



# INSIDE DIRT

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### President's Message

David Bickerstaff, Master Gardener

Fall has finally arrived, and the area gardens are happy to be past the summer heat. Our newest project, the Harvest Garden, has taken shape with herbs, fruit trees, vegetables and more. We are planning our grand opening for the Harvest Garden in the spring of 2020. Our DREAM garden at the East Texas Arboretum has a new fence and the annuals, trees and perennials should provide you with inspiration for your own garden. We are also working with some of the local schools to assist them in establishing their own children's garden to educate our youth. Our greenhouse, located on the grounds of TVCC, is being used to grow plants that will be sold at our plant sale in the spring. Our community outreach provides monthly speakers and gardening workshops free to the public. A new master gardener training class began in September with 15 energetic Henderson County residents. At the time of writing this article, we are also in the final stages of planning our 'Tomato Town' conference with four expert speakers to explain everything you need to know in selecting, planting and growing tomatoes.



I want to thank two HCMGA officers that will end their term at the end of the year. Sara Drummond, Secretary and Lora Tomlinson, Vice President Member & Community Education have done an outstanding job serving the board and the membership. They will be missed as officers, but I am sure that they will continue to be leaders within the association. It has been a pleasure to work with both of these great master gardeners!

The Henderson County Master Gardener Association will be celebrating our 20<sup>th</sup> year in 2020, so stay tuned for special events.

Please enjoy reading this issue of *Inside Dirt* and happy gardening.

David Bickerstaff, President HCMGA



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# American Beautyberry

David Bickerstaff, Master Gardener



One of the plants in our garden when we moved to the lake was the American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa Americana*, which belongs in the Verbenaceae family). This plant has a grand show in the fall when the clusters of berries are prominent. The native habitat of the plant is in

slopes, woods, moist thickets, wet low rich bottomlands, and at the edges of swamps in the Piney Woods, Post Oak Woods, Blackland woodlands, and coastal woodlands.

Other common names include Beautyberry, French Mulberry, American Mulberry, Spanish Mulberry, Bermuda Mulberry, Sour-bush, and Sow-berry.

The plant is hardy (both heat and cold tolerant) and requires part shade. The American beautyberry is a wonderful, large understory shrub with a naturally loose and graceful arching form. The large leaves can hide the blooms, which if you are not paying attention you can miss altogether, and are very attractive to butterflies and bees. In the fall and early winter, the branches are laden with magenta purple (sometimes white) berry clusters that look spectacular as the leaves drop in autumn.



The American Beautyberry can prove useful as a screen in swampy or wooded locations, or under shade trees in a garden setting. It can be cut to 12 inches above the base each winter to encourage more compact growth, flowers and fruit. It can also be left to mature naturally into a tall woody shrub. The shrub may temporarily defoliate and lose developing fruit during periods of prolonged summer drought.

The seeds are much loved by many species of birds and other animals, which subsequently may disappear in a matter of days. The foliage is a favorite of White-tailed Deer, so beware if you have these guests on your property. The American beautyberry is easily propagated by seed or softwood cuttings. Birds do a good job of

## 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.





distributing seeds and the shrub self-seeds just as well. Scientific studies have been done to confirm that the leaves of the American Beautyberry contain compounds that repel mosquitoes and other biting insects.

Add this plant to your garden and enjoy the show. The birds and animals will also thank you.

#### Resources

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamentals/nativeshrubs/callicarpaamerica.htm>

<https://bexar-tx.tamu.edu/homehort/archives-of-weekly-articles-davids-plant-of-the-week/american-beautyberry-callicarpa-americana/>

[https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=CAAM2](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=CAAM2)

*“My garden is my most beautiful masterpiece”*

~~ Claude Monet

*“A weed is but an unloved flower.”*

~~ Ella Wheeler Wilcox



**LIBRARY SERIES**

**On hiatus in November & December**

Visit our website for details on the January 2020 Library Series event.

