

Henderson County Master Gardeners Association (HCMGA)

January – February
2021



INSIDE DIRT



THIS ISSUE



President's Message

Yvonne Sparks, Master Gardener



Happy New Year's Master Gardeners,

Thank goodness 2021 has finally made it and the hope for a better year is ahead of us. I am very excited to return to the job of President.

Accepting it was a thoughtful process.

Just ask my husband, Danny. Last year was a year we all hope to never repeat. It was also a challenge to keep HCMGA going under the restrictions presented to us. There are a lot of people to thank for doing that:

- Spencer for reminding everyone of the directives from A & M and guidance that keeps us safe and connected;
- Past president, David, kept us informed and communicated faithfully,
- Vice President, Claudia took up the mantel when David moved (thanks Claudia) and never wavered in her determination to keep our organization going;
- Project chairs (Lynn, Shery, Janelle, Cindy B., Carl, Cynthia, Larry, Lora, Cindy O., Barbara) who continued to work in their areas to make sure our gardens and greenhouse were healthy and beautiful;
- Judy H. who guided the intern class through some difficult times and kept the eleven candidates on task with encouraging words, emails, and phone calls;
- Judy H. and Cheri T. who began planning for the 2021 plant sale;



President's Message	1
Editor's Message	2
HCMG Projects	2
Take Advantage of Cool Weather	3
Library Series Updates	4
Hello Winter	5
Calendar of Events & Around Town ...	6
January & February Gardening Tips ..	7
A Plant Lover's App	9
Show -N- Tell	9
2020 In Review	12
Fall Pollinator Plants	13
Cloud Nine: Inspirational Friendships	14
Pumpkins	15
Member's Page	16
Texas Bumble Bees	17
Connect with Us, Contact Info, & Officers	21



"One kind word can warm three winter months ~ Japanese Proverb

- Claudia and Spencer worked with the new MG class this fall to make sure they received the educational experience (although a little different) by informing each student of our organization mission and garner their excitement about being a MG.

I truly feel the energy HCMGA has and will build on in 2021 and hope all members will participate in areas they are comfortable with. Our budget looks different. That is one area we will work on.

Again, it is an honor for me to be your leader and I will try my best to bring back our passion and energy this year.

Yvonne

PS. The above picture is Danny and me on our anniversary at Brennan's in New Orleans.

Editor's Message

Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener

The accommodation of COVID in our lives, makes these strange times. Plans often need to be rearranged or canceled with little notice. Sometimes I don't like the flexibility required. I like meeting my responsibilities and keeping my plans. This tension however, provides excellent conditions under which to grow stronger.

You must be thinking that an opening like that has to have a story to go with it. You are so right. I do have a story! But I bet you do too.

I found myself unable to publish the November/December issue of the *Inside Dirt*. No, you didn't miss it. It never went out, as I had covid (second time) and a blown-out knee (I'm up to the third time now). It has been a rough several months: crutches, not being able to be around people, being in bed a lot, needing to ask for help... That last one's the hardest.



Don't they say, "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger"? I am stronger. My immune system is stronger and though I'm still on crutches, my arms are stronger. AND, because of all the articles sent in from amazing Master Gardeners, meant for the last edition, the January / February edition of the

Inside Dirt is packed full of treasures. I hope you enjoy, learn, and grow stronger. Stay safe and be flexible.

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.

Take Advantage of Cool Weather

By Lydia Holley, Master Gardener



Texas is known for its hot summer weather. But while other gardeners in the North are sheltered inside their homes during winter, this is a great time to get outdoors and take advantage of our cool fall and winter days. Besides, there is a multitude of things you can do now to help your garden look its best in spring.

Plant bulbs (tulips and hyacinths need to be chilled). I purchase bulbs throughout the year, then they are delivered to me at the proper planting time. It's always a fun surprise to get a gardening package in the mail. Planting bulbs is not only an enjoyable activity, it gives you something to look forward to.

Fall is a great time to plant many shrubs. I need more shrubs in my garden—I'm hoping to be very busy with this chore!

