis Garden Club will drive the trails to check the bloom status each week starting in April. The Club then reports to the Ennis Convention and Visitors Bureau about the latest status of the bluebonnets so that visitors can be well informed where the best flowers are on the trails at the time of their visit. In Ennis, the bluebonnets typically peak around the 3rd week of April, according to the Ennis Garden Club. This can vary year to year due to weather conditions and terrain, so please check this website or call 972-878-4748 before your visit."
- **April 12<sup>th</sup> – Smith County Master Gardeners:** <https://txmg.org/smith/coming-events/> "Supercharge Your Garden with Texas Superstar Plants." (11:30am-1:00pm) – "Strong and stunning plants for Texas, with Smith County Master Gardener Texas Superstar Specialists."
- **April 20<sup>th</sup> – Collin County Master Gardener:** <https://www.facebook.com/events/337640216817743/> "Collin County Master Gardener Plant Sale" (9:00 am – 3:00pm) – "This special spring event will once again be held in the Show Barn at beautiful Myers Park & Event Center in McKinney. Attendees can expect to find hundreds of varieties of beautiful plants recommended by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension that will include annuals, perennials, trees, shrubs, vegetables, herbs, grasses, and succulents that thrive in sun, part-sun, and shade. Compost and mulch from Texas Pure Products will also be available for purchase. Collin County Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer questions, and offer advice to help homeowners plant with confidence and success."
- **April 20<sup>th</sup> – East Texas Arboretum and Botanical Society:** <http://www.easttexasarboretum.org/events.html> **Plant Sale and Art Show** – While there, visit the HCMGA's DREAM garden.
- **April 27<sup>th</sup> - Henderson County Master Gardener:** <https://henderson-co-tx-mg.org/welcome/plant-sale/catalog/> "Henderson County Master Gardener Plant Sale" (9:00am-2:00pm) – "Held at the **Senior Citizen Center**, 3344 State Hwy 31 E, Athens, Texas 75752 (next to the Fairgrounds). Offerings will include a wide variety of annuals, perennials, herbs, vines, succulents, houseplants, Texas Superstars, as well as bat and bird houses! The link provided, will take you to the plant catalog. Browse the available selection!"





# Spencer's Corner

## Clearing Muddy Water

By Spencer Perkins, County Extension Agent



Muddy water is often a problem in East Texas farm ponds, because it inhibits the growth of natural fish foods and is not aesthetically pleasing. In addition, the reduced visibility in muddy ponds limits the ability of sight-feeding predators, such as largemouth bass, to feed on forage populations effectively.

The first step to clearing muddy ponds is to inspect the watershed and shoreline for signs of erosion. Grass sod should be established on bare areas. Rocks or other rip-rap material should be placed on shorelines of larger ponds, if being eroded by wave action.

Many ponds become temporarily muddy following heavy rains, but clearing usually occurs in a few days. Abundant bullhead catfish and/or common carp populations may also cause muddy conditions and should be eliminated.

If heavy rainfall or undesirable fish are not causing muddy conditions, the cause is negatively charged clay particles, causing the coagulation precipitation of those clay particles.

A good compound recommended for clearing ponds is agricultural limestone and gypsum.

Late winter to early spring is the best time to lime a pond. I have a testing kit and can run an alkalinity and pH test here at the office. Be sure and call ahead to make sure we will be available to run the test on your sample when you get here.

Alkalinity and pH are important in providing adequate natural food, as well as maintaining a healthy fish population. It is important to look at both numbers as the pH can change daily due to respiration and photosynthesis.

Finally, a few important dates for March and April are the:

- March 18<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>: Henderson County Livestock Show. The full schedule is available at [hclsathens.com](http://hclsathens.com)
- April 4<sup>th</sup>: Henderson County Beef Cattle Committee Cow-Calf Clinic. [Click here for more information.](#)



# Correcting Crape Murder

By Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener



Clearly, the people who owned our property prior to us, and who lived on it a lifetime, loved Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia*) trees. There are 22 of these gorgeous trees on our land. These tall graceful beauties, with cinnamon and silvery-grey smooth trunks offer long-lasting, stunningly large blooming clusters of frilly flowers. As if that were not enough, they are also tough, drought tolerant, low maintenance, and subject to few plant pests.

Pruning and caring for them only increases my appreciation. Fortunately for me, the previous owners knew how to prune them.

All have been allowed to grow in accordance with their natural vase-like shape, sporting gently arching branches that reach toward the sky... that is, all but one. Someone, within the few years prior to our ownership, murdered it and I've been trying to correct the damage. Let me share with you my research on how to correct crape murder.

