



# INSIDE DIRT



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### President's Message

Yvonne Sparks, Master Gardener

### Hurray for Spring!

Today is Valentine's Day, Ash Wednesday is this week and Spring 2021 is not far away. The weather in Henderson County begins a long stretch of below freezing temperatures and several chances for snow. BRRR! Yesterday (Feb. 13), ten MG responded to the email for help in moving plants from the Annex to the Greenhouse. We got the job done and hopefully the plants will perk up in time for the Plant Sale. Many, many thanks from the Greenhouse Committee to those of you who showed up in 26° temperatures. The plants got moved and everyone got to visit for a short time with other MG.



Last weekend, I made a presentation to the Enchanted Oaks Ladies Club. It was an enjoyable experience. I met several members, sold 5 Monthly Guidebooks, accepted a \$50 honorarium for

HCMGA and hopefully recruited one or two ladies for the 2021 MG class. Speaking to local community groups is a wonderful way to promote the mission of MG. Debbie Pascoe, a new intern was attending and Paula Patterson, current MG and club member, stopped by to deliver food. Shannon Greene is scheduled to speak at the same group in March. Community education is the cornerstone of our organization. If Bob Erickson asks you to make a presentation, please give it careful consideration. You will receive great rewards from speaking and it is an easy way to get volunteer hours. Bob will gladly help you with our A/V

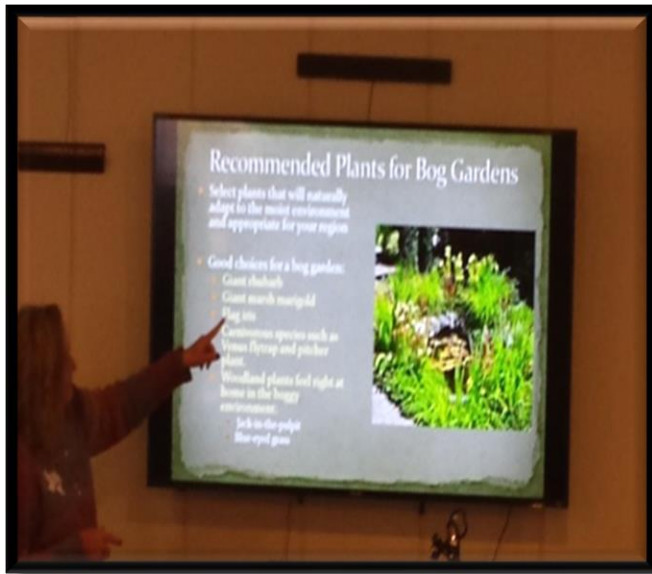


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equipment if the group does not have access to any.

Don't we have great members!



Read further in this edition for current information about the HCMGA 2021 Plant Sale.



Keep digging and planting!

Yvonne

## Editor's Message

Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener

What a crazy ice storm we experienced in February! Though we are moving on to spring and great weather, we need to address the damage that ice did to our precious gardens. In addition to information key to gardening in March/April, this issue features articles that will guide you through the process of nurturing your plants, shrubbery and trees back to health.

Happy Spring, to all you marvelous Garden-healers!

Susan

## 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.

# Announcing the Henderson County Master Gardeners Association

## 2021 ANNUAL PLANT SALE

Cherie Tanneberger, Master Gardener, Co-Chair 2021 Plant Sale

One of the favorite events for Henderson County Master Gardeners is our annual April Plant Sale. We especially enjoy talking with guests who come to browse or purchase plants. Due to COVID-19 and any possible restrictions relating to an in-person sale, we are taking a creative approach this year! Our Plant Sale will be an **online event**. In late March, we'll send out an email, listing all plants available for sale. That list will provide the common name, scientific name, a photo, and some information about the plant. (See examples throughout this newsletter.) You can find more plant information on line at: <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/welcome/plant-sale/>.

*Creative  
On-line Event*

If you receive our emailed newsletter, you'll receive the plant list. If you have friends who are not currently on our email list, you can give them our email address ([hendersoncmga@gmail.com](mailto:hendersoncmga@gmail.com)) so they'll be provided future information. A subsequent email will follow with any updates.



The online sale will open **Friday, April 9** and close **Friday, April 16**. A **one-day pick-up** at the Athens TVCC Pavilion, located behind the gymnasium, will be held **Saturday, April 24**. All customers will remain in cars while plants are loaded into vehicles.

We have a wide variety of plants for sale. Some examples are:

Texas Superstar® Plants: (To be named a Texas Superstar® a plant undergoes several years of extensive field trials during which they must show superior performance under Texas' tough growing conditions. Trial plants receive minimal soil preparation, reasonable levels of water, and no pesticides.) This group includes: Red and Pink Turk's Cap, 'Henry Duelberg' Salvia, Moth Orchid, Mexican Bush Sage, Esperanza, plus others.