For many trees, during dormancy is the proper time to prune. I've had my eye on several branches and trees that I plan on pruning this winter.

Keep hummingbird feeders out until they all migrate away. Like seeing birds at the feeder? Consider putting out seed for the many other birds that stay through the winter.

Clean up your garden. Cut away canna foliage and the dead stems of many other perennials. Some, such as deciduous grasses or perennials with ornamental seed heads, can be left until early spring.

Enjoy your evergreens. You don't have to work every time you go outside. Enjoy your garden and the nice days we get throughout the fall and early winter. To keep a smile on your face, be certain to plant pansies or other winter annuals so you'll have something colorful to see every day. In addition to winter annuals, there are numerous plants that bloom in the winter months. If you don't have any of these, plant some! Those winter blooms are always appreciated.

Collect leaves and make leaf mold. It's a simple chore but very satisfying.

This time of year, is also the last chance to divide some perennials before frosts and freezes arrive.

I haven't even gotten started on vegetable gardening! See how much you can do outside during the mild days of a Texas fall and even winter.

If you are interested in learning more about gardening chores month to month, HCMGA's Monthly Gardening Guide is available from the Ag Office (903-675-6130) for only \$15. Cross off another chore and buy one for everyone on your Christmas list, too!



Editor's Note: Lydia Holley, Henderson County Master Gardener, is a prolific writer on gardening topics. Her articles are full of great information and can be very witty. She contributes a weekly article, not only to the HCMGA website, but to several local papers. All of her articles can be found on the website. Her contributions for November and December are:

- [The Garden in Winter, Part 3: Evergreens – December 21, 2020](#)
- [The Garden in Winter, Part 2: Berries – December 14, 2020](#)
- [The Garden in Winter, Part 1: Blooms – December 7, 2020](#)
- [Gifts for Gardeners – November 30, 2020](#)
- [What is in a Seed – November 23, 2020](#)
- [For the Love of Hedges – November 16, 2020](#)
- [The LBG for Your Garden – November 9, 2020](#)
- [Not Truly Russian Sage – November 2, 2020](#)



“My garden is my most beautiful masterpiece”

~~ Claude Monet

“Winter is the season in which people try to keep the house as warm as it was in the summer, when they complained about the heat.”

~~ Unknown Author



LIBRARY SERIES

Programing remains on hold until public gatherings are again allowed.
Watch our website for details.

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

Library Series is a partnership effort between **HCMGA** and the **Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library**, in Athens, TX



Hello Winter

By Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener

Vistas of green turning gold
Sweat drench days becoming cold
Leaves adrift, piles on land
Amber fire rings, warm the hand

Butterflies, migrate along
Hummingbirds too, moving on
Gardens clean of plants long spent
Compost piles, hot to vent

Time to trim, bushes and trees
Increase spring blooms, for the bees
Plant more bulbs, for spring surprise
Colors reflect, a sunrise

Boots and mud, hats, scarves and gloves
Snuggle, in sweaters you love
Breezes, bite your face silly
Warm-up with soups, teas, n-chili

Squash, gourds and sweet potato
Fall favorites on your table
Enjoy the holiday cheer
Knowing family time, draws near



Pansies bring color to your garden in the winter.

Trim your trees in the winter while they are bare. Look at the balance of the branches: Trim what hangs to low or aesthetically throws the tree out of balance.



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

~~ Horace Walpole

Calendar

Of Events

January

- 1/1 New Year's Day
- 1/18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 1/28 Full Moon

February

- 2/2 Ground Hog Day
- 2/14 Valentine's Day
- 2/15 President's Day
- 2/17 Ash Wednesday
- 2/25 Purim Begins at Sundown



Events Around Town

Here are some websites I usually comb through to find events for this section on **Events Around Town**. As Social gathering restrictions are relaxed, visit these websites to see if there is something going on.

