



# INSIDE DIRT

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### President's Message

David Bickerstaff, Master Gardener

Welcome 2020! This will be a year to remember for the Henderson County Master Gardener Association. It is our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and we will have the grand opening for our newest project, the Harvest Garden.

During our 20<sup>th</sup> year as a Master Gardener Association we will **'celebrate the past and embrace the future'**. Yvonne Sparks, past president, has volunteered to coordinate the celebration efforts and we expect an exciting year!

We will have a grand opening for the Harvest Garden this spring. This demonstration garden is focused on vegetables, herbs, fruit trees, grapes and more. We will provide opportunities for the community to have a hands-on learning experience. We are also planning more community events across the county. We have focused primarily in the Athens area, but we want to provide opportunities to educate other parts of the county.

I want to welcome three new HCMGA officers for 2020. Elizabeth Murphy, Secretary; Bob Erickson, Vice President Member & Community Education and J Niswonger, Parliamentarian. I look forward to working with each of you.

We recently had our annual Holiday Party where we acknowledged members and enjoyed a night of fellowship. We certified a new group of master gardeners and welcomed a new class of interns. Members reaching service milestones were also acknowledged. Our total membership at the beginning of 2020 is 89 Henderson County residents which includes certified Master Gardeners, Interns and Associate Members.

Two of the most prestigious awards that we present each year are the **Intern of the Year** and the **Master Gardener of the Year**.

- \* Cindy Oliver received the Intern of the Year for 2019. Cindy has demonstrated leadership and enthusiasm during her year as an intern. She spent many hours in the greenhouse, at our plant sale and various other activities.



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- \* Cynthia Holifield received the Master Gardener of the Year for 2019. Cynthia was the Co-Chairperson for both the greenhouse and the plant sale. Her leadership resulted in taking the greenhouse to the next level and achieving record results in the plant sale.

Other recognitions during the Holiday Party are below:

**Officers for 2020:**

- \* David Bickerstaff, President
- \* Claudia Durham, VP
- \* Bob Erickson, VP
- \* Barbara Thompson, Treasurer
- \* Elizabeth Murphy, Secretary
- \* Sherry Sorrell, Historian
- \* J. Niswonger, Parliamentarian
- \* Yvonne Sparks, Past President
- \* Spencer Perkins, Advisor

**New Certified Master Gardeners:**

- |                  |                       |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| * Rachel Bayless | * Delbert "Dub" Hirst |
| * Carl Beck      | * Rita Hammond        |
| * Cindy Beck     | * Cindy Oliver        |
| * Larry Beier    | * Paula Patterson     |
| * Cindy Carter   | * Ellen Sokolovic     |
| * Rebecca Chapa  | * Barbara Whitfill    |
| * Judy Colvin    |                       |

**Intern Class for 2020:**

- |                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| * Eli Cole          | *Carolyn Savage |
| * Anna Cole         | * Robyn Savage  |
| * Anna Currin       | * Anna Wood     |
| * Sharon Dunn       | * Julie Yarber  |
| * Kim Gordo         | * Ronnie Yarber |
| * Kerry Kirksmith   |                 |
| * Kathi Mooney      |                 |
| * Shirley Niswonger |                 |
| * J Niswonger       |                 |
| * Ben Nolley        |                 |
| * Francesca Rich    |                 |

***Want to become a Master Gardener?***

- ✓ Call: (903) 675-6130
- ✓ Email: [CMGA@gmail.com](mailto:CMGA@gmail.com)
- ✓ Visit: [txmg.org/hendersonmg](http://txmg.org/hendersonmg)

## 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.

**Service Milestones:**

**3 years**

- \* Linda Belssner
- \* Jeanne Brown
- \* Janelle Cole
- \* Peter Cole
- \* Sara Drummond
- \* Kathi Murphy-Boley
- \* Martha Rainwater
- \* David Seymour

**5 years**

- \* Lydia Holley
- \* Linda Schafer
- \* Yvonne Sparks
- \* Susan Stokes

**10 years**

- \* Lois Mallette

I also want to thank Spencer Perkins and Ariel Conway for their support during the year. Spencer is the County Extension Agent and our Advisor. Ariel is the Secretary for the County Extension office and helps us coordinate activities and maintaining our records.

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

***"The color of springtime is in the flowers; the color of winter is in the imagination."*** ~~ Ward Elliot Hour

David Bickerstaff, President HCMGA



President David Bickerstaff with  
Cindy Oliver, Intern of the Year.



President David Bickerstaff  
with Cynthia Holifield,  
Master Gardener of the Year.

## LIBRARY SERIES - Open to The Public

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**Tuesday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, at 5:30 pm: Library Series presents** Master Gardener Bob Erickson. He will take us through the process of Garden Planning for The Year.

**Tuesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30 pm:** This event is still being planned. Visit our website for more information.

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Library Series meets the **3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday** of every month. All presentations are held at the **Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library**, 121 S. Prairieville, Athens at 5:30pm. Come early as all presentations start on time and last for an hour. For details on the above presentations, turn to page 16, or visit us at <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/welcome/events/learn-at-the-library-series/>



**Watch for celebration details in the coming months.**

### **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.

# Creating A Tasty Garden

By Lydia Holley



In 2019, Henderson County Master Gardeners embarked on a new project — The Harvest Garden. This is a demonstration/education garden for fruits, vegetables, herbs, and berries. Our plan is to teach the full circle of growth, from seed starting to seed saving, and every step in between. The garden is the size of the average suburban lot, to demonstrate how much food you could grow in your own back yard.