**Coneflower 'Purple'**  
*Echinacea purpurea*

- Type: Perennial
- Zone: 3 to 8
- Height: 2.00 to 5.00 feet
- Spread: 1.50 to 2.00 feet
- Bloom Time: June to August
- Bloom Description: Purplish pink
- Sun: Full sun to part shade
- Water: Dry to medium
- Maintenance: Low



*Opens: Friday April 9  
Closes: Friday April 16  
Pickup: Saturday April 24th*

Texas Natives: Gregg's Mistflower, Giant Coneflower, Purple Coneflower, both White and Pink Gaura (Whirling Butterfly), Mexican Hat, Scarlet Sage, and others.

Shrubs: Bridal Wreath Spirea, Goji Berry, Red 'Texas Star' Hibiscus, White 'Texas Star' Hibiscus, 'Luna Pink Swirl' Hibiscus, 3 colors of Angel's Trumpet, and more.

Perennials: Lemon Bee Balm, Wild Bergamot Bee Balm, Blue Balloon Flower, Cashmere Bouquet, 'Green Twister' Coneflower, Pink Muhly Grass, and more.

Indoor Plants and Succulents: Crown of Thorns, Jade, Aloe Vera, Arrowroot, Arrowhead, Airplane Plants, and others.

Annuals: Mexican Heather, Cornflower (Tall White Bachelor Buttons), several varieties of Begonias and Coleus, and more.

Bulbs: Rain lily, Prairie Sunset Rain Lily, Salmon Canna, and others.

While many of the plants above attract pollinators, we also have a group of plants that are host plants for various butterflies: Bronze Fennel (Eastern Black Swallowtail), Butterfly Weed (Monarch and Queen), Cassia Tree (Sulphur), and more.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS** for the opening of the sale! We'll send a link for the online shop and will have more information on our website at <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/welcome/plant-sale/> and Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/HCMastergardener/>.



# Library Series

## Will resume once it's Covid-Safe



## Did you know?

Wow, I didn't




The HCMGA Library Series is always open to the public – for FREE! To find the most up to date information on the Library Series, go to <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/welcome/events/learn-at-the-library-series/>

The **Library Series** is a partnership effort between **HCMGA** and the **Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library**, in Athens, TX. Each month, HCMGA Master Gardeners present from their expertise to the public for free. There is always a wealth of information to take home to your garden.

*We look forward to seeing you soon!*

**Hens and Chicks**  
*Sempervivum techtorum*



- Type: Succulent
- Zone: 3 to 8
- Height: 6-12" Spread: 6-18"
- Bloom Time: June to July
- Bloom: Reddish purple (Showy)
- Sun: Full sun
- Water: Dry to medium Maintenance: Low
- Leaf: Evergreen Other: Winter Interest
- Tolerate: Deer, Drought, Dry or Shallow-Rocky Soil

**Crown of Thorns**  
*Euphorbia milii*



- Type: Houseplant
- Zone: 9 to 11
- Height: 3-6' Spread: 1.5-3'
- Bloom: Seasonal bloomer (Showy)
- Blooms: Green subtended by red or yellow bracts
- Sun: Full sun, part shade
- Water: Dry to medium
- Maintenance: Medium

# Hold off Gardening After Snow Thaws

Lydia Holley, Master Gardener



After the basic necessities of electricity and water have been restored, many gardeners may be itching to return to their regular spring garden chores. However, even after the snow thaws, you need to be patient and not start working outside too quickly.

Chances are, your soil will be thoroughly drenched from the melting snow. Estimates vary, but sources state it takes anywhere from nine to thirty inches of snow to equal one inch of rain, depending upon the snow's texture. A light, powdery snow takes up more space than a wet, heavy snow or one mixed with sleet.

So, if we only received the equivalent of around one inch of rain, why is the soil so wet? Rain runs off instead of soaking in

completely. But snow melts, so most of it is absorbed, saturating the soil. The air is cool, so the rate of evaporation is low. Also, plants are dormant, and less foliage means plants take up less water through their roots.

When will conditions be safe to work in your soil again? Much depends upon your particular soil's structure. Sand drains quicker than clay because sand particles are much larger than clay's. Clay's structure is considered plate-like, with flat, microscopic pieces that lay on top of each other. Because there is little room in between these flat plates, the soil holds less air, so it takes more time to dry.

Ideally, soil holds 50% water and 50% air, but a snow melt changes that composition. In order for your soil to be workable, you must wait until your soil has had time to exchange extra water for air. Because of the large, round-ish shape of sand particles, it dries quicker than clay. That is also why people are cautioned not to drive or even walk on wet soil—that pressure compacts the soil further, giving less space for air to occupy. Digging in wet soil damages the soil's structure, compromising drainage and reducing aeration, which is necessary for soil microorganisms to live. Studies have shown that compacted soil which drains poorly may contribute to certain diseases.