– details coming soon –

<https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/welcome/events/learn-at-the-library-series/>



# How to Prune Salvias

Judy Haldeman, Master Gardener

Salvias are a staple of Texas gardens because they have long-lasting blooms. They range from tender annuals to tough perennials. Salvias can benefit from periodic deadheading of fading blooms. Some plants will repeat-bloom only if the old, dying flowers are removed. Once deadheaded, the plant will put its energy into strengthening itself rather than producing seeds. Pruning is defined as the selective removal of parts of a plant. By pruning shrubs regularly, you can better control the size and shape of the plant. In some cases, this will prevent the plant from dying out in the middle of the plant. The method you follow depends on the way the plant grows—from the base of the plant or from an established framework of branches. For pruning, salvias can be categorized into 3 types depending on the plant's structure and growth habit.

## Type 1: The Deciduous, Herbaceous Salvias:



Black & Blue Sage

This type of salvia doesn't have woody stems. It includes *Salvia elegans* (Pineapple Sage, Tangerine Sage), *Salvia guaranitica* (Brazilian Sage, Black and Blue Sage), and *Salvia leucantha* (Mexican Bush Sage). We have grown both the Mexican Bush Sage and the Black and Blue Sage. Our Black and Blue Sage was strikingly beautiful, but unfortunately, didn't make it through its first winter. However, the Mexican Bush Sage has been a consistent bloomer in our garden. With these salvias the



Mexican Bush Sage

old growth eventually dies out and the fresh new growth emerges from the base of the plant. They have softer stems that will either die off and/or freeze. These types of salvias are better pruned in spring because the old growth will protect the fleshy new growth over the winter. Make sure to clean out some of the dead material at the base of the plant or you will run the risk of the plant rotting.

## #2 The Herbaceous Salvias with Woody Stems:



Augusta Duelberg Salvia

This category includes *Salvia greggii* (Autumn Sage), *Salvia coccinea* (Scarlet Sage), *Salvia farinacea* (Mealy blue sage, Henry Duelberg Sage, Augusta Duelberg Sage), and *Salvia microphylla* (Hot Lips Salvia). These are the shrubby salvias. We've successfully grown Hot Lips Salvia, Hendry Duelberg Salvia, and Augusta Duelberg Salvia. These can be dead headed any time after blooms are spent. For the Duelberg salvias, we tend to prune them back a little after flowering but not all the way to the ground. Take them back to at least where the first set of foliage starts on the flower stem. This



Henry Duelberg Salvia

could be a pinch or you can take them down further if they need it. Some sites

recommend pruning down to about 3 to 6 inches. We've never done that with this type of salvia. We wait until new growth starts and prune the old woody stems down to the ground. The Hot Lips Salvia is a plant that came with the house when we purchased it. It is filled with thick, woody branches. As it aged, the center died back. We have left it as is. If it were a younger plant, we would have done periodic pruning to maintain a more pleasing look. Now, we prune around the edges to help the outer growth hide the unsightly inner parts. It looks better from a distance.



Hot Lips Salvia

### Type 3: Rosette-growing, herbaceous perennials:

Rosette-type salvia plants grow stems out of a circle of leaves close to the ground. Tall flower spikes form on these stems. Vista Red Salvia is an example that grows in our area, but it is not perennial here. The rosette salvia we have in our garden area is the perennial *Salvia lyrata* or 'Purple Volcano'. The plant grows 6-12 inches wide. The flower stalks rise about 10 inches above the rosette. Some gardening sites refer to this as a weed and I have to admit when we moved to this area, I spent countless hours pulling this plant out of the grass and our inherited cottage garden. I retreated indoors in the heat of the summer and later, was pleasantly surprised by the display of white-tipped purple flower spikes that rose above the purple-bronze leaves. In late summer and fall the leaves turn a beautiful deep purple. Cut the stems to the ground in fall. The second round of buds will fade by the end of fall. Prepare the salvia for winter by locating the basal foliage, which is the circular cluster of leaves on the ground. The salvia's flower stalks grow out of it. Snip all of the remaining stems right above these leaves. After trimming the stalks, only the leaves and possibly a small amount of stalk should remain. Be sure to take out any dead plant material you notice, since it can prevent light from reaching the bottom of the plant.