- ✓ Henderson County Master Gardener Association: <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/>
- ✓ East Texas Arboretum and Botanical Society: <http://www.easttexasarboretum.org/>
- ✓ Texas A&M AgriLife's Dallas Center: <https://dallas.tamu.edu/events/>
- ✓ Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Gardens: <https://www.dallasarboretum.org/>
- ✓ Texas Parks and Wildlife: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/>
- ✓ Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center: <https://www.wildflower.org/>
- ✓ Smith County Master Gardeners: <https://txmg.org/smith/coming-events/>
- ✓ Kaufman County Master Gardener Association: <https://www.kcmga.org/events-4/>
- ✓ Free State Master Gardeners Association of Van Zandt County: <https://txmg.org/freestatemastergardeners/>



Wow, I didn't

Did you know?



The HCMGA Website has a lot of good information. click on:

<https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/welcome/our-impact/publicity/>

and go exploring!

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 and you'll be published in the next edition of *Inside Dirt*. Include photos or just send photos with a blurb as to what you are doing and I'll do the write up for you. I'm in the midst of a big one that I'll be sharing later in this edition. If you'd like to share yours, please send submissions before February 19th to me, the editor, at susanloves1life@gmail.com.

Veggie and herb Care:



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!

Flower Care:

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.



Caring for your trees and shrubs:

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.

April 25, 2021 PLANT SALE

In the spirit of hoping, planning and preparing for better things...

the Henderson County Master Gardeners Association **2021 Plant Sale** is on.

Be watching for Details to come.



A Plant Lover's App

Janelle Cole, Master Gardener

Ever find yourself in a new place where you spot a plant that you are curious about? If you are not in your local area, with friends you can ask, what do you do? A favorite APP among gardeners and those wanting to know more about plants is called **iNaturalist**.

This is a free app that allows you to snap a photo of the plant you are investigating, and enter where you are and it will offer suggestions of the plant. I have used this app in other regions of Texas, other states and even close to home when I spot a plant I have not seen before.



Another favorite part of this app is that it saves the plants you look up. So, if you find a certain plant in Mississippi that is covered with honeybees, you can look it up to identify it. Then when you get home you can take that id to a local nursery and see if you can find it locally. I love this because then I can bring in some plants that I know do well in our similar climate, but maybe are not necessarily native to our state. It can be a win/win!

The information it will provide includes full grown size, region where it does well, photos of flowers, and more.

It is a great app if you want to learn more about the plants you have or ones you have never seen before!! Check it out and let us know what you think!



Show -N- Tell

Ann Currin, Master Gardener

Zinnia



I have never grown Zinnia flowers before and this year have grown seeds to flowers directly in my vegetable garden. They have bloomed and are such a pleasure to look at. I have noticed more bees and butterflies. I just looked up the meaning of Zinnias. The Victorian meaning of Zinnias is *"thoughts of an absent friend. Of the heart. Lasting affection."* Now it is even more meaningful because last year I lost my best friend and



will think of her as well when I look at them.

Shirley Niswonger, Master Gardener



Sweet Peas

I love the fragrance of sweet peas in the beginning of Spring. They are such a sweet delicate flower. I have learned that we should grow the earliest bloomers because they do not like the hot nights we get fairly early. They give such pleasure to grow.



Judy Haldeman, Master Gardener

Gregg's Mistflower - *Conoclinium greggii*



This perennial, blooms spring through fall. The flowers are light blue to purple and grow in clusters. The bright green leaves are finely divided. The plant grows in full sun to part shade, spreading by rhizomes to form colonies that are 1.5-2 feet tall. My favorite characteristic of this plant is that it attracts Monarch and Queen butterflies in the fall. The Native Plant

Society of Texas says that chemicals in the nectar are used by male Queen butterflies to attract females. A toxin in the nectar will protect the Queen's eggs from predators.



Shery Damuth, Master Gardener

Apricot Brugmesia Trumpet Flower

This is my apricot Brugmesia trumpet flower. This bush is a show stopper. It is planted in the ground and comes back every year. In the winter, I cut it back, and stack alfalfa hay on top to protect it from the cold weather. This plant is very low maintenance.



Shery Damuth, Master Gardener

CandleStick Cassia

Another show stopper, CandleStick Cassia. This is one plant! It's extremely hardy and low maintenance. It is a very fast grower and puts on hundreds of seed pods.