Let's start by defining crape murder and why it is such a bad thing. We have all seen it. Every year, sometime mid-winter, you can drive past numerous yards lined with Crape Myrtle trees, all flat-cut down to just above the tree's joints from which the thickest branches emerge.

If it's so bad, why do so many people do it? Well, probably because they see it done everywhere, and think it's necessary.

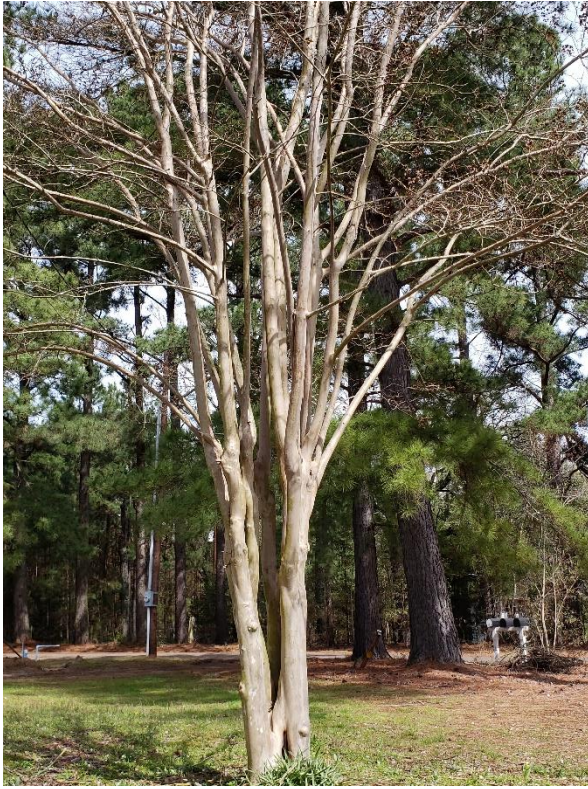
There are three reasons I know of, as to why this is a bad practice. First, it robs the tree of the opportunity to reach its full height and take its natural shape. That beautiful bark, and the elegant trunk and branches, cannot develop to their fullest potential. Second, repeated cuts tend to develop unsightly nobs. In the winter, the bones of the tree are dreadful, when they could be beautiful. (Notice the difference in the bones of the trees in this picture, versus the picture below.) Third, the branches put out that next season are often not strong enough to hold the weight of the large blossom clusters. While it's true that crape murder does result in larger (but fewer) flower clusters, the thin branches that result from improper pruning, cannot support them. The result is that branches bend severely under the weight, and may leave flower clusters dragging on the ground – especially after a summer rain. Heavy pruning is not necessary to have an abundance of gorgeous blossoms. In fact, blooms on a well pruned tree last significantly longer.



*Crape Murder. Notice the flat tops.*

The objective when pruning, is to remove thin and poorly placed branches, opening up the center for better air circulation. In reality, proper pruning of Crape Myrtle involves little if any cutting of the main trunk. A well pruned





*Well pruned over many years. Notice the open interior. All branches are up and outward.*

Crape Myrtle should not look like it has been pruned at all. When removing branches, cut them back to the larger branch or trunk, leaving no stump. Remove all suckers from the base. Remove side branches from the main trunk, up to about four feet. Remove higher branches that grow inward toward the center of the tree instead of outward, as well as any crossing or rubbing branches. You can remove seed pods if you don't like the look of them, but it will not affect flowering the following year. If you want to encourage a second flush of flowers however, remove green seed pods immediately after the summer bloom. Lastly, stand back and look at the bones of the tree. Are there any dead branches, or branches growing in a weird direction? If not, you are done.

Correcting Crape murder is very possible. All it takes is patience and a few years. If at all possible, start out by varying the heights of the main branches needing repair. This will create a more natural look in the long run. Cut off any nobs. In spring the trunks will sprout new growth. When the new growth is a foot or two long, select one or two sprouts per trunk and prune off the rest. Let those shoots develop into strong new trunks. Maintain them by pruning away shoots and inward growing branches. In a few years the new sprouts will have thickened to nearly the size of the original trunk.

If you feel as if crape murder is necessary because the tree is too tall, then you have to face the hard truth that the cultivar that's been planted is too large for the spot it's in. Crape Myrtles come in various sizes. Find the cultivar whose natural height is a better fit.

**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.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

From a botanical standpoint, avocados and pumpkins are fruits, not vegetables, because they bear the plants' seeds. Rhubarb, on the other hand, is a vegetable.

Small pockets of air inside cranberries cause them to bounce and float in water.