There are several advantages to pruning your Salvia. Pruning removes weak or thin stems. It can shape a plant to give it a more attractive, less crowded appearance. Plants will be rejuvenated by removing dead stems. Pruned plant material should be picked up off the ground. Trimmed plant material left on the ground could eventually encourage disease. Final advice! Be gentle, more is definitely not better when pruning.



***"When people will not weed their own minds, they are apt to be overrun by nettles."***

#### Henderson County Master Gardeners

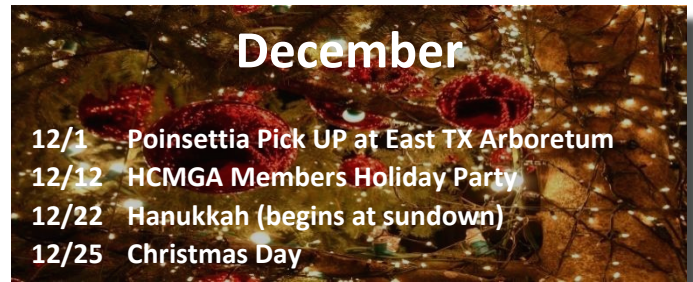
The master Gardener program is a volunteer development program, offered by Texas AgriLife Extension Service, that disseminates horticultural information to individuals and groups in Henderson County. The mission is to develop and cultivate community projects related to horticulture. We are a group of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



# Calendar



## Of Events



## Events Around Town

- **November 9<sup>th</sup> - Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center:** <https://www.wildflower.org/events> **Tree Pruning Workshop** (9:00am-12:00pm) *“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.”*
- **November 9<sup>th</sup> – Smith County Master Gardeners:** <https://txmg.org/smith/coming-events/> **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual “Getting Ready for the Holidays”** (10am – 1pm) Cotton Belt Building room #116A (basement) 1517 W. Front Street, Tyler TX 75702 *“Receive a book of recipes for admission of \$8.00. 6-12 yrs half-price, 5 and under free.”*
- **November 11<sup>th</sup> - East Texas Arboretum:** <http://www.easttexasarboretum.org/events.html> **Veterans Day Service at the Wall.** 1601 Patterson Road, Athens TX 75751. (903) 675-5630
- **November 16<sup>th</sup> - Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center:** <https://www.wildflower.org/events> **Winter Care for Native Plants** (9:00am-12:00pm) *“This gardening workshop will introduce tips and tricks for keeping Texas plants healthy through the winter.”*
- **November 19<sup>th</sup> – Kaufman County Master Gardeners:** <https://www.kcmga.org/events-4/> **Forney Garden Club: Edible Landscapes (10:00 am)** *“Join Kaufman County Master Gardener Dianne Kaufman to learn how to incorporate edible plants in your home landscape. Fruit and nut trees, berries, herbs, and even many vegetables can be interspersed among traditional landscape plants to produce a beautiful yard that also provides fresh food.”* For more information, call 817-657-0061.
- **November 21<sup>st</sup> – (Van Zandt) Free State County Master Gardeners:** <https://txmg.org/freestatemastergardeners/events/> **Growing Fruit & Nut Trees (7pm)** VZ County Library, 317 First Monday Ln. Canton, TX 75103. *“Presenter: FSMG Bob Williams.”* Free to the public.
- **November 23<sup>rd</sup> - East Texas Arboretum:** <http://www.easttexasarboretum.org/events.html> **Poinsettia Pick Up at the Arboretum.** 1601 Patterson Road, Athens TX 75751. (903) 675-5630
- **December 12<sup>th</sup> – Kaufman County Master Gardeners:** <https://www.kcmga.org/events-4/> **Terrell Garden Club: Soil Preparation (9:30 am)** *“Join Jim Burt, Kaufman County Advanced Master Gardener - Vegetables, to learn how to prepare your soil for a productive spring planting season. Topics include soil testing, amending soil, and mulching.”* For more information, call 402-850-8965.

# Henderson County Master Gardener Association

## ~~ Member's Page ~~

### Texas State Conference

May 12-14, 2020 in Waco, TX



hotels are now taking reservations, so don't wait!

<https://txmg.org/conference/2018-conference>.