So, what happened in 2019? We dug irrigation lines, put together raised beds, installed a grape trellising system, erected a hoop house, and concreted posts for colorful shade sails that fly over an education area. Fencing was installed, and a storage building completed. We planted vegetables, herbs, fruit trees, grapes, and berries. We are now so close to the grand opening of this edible demonstration garden; we can almost taste it!

There are just a few steps left. We plan to have a compost demonstration area and a rainwater harvesting area next to the storage building. We will use picnic tables on the education slab for versatile seating. A cutting garden will also be included, so you can learn how to grow something pretty as well as tasty.

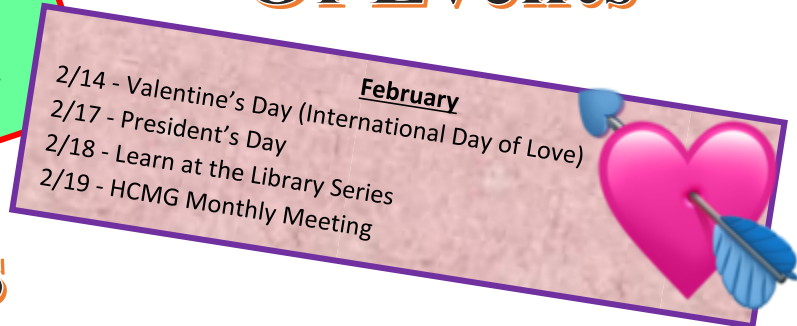


Raised Beds and Hoop House

So, we have a few more months of work to get this project off the ground, but we are very excited to be able to offer such valuable and intensive information to the public through hands-on demonstrations in addition to presentations and handouts. Look for news of our grand opening and future educational opportunities. Then, come on out and learn how to grow enough food to fill your tummy and delight your taste buds!



# Calendar Of Events



## Events

## Around Town

- **January 9<sup>th</sup> - Kaufman County Master Gardeners:** <https://www.kcmga.org/events-4/> **Terrell Garden Club: Edible Landscape (9:30 am)** Varies. Call 402-850-8965. *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.*
- **January 18<sup>th</sup> - Van Zandt County Master Gardeners:** <https://www.facebook.com/events/2473057786265897/> **Hosted by Plants of Texas: Everything You Need to Know About Roses (9:00am-10am)** 14421 FM-849 Lindale, TX 75771-2300 Class fee \$20.00 Come learn about the total care of roses including: pruning, pests and disease, planting, & overall health. You will go home with your very own Knock Out<sup>®</sup> or Drift<sup>®</sup> 3 gallon rose plant.
- **January 21<sup>st</sup> - Kaufman County Master Gardeners:** <https://www.kcmga.org/events-4/> **Forney Garden Club: Choosing a Garden Site (10:00 am)** Varies. Call 817-657-0061. *Join Jim Burt, Kaufman County Advanced Master Gardener - Vegetables, to learn where to locate your garden for the best growth. Factors to consider include nearness of other structures, amount and type of sunlight, wind exposure and other environmental elements.*
- **February 11<sup>st</sup> - Kaufman County Master Gardeners:** <https://www.kcmga.org/events-4/> **Sunnyvale Garden Club: Rose Rosette and Other Diseases of Roses (10:00 am)** Sunnyvale Townhall. *Join Kaufman County Master Gardener Dianne Kaufman to learn about rose rosette disease, one of the biggest challenges facing rose lovers in the last decade. While it's a serious disease, it's not the only one you need to know about. Kaufman will discuss other common threats to roses.*
- **January 17<sup>th</sup> - Smith County Master Gardeners:** <https://txmg.org/smith/coming-events/> **"Pines, Pawpaws and Pocket Prairies"** (11:30am - 1:00pm / FREE and open to the public) *Developing and Maintaining an Ecosystem for Birds and Butterflies.* -Greg Grant, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Horticulture Agent for Smith County.
- **February 18<sup>th</sup> - Kaufman County Master Gardeners:** <https://www.kcmga.org/events-4/> **Forney Garden Club: Texas Superstar Plants (10:00 am)** varies call Call 817-657-0061 *Join Beverly Curtis & Linda Wells, Kaufman County Advanced Master Gardeners - Texas Superstar Plants, to learn about these tough plants tested by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and proven to do well over most of Texas. They will discuss several categories of plants, show photographs and discuss how to grow the plants.*

- **February 18<sup>th</sup> - Kaufman County Master Gardeners:** <https://www.kcmga.org/events-4/> **Sunnyvale Garden Club: Plants of the Bible (2:00 pm)** *Plants were an important part of life in Biblical times. They provided many of the things needed for survival: food, fuel, medicine and building materials. Explore some of the most important plants, including trees like olive and cedar and grains like wheat and barley, and learn how they were used in daily and ceremonial life.*
- **February 21<sup>st</sup> - Smith County Master Gardeners:** <https://txmg.org/smith/coming-events/> **“Protecting the World One Garden at a Time”** (11:30am - 1:00pm / FREE and open to the public) *What is YOUR Role and What Can YOU do? with Debby Watkins, Smith County Master Gardener.*
- **February 29<sup>th</sup> - Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center:** <https://www.wildflower.org/event/> **Gardening for Newcomers** (1:00pm-4:00pm) *New to Texas or just new to gardening? Come meet some natives and learn where to plant them and how to keep them healthy!*

## Resources for Natives Plants

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? 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/>