Snapdragon flowers resemble a dragon, and if you squeeze the sides, the dragon's mouth will appear to open and close.

A sunflower looks like one large flower, but each head is composed of hundreds of tiny flowers called florets, which ripen to become the seeds.



# Honey Bees

By Jacob Cole, Master Gardener



Are you a fan of Honey Bees? You should be! The leading experts approximate that honey bees produce 1/3 of the food we eat, and pollinate almost 80% of the flowering plants around the world. Honey bees are found on every continent except for Antarctica, and survive in a wide variety of habitats. Whether you are a Beekeeper, Gardener, or a lover of fresh fruits and vegetables, you should be a honey bee advocate.

You may be wondering how you can help bees. Even if you aren't a beekeeper, you can have a significant impact on the bees around you. Honey bees will forage up to two to three miles away from their hive. This means that anything you plant in your garden, will probably be useful to honey bees.

Some guidelines for picking bee friendly plants would be to choose blue or purple flowers, as bees see those colors better than others. Also choose more aromatic flowers, as this helps the bees find the flowers better. Lastly, plant a 3'x3' square to encourage honey bee pollination. They are more willing to return to a large group of flowers than to one solitary plant.



Other ways you can help bees would be to have water available. In the hot Texas summers, the only way to cool their hive is through evaporation. If you put out a small dish of water, or even a birdbath, you will see many bees come and collect a bit of water to take back home. You could also consider using less harmful chemicals, or spraying at dusk/dawn. Doing so helps reduce their contact with the chemicals that might affect them.

If each one takes a few little steps in our own yard or garden, we can all have a huge impact on helping the honey bee and all the other pollinators!

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## March & April Gardening Tips

### In General:

Spring is about to arrive and who's not excited! The bulbs are up and declaring it with all their color! We've had a lot of rainy, cloudy weather this winter. We are ready for sunny skies and the mild temperatures of spring...though we know the weather will continue to be fickle at least through the month of March.

Now it's time to mow, mulch, and fertilize. There is still time in early March to finish winter cleanup if the rain has kept you indoors. The main task however is preparing your gardens. Compost any remaining wilted and dead stems and leaves. Run your mower over fallen leaves and add them to your compost if you don't need them as mulch in the flowerbeds.

As the weather warms, turn your compost a bit more frequently. If the rain has washed your compost into the land around it, don't hesitate to rake it back into the pile.



If you've not renewed your soil with compost, now is the time. Take care of the weeds the rain encouraged. Ensure there is plenty of mulch on your flower beds – about a 3" layer. Since you cleaned your tools already, (right?) it's time to get planting!

By April, with the likelihood of frost gone, much time will be spent planting, weeding and thinning.

### Love veggies and herbs?



Start herbs either by sowing seeds, division or propagation. Cool-season crops should be in the ground already.

Begin sowing seeds for summer vegetables and put in transplants after average last frost date. Though the rule of thumb for the average last frost date is March 15, see the President's Message on page 1. He talks about how the average last frost over the last 30 years has really been more like March 30<sup>th</sup>. Proceed with caution and be ready to cover the vegetable gardens in case of a late frost.

Starting in March, through the end of April, plant bush beans, cantaloupe, cucumber, eggplant, pepper transplants, summer muskmelons, summer and winter squash, and watermelon. From mid-March through mid-April, plant tomato transplants, lima beans (bush and pole), and pole beans. Starting April 1<sup>st</sup>, plant your pumpkins, by the 10<sup>th</sup> your sweet potato slips and by the 15<sup>th</sup> your southern peas and okra.

### How about Flowers?

Complete planting your gladiolus from last month's to-do list. In March, plant dahlia tubers and ground cover plants. Purchase caladium tubers when available in nurseries and garden stores, but wait until the soil warms up to plant. After danger of frost and freeze, plant spring and summer annuals. Select and plant flowering perennials for garden color. Start hanging baskets of colorful annuals, but be vigilant to bring them indoors if the weather turns bad. By April it should be safe to plant most ornamental plants.



The **Henderson County Master Gardner Association Monthly Gardening Guide** has lists of flowers to choose from in each of the categories mentioned. There are also wonderful tips and tricks to give you the knowledge you need for your garden to flourish. This month-by-month spiral bound gardening guide is available for only \$15, by contacting the Henderson County Extension Office at (903) 675-6130.

The guide is specific to East Texas and not only covers planting dates and gardening chores for flowers, but also vegetables, shrubs and trees, and lawn and ground cover. The format allows for use year after year, and has room for notes. The guide is full of tips and tricks and articles on important-to-gardening topics.