You can also follow the Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/tmga2020/>



**HCMGA Members Holiday Party**  
December 12, 2019 / 5:30pm – 7:30pm  
The Pinnacle Golf Club  
200 Pinnacle Club Drive Mabank, Texas 75156  
\$25.00 per person / RSVP by 12/6/19

### 2019 HCMGA Members Meetings

- ✓ November 20<sup>th</sup>:
  - Noon Luncheon
  - Richard M. Hart & Johnny Morris  
Conservation Center, 5601 Country Road  
4812 Athens, TX 75752
- ✓ December 12<sup>th</sup> (Holiday Party)

### Member's November General Meeting

Nov 20, 2019

### Growing Grapes in East Texas: Challenges & Opportunities

Michael Cook is the Viticulture Program Specialist for North Texas with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. His primary function is to provide educational support for the 100 commercial vineyards in the region. Michael is a Dallas native and studied Horticulture at Texas A&M. He was then awarded a fellowship to California State University - Fresno where he earned a Master of Science in Viticulture & Enology working for the makers of Two Buck Chuck.

*"The kitchen garden satisfies both requirements, a thing Of beauty and a joy for dinner."*

~~ Peter Mayle, Encore Provence: New Adventures in the South of France





# November & December Gardening Tips

Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener

## In General:

No need to wonder when the first frost date will be. Bam - it already hit! A frost this early reminds me to enjoy any fall color I can find, as it will probably pass fast. Once the trees have lost their leaves, a different beauty emerges, and we can evaluate our landscape for changes. What do we look for? Check out the trees for shape, winter gardens for bareness, lawns for gopher and water damage, and shrubbery for overall impact. Included in this edition on page 15 is an excellent article on lawns by Lydia Holley, Master Gardener. She offers information on the different grass types and their growth patterns.

## Love veggies and herbs?



Cool season vegetables love this weather. Just keep the frost off them using frost blankets or domes of plastic. Don't forget to water your cool season veggies such as lettuce, cabbage, spinach, broccoli, brussel sprouts and leeks. Well watered plants have a much better chance surviving freezing temperatures. Many cool weather veggies taste better after a freeze, as they sweeten up. Keep in mind though, that growth and ripening slows down as the temperature drops.

Garden supply stores and online sources offer frost blankets that lay over your rows or beds. However, protecting your hard work doesn't

have to be expensive. pictured is an inexpensive example of keeping the frost off your veggies. The frame of this cover was made with PVC, to which a couple of \$4.00 clear shower curtains are clamped. The clips that clamp over the plastic and PVC were bought through an online garden center.



A clamp holds down the plastic

## How about Flowers?

This is the first year for my Carolina Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*). I planted it in the spring, and must say that I do believe it much prefers this cool fall weather over the scorching heat of summer. Likewise, my Oxblood Lilies (*Rhodophiala bifida*), rosebushes, and Mystic Spires Salvia (*Salvia balsalmispim*) are enjoying the cool weather. (See page 4 for a great article by Master Gardener Judy Haldeman, on how to prune Salvia.)



November and December offer perfect weather to finish planting spring bulbs like Daffodil, Crocus, Dutch Iris, Hyacinth, and Narcissus. Bulbs are such a big part of spring, but with planning, you can have an almost year-round display of flowers. Many bulbs return year-after-year and multiply on their own. Digging up the divisions gives you bulbs to transplant into other gardens. When purchasing or dividing to transplant, the bulbs should be firm, not mushy. Some varieties need to be divided every few years to prevent overcrowding.

Enjoy the blooms of Camellias and consider adding more to your landscape. Check your favorite nursery for a supply of colorful Mums to adorn your patio or add to your garden. Plant cool-season annual color directly into the soil as you buy them,



including Daffodils, Flowering Cabbage, Flowering Kale, Grape Hyacinths, Jonquils, Narcissus, Pansies, Pinks, and Snapdragons.

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



Shrubs provide greenery year-round. Many offer flowers in the spring and berries in the fall. They make the perfect backdrop for flowers, offer privacy, and help define yard-space. The right trees offer spectacular color during the fall. See Lydia Holley's article on page 12, featuring the Bald Cypress Beauty, also pictured here. Notice the backdrop of greenery offsetting the blazing color of the Cypress.