# 2019 Henderson County Master Gardeners



# Henderson County Master Gardener Association

~~ Members Page ~~

## 2020 HCMGA Meetings

For more events, see the calendar on page 6

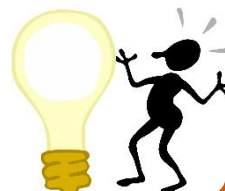
**When:** Noon (luncheon), 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Wednesday of the month

**Where:** Richard M. Hart & Johnny  
Morris Conservation Center  
5601 Country Road 4812 Athens, TX 75752

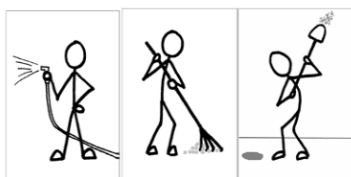
- |                             |                              |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| * January 15 <sup>th</sup>  | * July 15 <sup>th</sup>      |
| * February 19 <sup>th</sup> | * August 19 <sup>th</sup>    |
| * March 18 <sup>th</sup>    | * September 16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

### For information on how to become a Master Gardener

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



*Master Gardeners,  
remember to  
record your hours!*



### Try something new in 2020

HCMGA has many projects that need you! If you are not **plugged** in yet, one of our projects will fit your schedule, energy level, and mobility. Talk to someone to explore a good fit for you.





## ~~ HCMGA Members Page Continued ~~

### 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 have until Jan 20th to register to get early bird pricing**

You can also follow the Facebook page

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

### TIP:

Print out the agenda HCMGA President David Bickerstaff sent you in your email. Circle the sessions that you want to attend. Once registration opens the most popular sessions fill up quickly. Please pay careful attention to the times because some events overlap and this may cause you to miss out on something you really want to be a part of.

### HCMGs, New training opportunities are on the horizon!



**Texas A&M AgriLife has a beautiful campus at Coit and the Dallas Tollway.** We are planning a visit for members, sometime in 2020. The facility includes a rooftop research greenhouse and laboratories deliver equipment and safety standards for their research initiatives. Outside is the facility's 30,000-gallon showcase rain harvesting cistern. Many events, most of which are free, that will provide continuing education credits, have been added to our calendar of events

# Gardens of the Mediterranean

By Yvonne Sparks, Master Gardener

In October 2019, my husband, Danny and I, put another check on our bucket list. We went on a 16-day adventure in the Mediterranean. After three days in Barcelona we boarded our cruise ship and set off toward many wonderful ports of Toulon, Florence, Pisa, Kotor, Corfu, Palermo, Naples and finally ending in Rome. There we stayed three more days taking in sites in Rome we did not get to visit in 2017.



Dragon's Blood banyan tree grown on the garden property.

tree that happens to be the only one found in Europe. The garden of the villa was designed by Emilio Kunzmann and covers about seven hectares. Many rare plants from Tunisia, Sumatra, Australia and South America are located in it. The Whitaker family entertained local high society with lavish parties, and even George V and Queen Mary of England visited. In World War II, Gen. George Patton temporarily stayed here as he planned the invasion of southern Italy. The villa is currently the headquarters of the Whitaker Foundation. A few years ago, this aristocratic villa became the subject of controversy. It was discovered that Mafiosi were hiding weapons in and around the villa gardens.

*Ficus macrophylla* (Moreton Bay fig or Australian Banyan) is widely used as a feature tree in public parks and gardens in warmer climates such as California, Portugal, Italy, Spain, northern New Zealand (Auckland), and Australia. Old specimens can reach tremendous size. Its aggressive root system renders it unsuitable for all but the largest private gardens.

The first garden tour was in Palermo. The tour had two stops, the **Villa Malfitano Whitaker** and The **Orto Botanico di Palermo** (*Palermo Botanical Garden*). Our tour guide was very knowledgeable of the history of each site and also of horticulture of the plants grown there.

**Villa Malfitano Whitaker** is a 19th-century rural palace. It is presently a museum displaying Whitaker's natural history and archaeological collections, as well as his artwork. The villa was constructed in 1886 by Joseph Whitaker, who had trees shipped to Palermo from all over the world to plant on the grounds. These included such rare species as Dragon's Blood, an enormous banyan



Yvonne under the massive branches of the banyan tree.

Three of the most interesting and spectacular plant specimens found in the garden are a Ponytail Palm, several Norfolk Pines and Sago Palms, all believed to have been planted in the 1890's. These are pictured below.



Norfolk Pine



Sago Palm

**Villa Malfitan Whitaker** offered a very comfortable stroll along the paths. Unfortunately, the garden is not maintained as well as other gardens in Europe. It was still very enjoyable to visit.

The second stop on the tour was the **The Orto Botanico di Palermo (Palermo Botanical Garden)**. This garden was located in the middle of the city. The **Orto Botanico di Palermo (Palermo Botanical Garden)** is both a botanical garden and a research and educational institution of the Department of Botany of the University of Palermo. The garden covers about 30 acres. The earliest beginnings of the garden go back to 1779, when the *Accademia dei Regi Studi* created the chair of "Botany and medicinal properties". A modest plot of land was allocated to develop a small botanical garden dedicated to the cultivation of plants with medicinal benefits, for the twin objectives of general learning and improving public health. This initial garden allotment soon proved insufficient for the purposes for which it was intended, and in 1786 it was decided to move to the present site, right next to the *Piano di Sant'Erasmus*.



Ponytail Palm



This botanical garden was very well maintained and organized. The botanical gardens have been managed by the Department of Botany since 1985 and are currently home to at least 12,000 different species. **Orto Botanico di Palermo** (*Palermo Botanical Garden*) became an important point of reference for the bigger botanical gardens of Northern Europe. Because of Palermo's favorable climate, they transferred a good number of unknown, poorly classified and exotic tropical species there.