Lydia Holley, Master Gardener



Pink Muhly Grass - *Muhlenbergia capillaris*

My favorite autumn plant is pink muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*). Its cotton-candy plumes dance in the wind, are soft to the touch, and bloom

when other plants are starting to go dormant. Planted in masses, this plant makes a striking statement. In my garden, it pulls me forward, to venture deeper into the garden to watch the butterflies flitting about, hear the birds chattering, and appreciate the final flush of blooms from the roses, lantana, and Gregg's mistflower. Don't just grow one—if you have the room, grow a meadow full!



Sara Drummond, Master Gardener



Luffa Gourd - *Luffa cylindrica*

I grew luffa for the first time this year. It was easy to grow and made an attractive display. The 30' long vines sprawled over two 4x8 raised beds and up trellises creating a long stunning "tunnel". The plant produced numerous large yellow flowers that were a magnet for bees. And the fruit has been great fun to harvest. Now I've grown my own organic,



environmentally friendly, sustainable, biodegradable scrubbers! I will definitely grow luffa again!



2020 In Review

By Claudia Durham, Master Gardener

Wow! What a year to remember. People everywhere passed the time by installing gardens for the first time and setting up their outdoor areas to be more comfortable. Being outside and social distancing is one of the safe practices that all of us are able to do with COVID 19 still prevalent. In October, our first meeting since March was held with a terrific turn out. The location was at the Common Area Market, compliments of Amanda and Chris, which allowed us to meet in an open-air situation and keep safe distancing.

Henderson County Master Gardener Association has some of the top gardeners. Recently the Texas Master Gardener Association honored HCMGA with a first-place award for outstanding association and a first place in written education in weekly articles. Thankfully the faithful Henderson County gardeners have kept The Dream Garden, The Harvest Garden and The Greenhouse at TVCC in good shape. The majority of the HCMG continue to stay active by getting their required hours and continuing education credits.

The next major venture will be the Plant Sale April 25, 2021. Gardeners are working to raise plants for you to enjoy. While we hope to resume the Library Series and other educational endeavors, the goal for Henderson County Master Gardeners to continue to provide education with new methods of teaching being discovered. Now, Facebook has many instructional videos, the Website has sources to look up information, Inside Dirt and the Athens Review contain a wealth

of written information. So please continue to contact us with your gardening questions. We are being active in our mission. Gardening in 2021 will continue to be a worthwhile and an enjoyable activity for all of us.

Fall Pollinator Plants

By Janelle Cole, Master Gardener



In March and April, most are enjoying wildflowers and thinking about pollinators. However, beekeepers are thinking about pollinators all year, and here are some ways you can too!!

Beekeepers and Pollinator lovers start thinking about flowers about six to nine months before they even bloom, sometimes longer! We have to plan forage for our bees so that no matter what, we know they have somewhere to gather nectar and pollen all months of the year. One way to do that is to watch when things bloom annually and look for other blooming plants you might not even have that bloom in other

seasons. For example, Esperanza. Esperanza actually is one of the later blooming plants in our area. This is a lovely, prolific blooming plant that does really well in a semi-protected area. In East Texas It starts to bloom as early as August and goes until we get a freeze. This particular time of the year, since there is not a large variety of blooms, the bees, hummingbirds, and other pollinators LOVE Esperanza!

Another favorite of mine thanks to a fellow Master Gardener who first told me about it is African Blue Basil. I plant this plant in my yard every year and some years completely forget about it. I love that no matter how much attention it gets, it thrives and produces abundant blooms that my honeybees love! This will bloom as early as May, in perfect conditions, but it is not heavily worked until about September and October by our honeybees. When I say that this plant gets worked, I mean that it literally buzzes and that you cannot count all the honey bees collecting pollen and nectar. This is a wonderful smelling plant and it does so well in our area. One side note is that it is a sterile variety and must be replanted every year. It is worth every ounce of effort you offer it though. As summer winds down the honeybees will love you!