### Do you care for your trees and shrubs - or are they just there?

Finish pruning summer-flowering trees and shrubs. Prune evergreen shrubs and spring-flowering shrubs and trees **after** they have bloomed. Fertilize Azaleas and Camellias **after** they have finished blooming. Add more organic mulch underneath Azaleas and Camellias and other shrubs as needed. Begin fertilizing Roses every 4-6 weeks until September.

### And what about your grass?

With the possibility of the temperatures dipping below freezing, hold off planting warm-season grasses until April. If it has been more than 2 years, it is time to send in a lawn soil sample for testing. In March, mow if there has been sufficient growth. By April, mowing is a regular task. See the **Henderson County Master Gardner Association Monthly Gardening Guide** for the appropriate height to set your mower given the type of grass. Weeds may be treated with a broadleaf weed killer.

# CHILL HOURS

By Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener



Most people who grow fruit, nut, and berries, know that those plants and trees require a certain amount of cold weather to produce plenty of healthy, well-formed, sweet fruit and tasty nuts. For the most part, we've had a pretty mild winter. You may be wondering if we had enough cold weather (chill hours) to have a good harvest, and if the quality of the fruit and nuts will be ok. At this point, you may also wonder, *"what are chill hours, and how are they calculated?"*

Fruit, nuts, and berries bud in the late summer to fall. As winter approaches and temperatures drop, the buds go into a state of dormancy. This state protects the bud from freezing temperatures as well as from prematurely responding to a warm spell. Buds will not come out of dormancy until they have experienced a certain number of chill hours. This number varies by species.

Texas A&M, [Overton Station](#), keeps track of chill hours. They have been doing so for 23 years. Their findings can be found on their website. Overton Station logs hours based on 2 different calculation methods. One method is to count the number of hours at or below 45<sup>o</sup> F, from October 1<sup>st</sup> through February 28/29<sup>th</sup>. The other method is to count the number of hours between the temperatures of 32<sup>o</sup> F and 45<sup>o</sup> F during the same period. The difference between these two methods can sometimes amount to a couple hundred hours. It's also important to remember that there are numerous microclimates all over northeast Texas. The number of chill hours gained in Overton may vary from your location.

So, what about the 2018-2019 winter season. How did we do? By either means of calculation, the news is good! According to the first method described, we accumulated 1238 chill hours. According to the second method described, there are 1040 chill hours. Either way, this is good and I'll tell you why in a minute.

If you look at the number of chill hours on record, over the past 23 years, the least number of chill hours occurred in 2016-2017, with 509 chill hours (1<sup>st</sup> method) or 394 chill hours (2<sup>nd</sup> method). The greatest number of chill hours happened in 2013-2014 as well as this year, 2018-2019, depending upon which method you use to calculate. By the first method, 2013-2014 recorded 1,404 chill hours – 166 more hours than this winter. With the second method though, 2013-2014 recorded 1018 chill hours – 22 hours less than this winter. The average number of chill hours over the past 23 years, using the first method of calculation, is 1046 hours. Using the second method, the average chill hours over the last 23 years is 854 hours.

How many chill hours do fruit and nut trees need? Great question with a simple answer: Totally depends on the variety! Ok, maybe not so simple. There is however a simple way to manage the issue: follow the recommendations of Texas A&M. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension recommends varieties for East Texas that require no more than 800-900 chill hours. Since the chill hour requirement can vary greatly between varieties, the following varieties are recommended for East Texas:

- ✓ **APPLES:** Fuji, Gala, Granny Smith, Holland, Imperial, Gala, Jersey mac, Mollies Delicious, Mutsu/Crispin, Pink Lady, Red Delicious, Royal Gala, Smoothee, Super Gala.
- ✓ **APRICOT:** Blenheim, Bryan, Chinese/Morman, Moorpark.