Now is a good time to plant or transplant trees and shrubs. When adding shrubs to your landscape, choose carefully, keeping in mind their height and width when fully-grown. Newly planted or transplanted shrubs and trees need more water during the winter than do those that are well established.

This is also the perfect time to prune and shape trees and shrubs. Before pruning, look at the tree or shrub in the context of its surroundings. Notice any branches that overhang structures or provide more shade than you want. Think about shape. I tend to like my shrub shapes to take on a natural or draped look. Others may enjoy the manicured round, cone, spiral, or flat-top look for their shrubbery. It all depends on personal taste and desired effect. A good rule of thumb when pruning trees and shrubs is to prune away suckers, as well as branches that grow downward. However, keep branches that grow upward. When your trees are bare of leaves, look at each tree individually from different angles. Notice branches that make the tree appear lopsided or out of balance. Trim these away with a solid clean cut.

### And what about your lawn?

This may sound silly, but after you've cleaned up your lawn mower, replaced the blades, and stored it away, winter is actually a great time to plan your lawn care for next season. Pull out next year's calendar and schedule in when you will repair, seed and fertilize your lawn. Spring gets busy fast.

The months of April and May are a good time to seed a new lawn, repair any low places, or mend holes and messes made by gophers, pigs, dogs, and other beast that dare to fight you for that plush green carpet. In general, the first time you fertilize is in June. By then you should have been able to mow that new spring grass at least three times. Remember to fertilize just before it rains, or give it a good watering afterwards. Plan to fertilize every six weeks until September.



***“And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.”***

~~ Genesis 2:8





# Harvest Garden Happenings

By Lydia Holley, Master Gardener



The newest project for Henderson County Master Gardener Association, the Harvest Garden, located at the Henderson County Regional FairPark Complex, is continuing to progress. Concrete has been poured, completing the education area slab which will be the heart of the garden. This is where Master Gardeners will give short presentations to the public before allowing hands-on demonstrations. The education area will be filled with picnic tables, which will allow various activities to occur in this small space. Completing the education area will be colorful shade sails.

A building for storage will be placed on a different concrete slab, allowing Master Gardeners to have small equipment available for maintenance. Already completed are the hoop house, raised herb and vegetable beds, fruit tree plantings, grape area, and a space planted with berries.

When the garden is completed and open to the public, it will be a learning garden, offering step-by-step instruction on the implementation and maintenance of an edible garden.



# Know your Weeds: Goldenrod

Janelle Cole, Master Gardener

If you saw a tomato plant growing wild in your yard would you pull it out and get rid of it as soon as possible? Or would you realize the gift that this wild tomato plant is? It will bear fruit, it will feed your family and maybe even a few birds or insects. Most of us would leave it right where it is, we might even manage to offer it some fertilizer or extra water. However, have you considered some of the other plants around your house, and that maybe they are not the pests you once thought they were?



Take Goldenrod. Did you know it is an herb? So many of the plants we see as pests or weeds today are simply herbs growing wild. Many people see goldenrod and think allergies, pest, weed - get it out! Hopefully after you read a little about this amazing plant you might think twice about getting rid of it and see it as a blessing in your yard!



A little background first: Goldenrod is a perennial that reproduces through its roots, bulbs, stems and by its seeds. This is probably why we have so much of this plant all over East Texas. In fact, there are over 140 varieties of Goldenrod due to its unique ability to crossbreed with other plants. Nebraska has made one of those varieties its state flower!

No one is allergic to Goldenrod. It does not cause allergies. How do I know? Well there is very little pollen in goldenrod, and unlike our other pesky allergy inducing plants, Goldenrod is not wind pollinated. That is right. Ragweed, a similar plant that blooms in fall, is wind pollinated. This causes major allergic reactions across our region! Goldenrod is only pollinated by insects, because the pollen is heavy and sticky and not able to be airborne. In fact, if you love the bees, you should fall in love with Goldenrod. Goldenrod will make enough honey, for many bee colonies to store for the winter.

Goldenrod is an herb with some great properties. All varieties of this plant are nutritious. You can harvest this plant fresh and either use it fresh or dry it. It makes a tea that has a bit of a bitter taste to it, but you can also use the leaves in a fluid extract, tincture, or in capsules. The flowers are also edible and would make a lovely garnish on salads or as decoration for other dishes. The leaves can be cooked like you would fresh spinach and they are a great addition to soups, casseroles, or stews.