Another favorite in our yard for the bees but also the butterflies is the Blue Mist. We have the Gregg's Blue Mist variety, but there is also a darker variety that grow wild in many area pastures. This flower is a favorite for so many pollinators. It blooms well into the





fall as well, making it a personal favorite due to the lack of flowers typical to East Texas. This is a very low maintenance plant that is easy to propagate and share, as well as spread through the area it is given.

So as our blooming season is wrapping up, I encourage you to look around and see if you have flowers in your yard for the honeybees, migrating butterflies or the hummingbirds. If not, now is a great time to start researching, planning and purchasing seeds or plants to add to your garden for next year. You will be blessed by the blooms, and the pollinators will love you for it!

Cloud Nine: Inspirational Friendships

By Claudia Durham, Master Gardener



There were 9 of us in the Master Gardener Student classes in 2017. Our name became Cloud Nine. This is where we first met David Bickerstaff. In addition to David and myself, there were Lora Tomlinson, Elizabeth Murphy and John Maloch; each in their own right a knowledgeable gardener and impressive person.

All of us became fast friends from the beginning. We attended a couple of state conferences together. David took leadership training, met and made friends with many other gardeners and eventually became involved at the state level with the Texas Master Gardeners. David was elected President in 2019 and took the club to a new level with his business sense. He worked to define agreements with Trinity Valley Community College regarding the greenhouse, and the East Texas Arboretum regarding the Dream Garden. He brought transparency to the club so that everyone knew what was going on. He was a great emcee and helped us with the

greatest fundraiser and silent auction in the 20-year history of HCMG.

Not only is David a wonderful gardener, he is a great husband, grandfather and friend. He found out his name meant keeper of the bees and he became a beekeeper. He built a greenhouse from old windows. He was Chairman of the CCL Veterans Foundation which sponsors the Thunder over Cedar Creek.

His best asset is his beautiful, sweet wife Donna. I found this out when she took us into her closet and gave us items to give away at the HCMG Christmas Party because we were trying to save money. She is a loving, accepting and truly dear woman. David has moved to Frisco to be closer to his children and grandchildren. He plans to join the Denton County Master Gardener Association. We wish him well and they would be wise to place him in their leadership lineup.

I speak highly of David to let you know the caliber of people that are in the HCMG. As you get to know each person, you find out everyone has something unique to share. HCMG is a great horticultural education source, and even though we are losing a great leader, there are many more in the wings waiting to spread them, like the butterflies in our gardens. During this Covid outbreak people are turning to sustaining their own gardens and outdoor projects. Let's keep it going! Stay safe Friends.



Pumpkins



Pumpkins are not so out of season to remember the local groceries store's wonderful displays of beautiful pumpkins for all to enjoy. When I saw the display at my grocer's, I immediately thought of my friend and fellow master gardener, whose ambition is to grow a pumpkin large enough to be a contestant in a pumpkin contest. When we are working one of the master gardener's events our conversations eventually led to pumpkins. We would discuss the different varieties, how large pumpkins can grow, and what is the best way to transport them. Now don't get the wrong idea, I'm not the expert on pumpkins, my friend holds that title. In our talks I just sit and listen and nodded in the appropriate places. This year after seeing all the displays, I wanted to be able to participate in our little talks. So, I have

found some interesting facts and would like to share them with you.

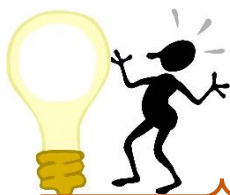
1. Pumpkins are one of the oldest domesticated plants. Native to North America, northeastern Mexico and southern United States, having been used as early as 7,500 to 5,000 BC.
2. They are grown around the world. Pumpkins are considered a winter squash and all parts of the pumpkin are edible.
3. In 1584, after French explorer Jacques Cartier explored the St. Lawrence region of North America, he reported finding "gros melons." The name was translated into English as "pompions," which has since evolved into the modern "pumpkin."
4. Irish people were the first to start pumpkin carving. They began with potatoes and turnips but after their migration to America they found pumpkins more worthy of carving.
5. Pumpkins are tough and heavy; but they are also very delicate. It is hard to save it from organisms, once its bruised.
6. The world record for heaviest pumpkin was set by Mathias Willemijns of Belgium in October 2016. According to Guinness World Records the pumpkin weighed 2,624 pounds.
7. According to the 2017 U.S. Agriculture Census, Illinois is the largest producer of pumpkins in the United States. It harvests twice as many pumpkin acres as any of the other top-producing states.
8. Morton, Illinois is the pumpkin capital of the world. The capital produces over 100 tons of pumpkin each year