As an example of the role of the Palermo Botanic Garden, the introduction of the mandarin (*Citrus deliciosa*) and the loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*) to the Mediterranean has proved to be beneficial. The early classifications of plants consisted of 1,580 different species, of which 658 still exist. Of these specimens, the most notable is the mighty *Ginkgo biloba*.

In the area dedicated to palms we found the *Chamaerops humilis*, the only palm native to Sicily, and numerous exotic palms. There are a good 34 genera and around 80 species growing in the gardens.

Also noted in the botanical garden is the *Ceiba speciosa*. The silk floss tree (*Ceiba speciosa*, formerly *Chorisia speciosa*), is

a species of deciduous tree native to the tropical and subtropical forests of South America. It has several local common names in different parts of the world. The natural habitat of the silk floss tree is the north-east of Argentina, east of Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay and southern Brazil. It is resistant to drought and moderate cold. It grows fast in spurts when water is abundant, and sometimes reaches more than 82 feet in height. Its trunk is bottle-shaped, generally bulging in its lower third, measuring up to 7 feet in girth. The trunk is also studded with thick, sharp conical prickles which deter wild animals from climbing the trees. In younger trees, the trunk is green due to its high chlorophyll content, which makes it capable of performing photosynthesis when leaves are absent; with age it turns to gray.

The silk floss tree is cultivated mostly for ornamental purposes. Outside of private gardens around the world, it is often planted along urban streets in subtropical areas such as in Spain, South Africa, Australia, northern New Zealand and the southern USA. The prickled trunks and limbs require safety buffer zones, especially around the trunks, in order to protect people and domesticated animals from its prickles, as the spikes are very sharp.

Here and below are pictures of the bark and blooms of the *Ceiba speciosa*.



Close-up of Bloom



Tree in bloom



Bark of *Ceiba speciosa*

The final port of call was Civitavecchia Port, from which a 50-minute bus ride takes you to the center of Rome. We made reservations three months prior, to go to the **Villa Borghese**. Located in the center of Rome, the museum in the villa, gardens and park area are renowned. This museum/villa only allows 250 visitors per day. The tour was fabulous and well worth the 2 hours of wondering in the two-story structure. The Villa provides a more enjoyable view of marble sculptures and painted ceilings because it is not as crowded as the Sistine Chapel and St. Peter's Basilica. In 1605, Cardinal Scipione Borghese, nephew of Pope Paul V, began turning this former vineyard into the most extensive gardens built in Rome. **Villa Borghese** is one of the largest public parks in Rome, at 197.7 acres, and is a landscape garden in the naturalistic English manner, containing a number of buildings, museums and attractions. The gardens were developed by the architect Flaminio Ponzio, developing sketches by Scipione Borghese. Located at the edge of Rome, Borghese used the villa for parties and to house his extensive art collection. The current gardens were remade in the late 18th century.

The Piazza di Siena, located in the villa, hosted the equestrian dressage, individual jumping, and the jumping part of the event competition for the 1960 Summer Olympics. One entrance to the park is six blocks from the Spanish Steps.

On the grounds of the park is a full-size replica of the Shakespeare Globe Theatre, very similar to the one in London. This is a fully working theatre that is only open for viewing when they put on a Shakespeare play. The park also has a zoo.



Globe Theatre: Villa Borghese



Stone Pine at the Villa Borghese  
(pictured in the middle of photo)

The Villa Borghese has many species of plants but this Stone Pine, *Pinus pinea* was everywhere in the parks among the numerous buildings on the property and throughout Rome. Also known as the Italian stone pine, umbrella pine and parasol pine, is a tree from the pine family (Pinaceae). The tree is native to the Mediterranean region. Stone pines have been used and cultivated for their edible pine nuts since prehistoric times. They are widespread in horticultural cultivation as ornamental trees, planted in gardens and parks around the world.

In addition to the three gardens we toured on our cruise, we also went to two vineyards. The Ambelonas Corfu/Vineyard & Restaurant in Corfu and the Cantina del Vesuvio Russo Family Winery at base of Vesuvius outside of Naples. Each of the vineyards offered a tour of the vineyard, winery buildings and served a tasty lunch...with wine. I am including pictures of both.

The Ambelona Corfu/Vineyard and Restaurant grows grapes and processes the harvest using old school methods. They also grow olive trees on part of the property and process the olives into oil, again using old school methods and equipment. The Lianolia olive tree is native to Corfu and produces an exceptional quality extra virgin olive oil unusually high in beneficial polyphenols. There are estimated to be as many as 4 million olive trees on Corfu island, both wild and cultivated. Corfu olive trees are special. Many of them were planted hundreds of years ago and Corfu hosts some of the world's oldest olive groves.



To the left notice the rose bushes planted at the end of alternate rows. The vineyard guide said it was to provide early warning of problems in the vineyard like bugs or disease. The vines could then be treated before the problem got too large. On the



right is the vine covered arbor where lunch and wine were served.

The Cantina del Vesuvio Russo Family Winery is located in the shadow of Mt. Vesuvius. The unique character of this vineyard is that the vines are planted in lava rock, giving the wine a unique flavor.