While many of us in the US consider Goldenrod to be a pest or weed, many Europeans prize these plants in their gardens. British gardeners adopted Goldenrod into their plant collections long before we realized its vast benefits. I hope that now that you know a little more about this great plant you will be hesitant to pull it from your fence rows or anywhere else it pops up!



#### References:

<http://www.ediblewildfood.com/goldenrod.aspx>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goldenrod>



***“The greatest service which can be rendered any country is to add a useful plant to its culture.”***

~~ Thomas Jefferson, The Quotable Jefferson

***“The first supermarket supposedly appeared on the American landscape in 1946. That is not very long ago. Until then, where was all the food? Dear folks, the food was in homes, gardens, local fields, and forests. It was near kitchens, near tables, near bedsides. It was in the pantry, the cellar, the backyard.”***

~~ Joel Salatin,

# Bald Cypress Beauty

by Lydia Holley, Master Gardener



One of the prettiest trees in my garden in fall is the bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*). A conifer with an attitude, the bald cypress has delicate leaves that turn a bright copper color in autumn. In winter, it shrugs off its leaves, leaving a bare skeleton. Its deciduous nature gives this tree the “bald” portion of its name. Most conifers are not deciduous, so for the first few years, I held my breath waiting for my tree’s leaves to return in spring. Now I appreciate the tree’s ever-changing look.

This tree has the ability to grow “knees” which are specialized roots that help transport air if the tree is growing in standing water. Cypresses grown in well-draining soil do not develop these knees.

Bald cypress is a Texas native. It can grow up to 75 feet tall, with a few reported to reach 120 feet. If that seems a bit too tall for your garden, there are dwarf cultivars available which will stay to around 10 ft tall. There is even a weeping cultivar, which would make an unusual specimen tree.

Cypress wood has traditionally been valued for its resistance to decay. It has been used for making furniture, houses, tools, boats, docks, and other construction. Cypress wood is not usually harvested now, however, due to the tree’s slow-growing nature.

If you have a low spot that collects rain, making it hard to grow other plants, you may wish to consider placing a bald cypress there. Or you may wish to place it elsewhere. But, once you have planted a bald cypress, it will probably outlive you. It is not unusual for bald cypress trees to live to 600 years of age, with several trees known to have lived over twice that age.

If you have been lamenting Texas’ lack of colored foliage in fall, plant a stand of bald cypresses. Their feathery needles will turn striking shades of orange and gold, which will not disappoint.



**“Tree planting is always a utopian enterprise, it seems to me, a wager on a future the planter doesn't necessarily expect to witness.”**

— Michael Pollan, Second Nature: A Gardener's Education

## DIGGING

Edward Thomas, Collected Poems

“To-day I think  
Only with scents, - scents dead leaves yield,  
And bracken, and wild carrot's seed,  
And the square mustard field;

Odours that rise  
When the spade wounds the root of tree,  
Rose, currant, raspberry, or goutweed,  
Rhubarb or celery;

The smoke's smell, too,  
Flowing from where a bonfire burns  
The dead, the waste, the dangerous,  
And all to sweetness turns.

It is enough  
To smell, to crumble the dark earth,  
While the robin sings over again  
Sad songs of Autumn mirth.”



# Season for Food, Friends, & Family - Not Necessarily in That Order

Susan Skommesa, Editor and Master Gardener

When friends and family gather, they bring food. Good times, memorable times, are had over food. Sometimes our memories are anchored by the food, even if we can't quite remember all we ate. It is at times like this, that people bring out "the favorites". These are the foods that we create, that people request from us every time we get together. When an event is coming up, this is the food they ask us to bring. This is the recipe they plead with us to reveal.

As master gardeners, there is nothing better than being able to grow (or raise) the ingredients for these foods. Since the garden is the source of food, we will feature a special recipe in each edition going forward. Feel free to submit that favorite recipe from your treasure trove to me at [susanloves1life@gmail.com](mailto:susanloves1life@gmail.com).