Now you have these fun facts about pumpkins to astound your family and friends as you are eating that huge piece of delicious pumpkin pie or sitting waiting patiently as the aroma of the baking pumpkin bread wafts through the house.



Henderson County Master Gardener Association

~~ Members Page ~~



*Master Gardeners,
remember to
record your hours!*

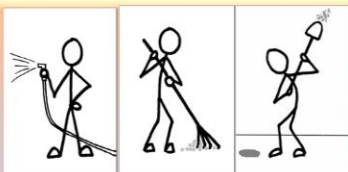


2021 HCMGA Meetings

- Noon luncheon or bring your lunch, depending upon COVID conditions,
- 3rd Wednesday of the month
- Location may change depending upon COVID conditions. Watch your email for notification

January 20 th	July 21 st
February 17 th	August 18 th
March 17 th	September 15 th
April 21 st	October 20 th
May 19 th	November 17 th
June 23 rd	December 15 th

- The above dates are contingent upon safe COVID conditions. Watch your emails for each month's notice.



Corona Virus

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 and get **plugged** in.

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

~~ Thomas Jefferson, The Quotable Jefferson

~~ Members Page Continued ~~

Member and Intern Requirements: Members need 12 hours of **volunteer service**, 6 hours of **continuing education**, and attendance at 5 **meetings**. Interns need 50 hours of **volunteer service**.



Members & Friends, want to help us raise money as you shop?

Your impact can make a difference in a big way. Please consider using Amazon Smile when you order from Amazon, and designate Henderson County Master Gardener Association as the charity of choice.

Set up is easy peasy. Sign into Amazon Smile instead of Amazon. Your account information can be seen just as if you signed into Amazon. In the far left upper corner, on Amazon Smile, click on "Your Charity" and then **search for [Texas Master Gardener Association Inc.](#)** A list of Texas Master Gardener associations will come up by chapter. Scroll down till you find Athens TX. Click on it and *voilà la!* When you make a purchase, log in through Amazon Smile, and you are helping HCMGA raise money as you shop!



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

~~ Peter Mayle,



Texas Bumble Bees

As I sit here watching the spikes of our Henry Duelberg salvia dip under the weight of several bumble bees, I wonder how long this group will last. I became interested in bumble bees when our elderly neighbor across the farm road either abandoned his 5 honey bee hives-or lost them to decline. We then became more aware of the many bumble bees that visited our wildflower garden daily. I knew nothing about bumble bees - except that they were large and would sometime dive bomb me when I worked in the garden. It was a year or two later that my husband was stung by bumble bees, when he stepped on a nest. Who knew bumble bees build nests in the ground?

The most familiar bee to most Americans is the honey bee. It is not native to North America. It was introduced to America in 1622. There are,



however, thousands of bees native to North America. Bumble bees are in this group and are descended from



wasps. Most wasps are carnivores. However, millions of years ago when flowering plants first appeared, some wasps switched from hunting prey to gathering pollen. Bumble bees are among the most recognizable and best known of pollen gathering bees. They are especially effective pollinators of economically important crops including blueberries, cucumbers, peppers, pumpkins, tomatoes, and watermelons.

There are more than 50 species of bumble bees occurring across North America. A total of nine bumble bee species have been documented in Texas. Bumble bee diversity in

Texas is highest in the eastern half of the state and declines as you move westward into the Chihuahuan Desert.

The life cycle of bumble bees is fascinating. In contrast to honey bee colonies that can last for years, the bumble bee colonies in North America last for just under one year from spring into late summer or early fall.