Vines on trellises



Mt. Vesuvius in the distance

Olive growers harvest olives in October, a few days before the olives are ripe. This is done by placing tarps or nets under the trees and collecting the olives as they fall. Some growers use severe methods to shake the olives off the tree while other growers employ gentler methods. These growers fear harsh methods of harvesting will damage the tree branches and reduce the olive yield the next year. The harvest lasts 3-4 weeks. Olives are processed at a mill within 8 hours of harvesting.



# Learn at the Library Series

**Open and Free to the Public**

These presentations are free and open to the public. They are held at Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library, 121 S. Prairieville, Athens. Come early as all presentations start on time and last for an hour. 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).

## January 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30pm: *Yearly Garden Planning*

Gardening takes some planning. There are different tasks for different times of the year, and timing is very important. There is nothing worse than life being so fast that you miss the window to plant your favorite vegetables. Likewise, there is a specific time of year to prune garden favorites like Hydrangeas and Clematis. While there is still time in the middle of winter, Master Gardener Bob Erickson will take us through the process of Garden Planning for The Year.

*"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

This presentation is free and open to the public. 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).

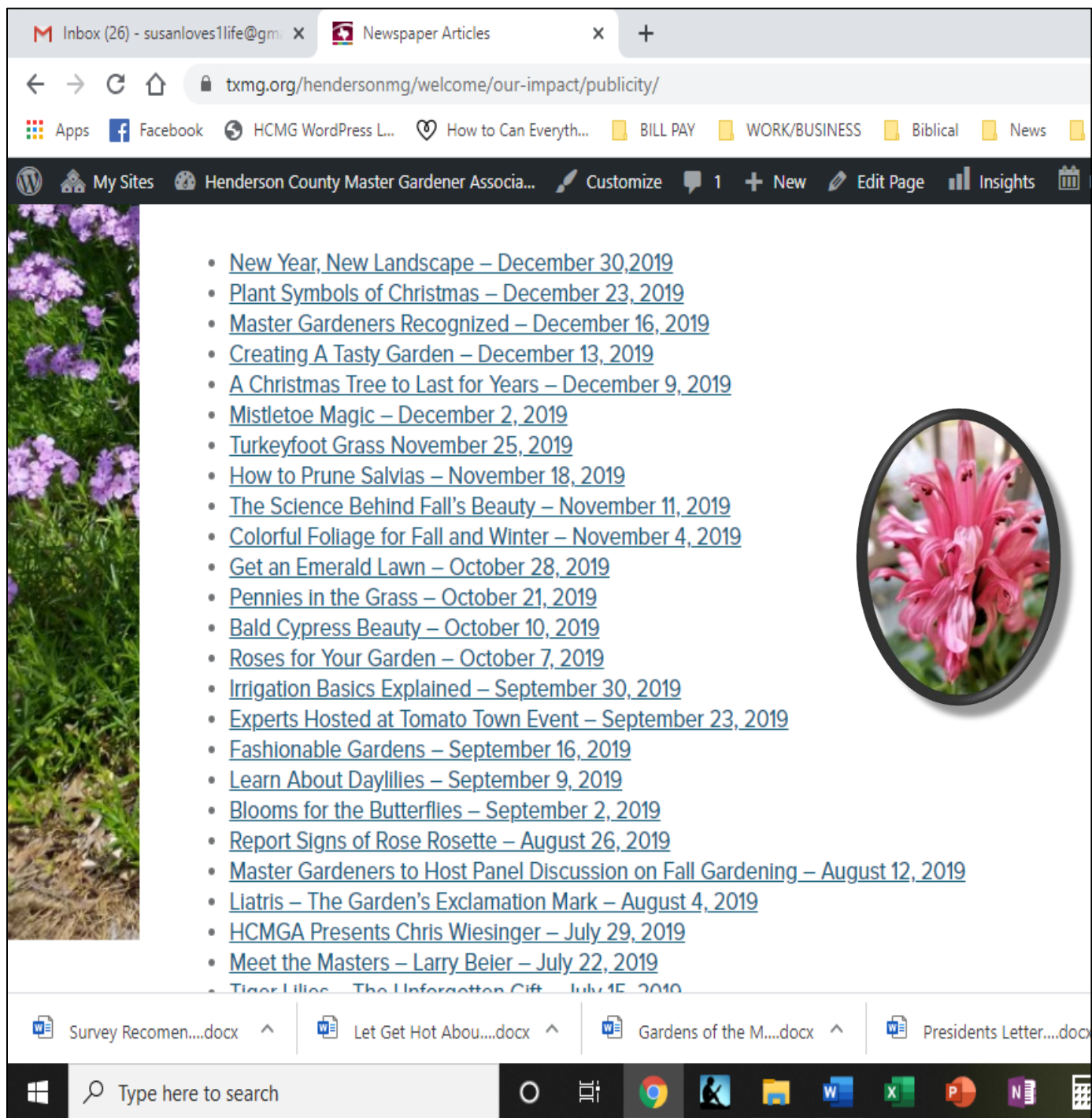
**February 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm: This event is still being planned. Visit our website for details. [txmg.org/hendersonmg](http://txmg.org/hendersonmg).**





# Did you know?

HCMGA Website has a lot of good information. We have articles on a variety of gardening topics. Below is a screen shot of just the first several articles. Click on over and take a look! <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/welcome/our-impact/publicity/>



The screenshot displays a web browser window with the following elements:

- Browser Tabs:** "Inbox (26) - susanloves1life@gm..." and "Newspaper Articles".
- Address Bar:** [txmg.org/hendersonmg/welcome/our-impact/publicity/](https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/welcome/our-impact/publicity/)
- Navigation Bar:** Includes icons for Apps, Facebook, HCMG WordPress L..., How to Can Everyth..., BILL PAY, WORK/BUSINESS, Biblical, and News.
- WordPress Admin Bar:** Shows "My Sites", "Henderson County Master Gardener Associa...", "Customize", "1", "+ New", "Edit Page", "Insights", and a calendar icon.
- Article List:**
  - [New Year, New Landscape – December 30, 2019](#)
  - [Plant Symbols of Christmas – December 23, 2019](#)
  - [Master Gardeners Recognized – December 16, 2019](#)
  - [Creating A Tasty Garden – December 13, 2019](#)
  - [A Christmas Tree to Last for Years – December 9, 2019](#)
  - [Mistletoe Magic – December 2, 2019](#)
  - [Turkeyfoot Grass November 25, 2019](#)
  - [How to Prune Salvias – November 18, 2019](#)
  - [The Science Behind Fall's Beauty – November 11, 2019](#)
  - [Colorful Foliage for Fall and Winter – November 4, 2019](#)
  - [Get an Emerald Lawn – October 28, 2019](#)
  - [Pennies in the Grass – October 21, 2019](#)
  - [Bald Cypress Beauty – October 10, 2019](#)
  - [Roses for Your Garden – October 7, 2019](#)
  - [Irrigation Basics Explained – September 30, 2019](#)
  - [Experts Hosted at Tomato Town Event – September 23, 2019](#)
  - [Fashionable Gardens – September 16, 2019](#)
  - [Learn About Daylilies – September 9, 2019](#)
  - [Blooms for the Butterflies – September 2, 2019](#)
  - [Report Signs of Rose Rosette – August 26, 2019](#)
  - [Master Gardeners to Host Panel Discussion on Fall Gardening – August 12, 2019](#)
  - [Liatris – The Garden's Exclamation Mark – August 4, 2019](#)
  - [HCMGA Presents Chris Wiesinger – July 29, 2019](#)
  - [Meet the Masters – Larry Beier – July 22, 2019](#)
  - [Tiger Lilies – The Unforgettable Gift – July 15, 2019](#)
- Taskbar:** Shows "Survey Recomen....docx", "Let Get Hot Abou....docx", "Gardens of the M....docx", and "Presidents Letter....docx".
- System Tray:** Includes a search bar ("Type here to search") and icons for Windows, Chrome, File Explorer, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote.

# January & February Gardening Tips

By Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener

## In General:

These warmer days of winter are ideal for preparing our beds for spring. Start by getting rid of wilted or dead stems and leaves, chop them up and add them to the compost pile. The compost pile should be turned at least monthly during winter, although weekly is preferred in other seasons. In addition, run the mower over fallen leaves to use as mulch in the flowerbeds. Think about how much easier it is to do this now while most plants are dormant rather than after everything starts to sprout and bloom.

To prepare your soil, remove any weeds, and then if needed, loosen any compacted soil. Finally, incorporate lots of compost and cover with 3-inches of mulch to deter those weeds. Keep in mind you may want to test your soil. If you had trouble growing last year, or it's been a few years since you last tested your soil, it may be about time. Forms and soil bags can be obtained at any HCMGA event.

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, and lastly, clean the filters.

Share your upcoming projects. Include photos and you'll be published in the next edition of *Inside Dirt*. Send submissions before February 19<sup>th</sup> to the editor, Susan Skommesa, at [susanloves1life@gmail.com](mailto:susanloves1life@gmail.com).



## Love veggies and herbs?



Yeah, it's finally time to start seeds indoors for: Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Collards, Eggplant, Herbs, Kale, Lettuce, Peppers, and Tomatoes.

From now till the middle of February, plant English Peas & Garlic. During the first two weeks of February, plant Chinese Cabbage, Carrots, Collards, Kale, Irish Potatoes. Throughout February, plant Asparagus, Beets, Cabbage transplants, Kohlrabi, Leaf Lettuce, Mustard, Onion sets, Spinach, Swiss Chard, Radish, Turnips, Strawberry transplants.

Note: Keep your frost blankets handy!

As an example of the types of tips you'll find in the Henderson County Master Gardener Association's *Monthly Gardening Guide* note that when planting potatoes: **Cut Potato into sections**

**with at least one eye, dust with sulfur and let sections dry for 3 days before planting 2 inches deep. When potato plants are 4" – 6" tall, create mounds around them, leaving 2" of growth showing."**

## How about Flowers?

Flower seeds can also be started indoors. From now through the middle of February, try starting seeds for Begonias, Marigolds, Periwinkles, Petunias, and other summer flowers.

Plant cool season annuals like Balsam, Calendula, Cannas, Dianthus, Larkspur, Nasturtium, Pansies, Phlox, Snapdragons, and Stock. You can also plant summer bulbs and corms, like Dahlia and Gladiolus. Both of these like full sun in well-prepared soil.

There is dividing and pruning that can be done. Divide your Cannas, Daylilies, Mums, Ornamental Grasses and Summer Phlox once new spring growth appears. Prune your non-evergreen ornamental grasses to a height of about one foot. Prune Clematis and Hydrangeas. However, before pruning either, make sure you look up important pruning details in the HCMGA *Monthly Gardening Guide*. August's *Tips and Tricks* guide you through when to prune which kind of Hydrangeas. February's *Tips and Tricks* talk about the three kinds of Clematis and offers important tips for pruning them as well.