- ✓ **ASIAN PEARS:** Shinko, ShinLi, Ya Li.
- ✓ **BLACKBERRIES: Thorny** - Brazos, Brison, Cheyenne, Chickasaw, Kiowa, Rosborough, Womack. **Thornless** - Arapaho, Natchez, Navaho, Ouachita.
- ✓ **BLUEBERRIES:** Rabbiteye (need more than one variety of Rabbiteye for pollination) Alapaha, Austin, Brightwell, Climax, Ochlockonee, Powderblue, Premier, Prince, Tifblue, Vernon, Woodard. See [https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/files/2015/04/blueberries\\_2015.pdf](https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/files/2015/04/blueberries_2015.pdf) for best variety pairing.
- ✓ **FIGS:** Alma, Blue Giant, Bournabat, Celeste, Lemon, LSU Purple, Texas Everbearing (Brown Turkey).
- ✓ **GRAPES:** Black Spanish, Blanc du Bois, Champanel, Conquistador, Cynthiana (Norton), Daytona, Emerald, Herbemont, Miss Blanc, Miss Blue, Orlando Seedless, Roucaneuf, Stover, Victoria Red.
- ✓ **JUJUBES:** Lang, Li.
- ✓ **MUSCADINE GRAPES:**
  - **Female:** Black Fry, Darleen, Fry, Higgins, Hunt, Scarlett, Sugargate, Summit, Supreme, Sweet Jenny, Scuppernong.
  - **Self-Fertile:** Carlos, Cowart, Dixie, Doreen, Granny Val, Ison, Magnolia, Nesbit, Noble, Regale, Southland, Tara, Triumph, Welder.
  - Plant 1 self-fertile plant (within 30 feet) for every 3 female plants. In a vineyard formation, that would be a self-pollinator every 3<sup>rd</sup> vine of every 3<sup>rd</sup> row.
- ✓ **NECTARINES:** ArmKing, Crimson Gold, Karla Rose, Redgold, Rose Princess.
- ✓ **PEACHES:** Bounty, Cary Mac, Cresthaven, Denman, Derby, Dixieland, Fairtime, Fireprince, Flameprince, Flavorich, Frank, GaLa, Harvester, Loring, Majestic, Ouachita Gold, Parade, Redglobe, Redskin, Regal, Ruston Red, Sentinel, Springold, Topaz.
- ✓ **PEARS:** Kieffer, Magness, Moonglow, Orient, Warren.
- ✓ **PECANS:** (Need a type I and Type II for cross Pollination): **Type I** - Caddo, Cape Fear, Cheyenne, Desirable, Houma, Oconee, Pawnee, Prilop. **Type II** - Candy, Choctaw, Elliott, Forkert, Kanza, Melrose, Sumner, Jackson, Moreland, Osage.
- ✓ **PLUMS:** Allred, Methley, Morris, Ozark Premier, Santa Rosa.
- ✓ **POMEGRANATE:** Al-Sirin-Nar, Flavorful, Russian 18, Salavatski, Spanish Sweet-Uvalde, Sumbar, Surh Anor, Wonderful.
- ✓ **RASPBERRIES:** Dormanred.
- ✓ **STRAWBERRIES:** Chandler, Douglas, Festival, Oso Grande, Seascape, Sequoia.

We've all done it: There is something we really wanted to grow, and probably at a time of the year we really shouldn't, but we try anyways. So, what's the big deal if you go with that variety the big box store carries? Yes, the one that's more suitable for Washington State than Northeast Texas. Well, here are the symptoms of insufficient chill hours:

- ✓ Delayed Foliation: Branches develop small tufts of leaves at the very tip, but foliage along the branch is significantly delayed.
- ✓ Reduced Fruit Set and Buttoning: Fruit set is describing whether flowers become fruit. Poor fruit set means very little fruit on the tree. Buttoning is when fruit is misshapen or exhibits stunted growth.
- ✓ Reduced Fruit Quality: Such as lack of fruit firmness and poor coloring when ripe. These are more than cosmetic issues that impact flavor and texture.

Enjoy your harvest!

# Social Media & the Garden

By Janelle Cole, Master Gardener



In today's digital age we are able to know more, see more, and do more than ever before. Twenty years ago, if someone learned about a cool plant, they may have told their friends. Today, you can post about a plant on Facebook and the whole world might hear about it!

One benefit to the digital world we live in today is sharing information. As we comment and share information on Facebook more people get to see what is going on in Henderson County. This is true with anything you see and find interesting on social media! In order for more people to see, more people to sign, or just more people to learn, we need you to share. My kids say "sharing is caring, unless you

have the flu" and this is especially true with Facebook!

So, as we make a concerted effort to bring you more information on plants that thrive in Henderson County, or events local to you, we would ask that you share our posts so that your friends can see the great things going on. We also want more people in our amazing county to know all the great things the Henderson County Master Gardeners are doing, like our Harvest Garden! Did you know that our garden is under construction? The fence is up, the grape supports are in, and more and more will be happening in the weeks and months ahead!! We want all of Henderson County to know about any opportunity they can attend, and learn at the Harvest Garden, or the Library in Athens, or even community events like Keep Athens Beautiful!!



So, thank you for sharing what we are doing with those you love! We love you for it!!

## For Real, Connect with Us:



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Texas master gardeners



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Henderson County



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