Very fitting for our holiday season is a recipe from Master Gardener Yvonne Sparks. She either gets the regular request to make these lemon bars, or is begged for the recipe every time she brings them to our gatherings. Without further ado (it really is 'ado' and not 'adieu')...

## Lemon Magic Bars

By Yvonne Sparks, Master Gardener

### INGREDIENTS:

- ✓ 1 roll Pillsbury™ refrigerated sugar cookies
- ✓ 1 TBLS grated lemon peel
- ✓ 1½ cups white vanilla baking chips (9 oz)
- ✓ ¾ cup sweetened shredded coconut
- ✓ ½ cup chopped macadamia, walnuts or pecans
- ✓ 1 can (14 oz) sweetened condensed milk (not evaporated)
- ✓ 1 TBLS lemon juice
- ✓ ¼ teaspoon lemon extract, if desired



### DIRECTIONS:

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Line 13x9-inch pan with foil; spray foil with cooking spray.
2. In large bowl, break up cookie dough. Add lemon peel; beat with electric mixer on low speed until peel is well combined. Press dough in bottom of pan.
3. Sprinkle white chips, coconut and macadamia nuts over dough.
4. In small bowl, stir together condensed milk, lemon juice and lemon extract. Pour over top.
5. Bake 28 to 35 minutes or until edges are golden brown and center is slightly glossy.
6. Cool completely, about 45 minutes. Cut into 6 rows by 4 rows.

The lemon extract is optional but adds a punch of lemon flavor.

For a more decorative bar, melt an additional 1/2 cup of white vanilla baking chips and drizzle over the cooled bars.

# Notable Gardens in the News

Reported by Susan Skomma, Master Gardener

Walmart's Corporate headquarters is reporting that they have planted 21 pollinator gardens at store locations in three states, as well as at their corporate headquarters. The goal of these gardens appears to be threefold: (1) beautify the store grounds (2) assist pollinator populations like bees and butterflies, and (3) inspire the community to plant their own pollinator gardens.

There have been reports over the past 20 years that bees and monarch populations are declining rapidly. My first 2 years planting vegetable gardens here in East Texas yielded gorgeous vegetable plants with lots of flowers, but almost no vegetables – including self-pollinating vegetables like tomatoes. A farm down the road brought several bee boxes onto their property this year. As a result, I have had an amazing harvest of strawberries, cucumbers, watermelons, squash, beans, tomatoes, and bell peppers. All that to highlight just how important pollinators are for our food supply.



One of the Walmart pollinator gardens in their pilot program

Back to the Walmart story... In April of this year, Walmart planted its first garden at a store in North Carolina. The next location was their corporate headquarters in Bentonville Arkansas. By May, they had planted a total of 21 pollinator gardens in 4 states, including Oregon and Washington.

A staple of their gardens is Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*). Monarch butterflies use Milkweed for food, shelter, and laying eggs.

*landscaping and serve as an important habitat for the birds and insects that play a vital role in plant, vegetable and fruit reproduction. We have received positive feedback from our customers and associates and are exploring opportunities to expand this project to additional store locations."*

Wendy Widener is with Walmart's Environmental, Health and Safety Compliance team. She said *"We are delighted to initiate this pilot at some of our stores as these flower gardens enhance our*

My personal experience affirms how important this project is. If you are inspired by this pilot program, and want help starting a pollinator garden on your property, school or business, Henderson County Master Gardener Association has the knowledge and willingness to help you on your way. See the last page of this newsletter for the numerous ways in which you may reach us.