It is not too early to mark your calendar for the  
Henderson County Master Gardeners Association  
**2020 Plant Sale on April 25<sup>th</sup>!**

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

Refresh the mulch around your shrubs. If you are planning on planting new shrubs, prepare the soil now with compost and fertilizer. In early February, prune summer-flowering trees and shrubs before buds begin to swell for spring. Now that the leaves are 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. Clean out dead wood and remove dangerous or bothersome limbs on your property.

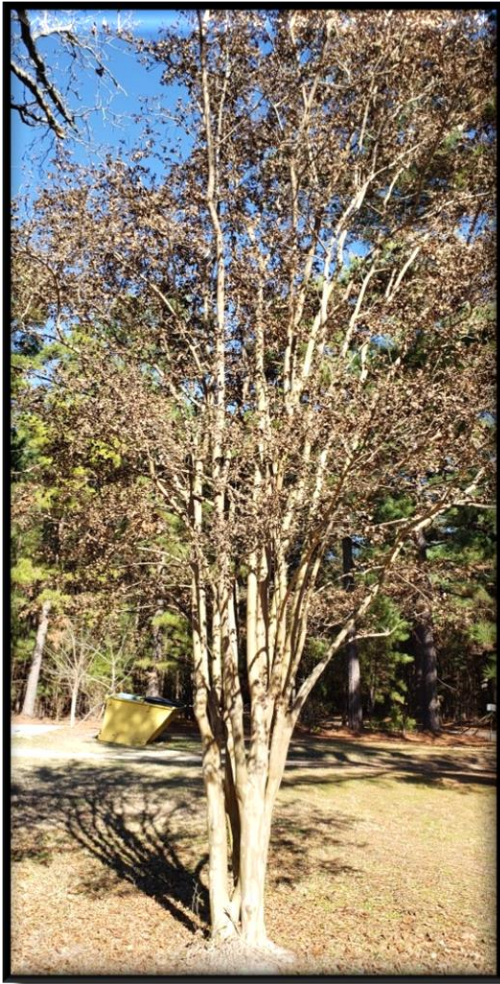
In mid to late January, weather permitting and as they become available in nurseries, feel free to start planting fruit trees, vines, Roses, and deciduous flowering plants.

Prune your fruit trees, as it keeps your harvest within reach. Thin crowded branches to allow the sun to stimulate new growth, as well as produce more fruit. Apricots, Peaches and Plums need pruning annually. You may spray with dormant oils.

Dormant oils on fruit trees dissolve the protective wax coating on, and/or smother, overwintering insects like aphids, scales and mites, as well as their eggs. It is applied in the winter months when fruit trees are in their inactive or dormant period. Hence the name of the oil. For dormant oil to provide proper control, the oil must come in contact with the pests. For more information on this topic, refer to the Texas A&M article found here: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/fruit/dormantoil.html>



Once February arrives, do not prune spring-flowering shrubs (Azaleas, Forsythia, Pearlbush, Quince, and Spirea) until after they bloom. Prune Roses around Valentine's Day, and love on your Crape Myrtles by using appropriate pruning techniques. Razoring Crape Myrtles so that all branches are level may be common, but it is not correct. See the correct and incorrect ways to prune Crape Myrtle in the two pictures below. One grows tall and elegant; the bone of which in winter are beautiful. The other is stubby and will not grow tall; the bones of which in winter are not beautiful.



**Crepe Myrtle**



**Crepe Murder**

Bare-rooted fruit and nut trees will be readily available at the nurseries in February. Plant Apple, Blackberries, Blueberries, Fig trees, Japanese Persimmon, Pear, and Plum trees. Fertilize fruit trees with a high nitrogen fertilizer. Plan your spray schedule.

If you haven't started yet, adorn your beds with new Rose bushes.

### *And what about your grass?*

Water only when necessary. You may choose to mow back winter weeds that may be growing. From now through February, Make & plant cuttings of English Ivy. Apply a pre-emergent herbicide.

#### Editor's Note:

The Henderson County Master Gardener Association's *Monthly Gardening Guide* features two excellent articles in the months of January and February. January's article is all about soil and February's article is all about Companion Planting. In addition, the tips in each month are extensive, featuring topics such as: *Clematis Pruning*, *Rose Pruning*, and *Fertilizing Fruit Trees*.

# Let's Get Hot Talking About Peppers

Robert Erickson, Master Gardener

When I give a talk about vegetables, one of my favorite teaser questions to the audience is “Why are tomatoes not mentioned in the Bible?” The question could just as easily apply to all peppers except the well-known black peppercorns. The answer is because tomatoes and peppers, along with potatoes, corn and others vegetables weren't known anywhere else in the world; they are native to the Western Hemisphere, specifically, Central and South America. All of these became known in the “Old World” only after the Spanish introduced them 500 years ago.



The history of tomatoes is a very interesting story all by itself; peppers have a less dramatic but just as important story, but first a clarification. Black Peppercorns were known during Greek and Roman times, and commanded a very high price. It alone is proof of the spread of trade internationally at that time. The actual source of peppercorns is one area in southwest India and are the product of a vine-like shrub called *Piper nigrum*. Its berries are harvested green but have a relatively short life on their own. The green peppercorns are boiled in water and then set out to dry to black. These are the peppercorns we are most familiar with. White peppercorns are black ones from which the black skin has been removed. *Piper nigrum* is generally thought of as an aromatic spice rather than as a vegetable.

When the first pepper plants from the Western Hemisphere arrived, it proved to be a game changer. They were also called peppers because they too provided the bit of heat or bite like black peppercorns did. As a result, both are called peppers even though there is no relationship between the two plants. Likewise, there are many words derived from the root “pepper” like pimiento and paprika. To add to the difficulty, these new peppers were also called *chiles* and *chilis*. If you need to split hairs, consider *chile* to be the whole pepper while the dried and ground form to be *chili* or chili powder.