In spring each bumble bee colony starts with just one queen that had hibernated over the winter. When each queen emerges with the arrival of warm weather, it will feed heavily from early spring flowers and then must find a suitable place to establish a nest. Bumble bees nest in or on the ground in protected spots under grass thatch or in abandoned rodent burrows. Compost piles, abandoned birdhouses, and brush piles may even be co-opted by bumble bee queens as nest sites.



After a suitable site is found, the queen provisions it with nectar and pollen. Bumble bees can secrete wax and the



queen uses this material to create nectar pots and pollen cells to store food. With enough nectar and pollen stored, she will lay her first batch of eggs which will all develop into daughter workers. The queen stays close to her eggs, warming them by vibrating her flight muscles. The larvae that hatch from the eggs feed on pollen supplied by the queen. After enough larvae develop into adults, the queen no longer leaves the nest to forage but instead focuses on laying eggs to expand the colony. Daughter workers take over nectar and pollen foraging, care of larvae, and nest maintenance. Worker bumble bees will also defend their colonies by stinging if harassed.

From spring into early summer, the queen will continue to lay eggs and the colony will grow in size given sufficient food resources. Bumble bees do not store great quantities of nectar and pollen, only enough to sustain the colony for a few days. By mid-summer, a bumble bee colony with access to good sources of nectar and pollen may reach a population of 300-600 workers, with colony size of 50 to 200 a more typical size.

New queens, and the colonies first male bumble bees, are generally produced over a discrete period during mid-to late summer. Eggs that will develop into new daughter queens are generally laid by a colony's queen when her workforce of daughter workers reaches a sufficient size.

Male bumble bee larvae are fed less food than queens and develop quickly into adults. Once they reach adulthood, they soon leave the nest, never to return. Males spend their days feeding on nectar and establishing territories to attract new queens after they emerge from the nest. When new queen bumble bees leave the nest, multiple males vie for mating opportunities. Following mating, these new queens spend considerable time through the remainder of the summer and into the early fall feeding from flowers to build up the fat reserves needed for overwintering.

As fall progresses, temperatures continue to drop and flowers dwindle, the old queen and all her daughter workers slowly decline and the entire colony perishes. Males, likewise, die. The only bumble bees to survive are the new queen bumble bees that search out some protected spot to shelter themselves from the elements. There, they overwinter and wait for the return of spring and the chance to establish their own colonies the following spring.

Because bumble bees do not store great quantities of nectar and pollen, only enough to sustain the colony for a few days, bumble bee colonies are very much dependent upon access to a succession of flowering plants from spring into fall to complete colony development.

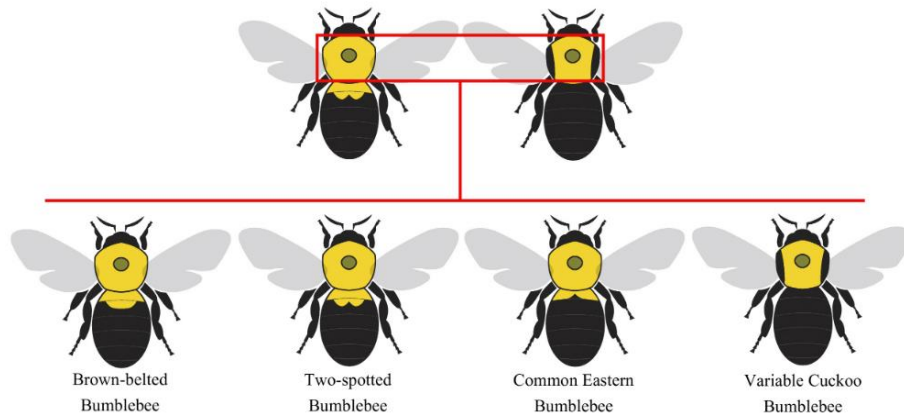
If you are interested in establishing a garden that will sustain bumble bees and other pollinators, check out the site: <https://www.pillinator.org/guides> There you will find 34 ecoregional planting guides based on US zip codes. The plants listed in the box below are plants native to our region, but the guide has many other plants that are suitable for pollinators in our area. Check out pages 16-20 for information on plants, bloom times, height, sun and soil requirements, etc. Page 20 gives information specific to bumble bees.