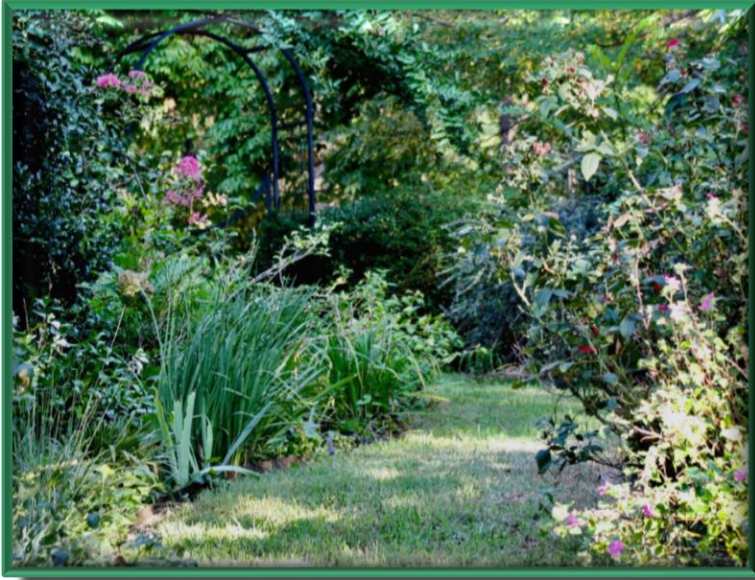
## Resources:

- ✓ <https://corporate.walmart.com/newsroom/2019/08/30/walmart-launches-pollinator-garden-pilot-in-three-states>
- ✓ <https://progressivegrocer.com/walmart-pilots-pollinator-gardens-stores-3-states>
- ✓ [https://www.hermistonherald.com/news/local/hermiston-store-helps-walmart-pilot-pollinator-garden-project/article\\_f5fb427e-d8d9-11e9-a238-7777ffb479a8.html](https://www.hermistonherald.com/news/local/hermiston-store-helps-walmart-pilot-pollinator-garden-project/article_f5fb427e-d8d9-11e9-a238-7777ffb479a8.html)



# Get an Emerald Lawn

By Lydia Holley, Master Gardener



A lush emerald-green lawn is the perfect backdrop to blooming ornamentals. Well-maintained grass is also a delight to walk on. There are several types of grasses available to the homeowner in East Texas; choose the right one for your needs.

One popular Texas native turf-grass is Buffalo. In the past, roaming buffalo ate it, and settlers used it to build sod houses. Unfortunately, it is not usually found in East Texas due to our high annual rainfall and sandy soil.

Warm season grasses appropriate to East Texas are Bermuda, Centipede, St. Augustine, and Zoysia. Native to Asia, Zoysia is an extremely slow grower. If you start it with plugs, be prepared to wait years for it to fill in to a lush lawn.

St. Augustine grass is native to various areas including the region around the Gulf of Mexico, which explains its need for irrigation. St. Augustine is partially shade tolerant, growing in as little as four hours of sun. Mow St. Augustine grass at two to four inches in height.

Centipede grass is less drought tolerant than St. Augustine. Native to Asia, Centipede grows slowly, so it may be desirable if you hate to mow. However, it does not go completely dormant, so an extended cold or fluctuating freezing temperatures can kill it.

Native to Africa, Bermuda grass is drought tolerant but not shade tolerant. If you have common Bermuda, mow at two to four inches high, but if you have planted a hybrid type, one and one-half to three inches in mowing height is usually recommended.

Warm season grasses reduce growth in winter, so when they are actively growing in summer is the recommended time for fertilizer application. Approximately 60% of nitrogen should be applied in summer, with 30% in spring and 10% in fall. Slow release fertilizers are generally best for grasses. The recommended fertilizer amount varies with each type of grass, so a soil test is encouraged. Get a test kit by calling the County Extension Office at the number listed below.

If you want pretty grass, you will have to do some maintenance. Regularly mowing with sharp blades, watering when applicable, and watching for disease are necessary steps for maintaining a beautiful lawn. But when you walk barefoot across a lush, soft, green carpet of grass, all your hard work will be worth it.



# Please Share with Us!



There is so much creativity amongst our readers, that I'd like to invite you to share your projects, ideas, clever quotes, humor, pictures or the interesting and beautiful things happening in your gardens or landscaping. You can send a blurb, a quote, an article or contact me to interview you. Photos are always worth a thousand words. Send submissions to the editor, Susan Skommesa, at [susanloves1life@gmail.com](mailto:susanloves1life@gmail.com).



## Connect with Us:



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Texas master gardeners



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

*"If you are thinking one year ahead, you plant rice.  
If you are thinking twenty years ahead, you plant trees.  
If you are thinking a hundred years ahead, you educate people."*

~~ Chinese proverb