These new peppers are called *Capsicum annuum*. Since their introduction, other variations have been introduced based on location of development but they all share a common ancestor. In general, *chile* peppers begin as green and then change color as they mature to include red, yellow, orange, and purple. In general, they can be harvested and eaten at any stage of maturity. However, it is also likely that the heat level caused by the amount of capsaicin will increase as the pepper matures.

One of the most confusing elements of peppers is the heat levels. The heat is the capsaicin located in the internal membranes and seeds which causes the tears. Removing these two items before consuming will reduce the heat level to some degree. The heat level is usually stated in Scoville units. This measure was introduced in 1912 by a chemist names Wilbur Scoville. It



confuses people because it is a measure of the chemical elements associated with the capsaicin rather than the actual reaction people have to these elements. As a result, the actual numbers on the scale should only be used as guide to heat levels.

Bell Peppers	0
Pimento	100 - 500
Anaheim	500 - 1000
Poblano	1000 -1500
Tabasco Sauce	2500 - 5000
Jalapeno	2500 – 8000
Serrano	10,000 – 23,000
Cayenne	30,000 – 50,000

Some of the more common Scoville measurements are seen in the chart to the left.

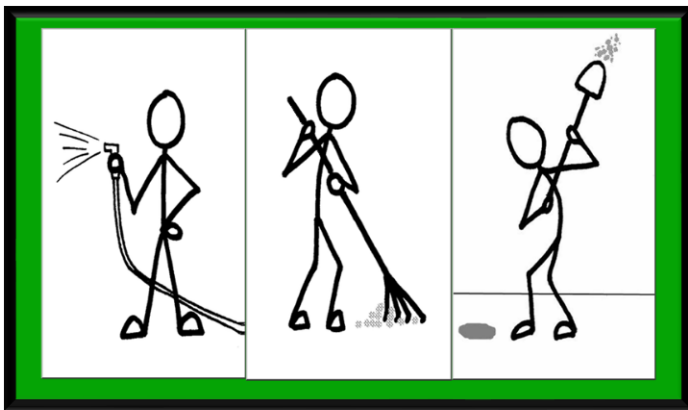
Having seen this, realize that some of the hottest peppers are Asian and measure over 1 million units on the Scoville Scale. As with most edible plants, new hybrids are always being introduced almost annually.

As an aside, like tomatoes, peppers can be used in almost any manner you want. However, like tomatoes, there are certain varieties which are better for certain uses than others. For example, paprika isn't a single variety of pepper but a thin-walled type which is easy to dry and grind into powder. Some are hot while others are milder. The same holds true for pimento. These peppers are basically mild but have a thick wall which makes them ideal for stuffing and mixing in recipes.

Enjoy your peppers.

# New Year, New Landscape

By Lydia Holley, Master Gardener



Does your landscape need refreshing? With a little bit of time and effort, you can make your landscape show-worthy. Just take these few steps.

First, evaluate. What went wrong last year? What went right? What is overgrown, weedy, needs to be replaced, removed, or changed? Do you have bare spots or places that yearn to be brightened? Look at your landscape with fresh eyes. It may need a little, or a lot. Either way, write it down. Do you need more plants, less plants, trimming, pruning, or mulching? Again, write it all down.

If you have plants that need to be removed, winter may be the perfect time for that chore. Research the plants that will go in their places. Determine sun and shade patterns, remembering that the winter sun is low in the sky and what is in shade now may be in full sun this summer.

Then come up with a planting plan. This step, although arguably the most important, is often overlooked. However, it is in the planning stage where you can change and rearrange plants without using backbreaking labor. Once you have a planting plan, you can purchase plants as they become available. Next year, evaluate again to determine if you still have blank spaces or overcrowding issues.

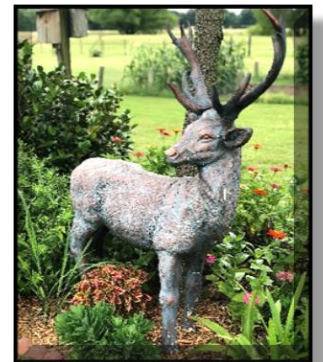
Even if you do not need a planting plan, now is a great time to come up with a list of chores that need to be accomplished throughout the year. Use your chore list to keep on track. Or, use the Henderson County Master Gardener Association's *Monthly Gardening Guide* book.

Sometimes, all you need to do is a little weeding and mulching. Winter weeds have been prolific this year due to the warm temperatures. If all you do is cut off their blooms so they do not go to seed, that will help reduce the weed population next year. A three-inch layer of mulch will also help reduce the number of weed seeds that germinate.

The most important thing is not to become discouraged. Since plants grow and sometimes die, all gardens change with time. The wise gardener knows when to completely redesign their garden to accommodate these changes, how to simply refresh the landscape, and when to just sit back and enjoy the beauty they've created.

**Editor's Note:**

As a compliment to this article, remember to join us on January 21<sup>st</sup> at *Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library* (121 S. Prairieville, Athens) for a presentation on *Yearly Garden Planning*. Come early as all presentations start on time and last for an hour. These presentations are **free and open to the public**. For more information on these presentations, or to buy a Henderson County Master Gardener Association's *Monthly Gardening Guide* book, 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).



Above pictures are featured in the Henderson County Master Gardener Association's *Monthly Gardening Guide* book.

# 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).



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