	<p><i>Lavandula</i> spp. (Lavender) <i>Salvia</i> spp. (Sage) <i>Helianthus</i> spp. (Sunflower) <i>Nepeta</i> spp. (Catnip) <i>Stachys</i> spp. (Lamb's ears) <i>Phacelia</i> spp. (Bells or Phacelia) <i>Rudbeckia</i> spp. (Black-eyed Susan) <i>Achillea millefolium</i> (Yarrow)</p>	<p><i>Rosemarinus officinalis</i> (Rosemary) <i>Echinacea</i> spp. (Coneflower) <i>Cercis</i> spp. (Redbud) <i>Penstemon</i> spp. (Penstemon) <i>Verbena</i> spp. (Verbena) <i>Aster</i> spp. (Aster) <i>Origanum</i> spp. (Oregano)</p>
--	--	--

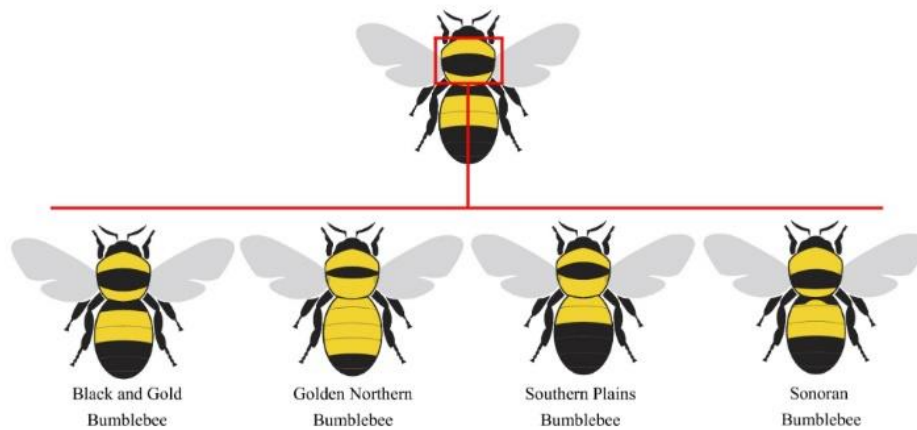
If you are interested in bumble bee identification of Texas species and/or conservation information, see the following site:

https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/nongame/native-pollinators/bumblebee-id.phtml

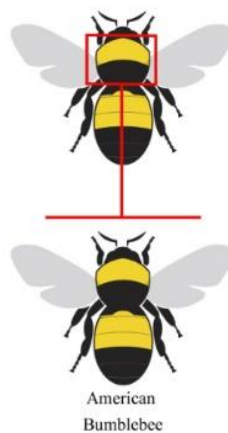
Thorax Type I. Completely yellow or nearly completely yellow thorax; a small bare area may be present in the middle of the thorax:



Thorax Type II. Thorax banded above and below with yellow; center black band present:



Thorax Type III. Upper portion of thorax banded in yellow, remainder black.



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.



Connect with Us:



HCmastergardener



hendersoncmga@gmail.com



Texas master gardeners



txmg.org/hendersonmg



Henderson County Extension Office

Office: (903) 675-6130

Fax: (903) 677-7222

Courthouse 3rd Floor, RM 300

100 E. Tyler St., Athens TX 75751-2547

Hendersoncmga@gmail.com

2021 Officers

President, Yvonne Sparks

Past President, Claudia Durham

VP Program & Administration, Dub Hurst

VP Member & Community Ed., Bob Erickson

Secretary, Elizabeth Murphy

Treasurer, Judy Haldeman

Historian, Barbara Thompson

Advisor, Spencer Perkins

Newsletter Editor, Susan Skommesa

Henderson County Master Gardeners Contact: Ariel Conway

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.