So, what can you do now? Stay inside and prioritize and plan your garden chores. Take established pathways. You may be able to prune shrubs now by keeping on those pathways. Look for sunny areas which will dry out quicker than those in shadier spots. Small hills will be workable long before low-lying areas. Every day, test your soil by squeezing it in your hand. When the soil is moist and crumbly instead of wet and sticky, it will be safe to resume your usual gardening activities.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email [hendersonCMGA@gmail.com](mailto:hendersonCMGA@gmail.com), or visit [txmq.org/hendersonmq](http://txmq.org/hendersonmq).

# Keep Your Itchy Fingers Under Control

Robert Erickson, Master Gardener



It's Spring, right? I mean we have 70-degree days and 60-degree nights. Time to get the garden started, right? Slow down, itchy fingers. We've just had a major week-long freeze. We may even have another one or two before we can get really dirty. Officially, our average last frost day is around mid-March. The emphasis is on the word *Average*. In recent years, we have had freezes in April and a couple in May. This doesn't mean we can't work in the garden however; we just have to be smart about it. Let's talk about our gardens. I will talk mainly about vegetables but most of this also applies to flowers and ornamentals.

It's still winter, until March 20<sup>th</sup>, but the warmer weeks allow us to do all of the prep work we have put off since fall. Getting rid of weeds and dead plant material comes first. If

the compost bin is full, it's time to dig out the black gold and put it in the garden. The dead and any new material will be welcome by the bugs which are tired of the same old menu. The next thing on the agenda is to loosen the soil. It has probably compacted over the winter with the rains and any foot traffic which might have taken place. This can be done at the same time you add the compost and work it in. Most likely, you won't have enough compost and might need to add some more. The goal for existing beds is 1-2" of fresh compost worked into the top of the soil. More is desirable but might strain the budget if you have a larger garden. With a larger garden, buying bulk compost can save some money. There are a number of local sources for bulk compost. If you have a trailer or truck, you can pick up what you need. If you don't have a trailer, you can order it for delivery but might have to pay for a minimum amount to have it delivered. Shop around.

It's also a good time to work in organic nutrients and fertilizers. They tend to be slow release and take time to be ready for your new plants. Chemical fertilizers are mostly quick release and should be applied at the time you plant.

Some plants can be put in the ground now but do some research on what is cold tolerant. As a general rule, greens like lettuce, cabbage, mustard, collards and others are tolerant. They are already in the plant stores and can be planted anytime now but be alert to the weather for an upcoming freeze. If they are recently transplanted, you might want to cover them. Once they are established, they should be fine. They will shut down growth for a couple of days until it warms up again. This list also includes onions. We think of onions as bulbs but they aren't. The onion bulb is actually the base of the green leaves. You should also remember to buy short day onions. These include the Vidalia, Texas Grano, and 1015 varieties which do very well locally. Long day varieties don't do well in the south. You can try but don't expect good results.





**A couple of other notes:** It's too late to plant garlic. In the south, it's usually planted in the fall. They and onions have about a six-month growth cycle to maturity. The hot summer here will be too much for them. We need to harvest them by June. The onion sets available now have been growing since October and are ready to plant. They will survive a freeze. Seed potatoes are also available now and can be planted. However, a late freeze might kill off the above ground greenery. My experience is that the potatoes will grow new greenery and will be fine. A few might not make it but most of them will survive.

With these out of the way, your garden is started but you still need to keep your itchy fingers under control. April is usually the month to put out the warm weather plants. It's certainly a good time to buy the plants but you still need to keep an eye on the weather. Most late freezes last only a short time. Tomatoes and peppers particularly might need to be covered when the temperature drops into the mid-thirties. Beans and peas will probably survive. The concern in April and later is about any seeds you plant directly in the ground. Rather than rely on the weather reports, consider getting a thermometer and testing the soil temperature. Soil is a lousy conductor of heat. It will take longer to warm up than the air and will take longer to cool off. Seeds germinate at a variety of soil temperatures but most seeds germinate best when the soil gets to sixty degrees or above. If you wait for that point, even a very late freeze won't change the soil temperature very much and seeds can be safely planted. Planting seeds too early might mean the early seedlings, with only minimal roots in place, might not survive a cold spell. Plan your planting accordingly.

Finally, when you plant anything, starter plants or seeds, water them in well to ensure the soil and the plant or seed make good contact and can begin its journey. Then, all you have to do is keep your itchy fingers busy pulling weeds and things, until it is time to harvest your well-earned bounty.

Enjoy your spring.



## 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:

- **HCMGA 2021 Plant Sale:** <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/welcome/plant-sale/>; <https://www.facebook.com/HCmastergardener/>
- 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://agriflifeextension.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/>

# Calendar of Events

## March

- 3/04 – Meet & Greet for New MG Interns – AG Office
- 3/06 – Keep Athens Beautiful (Athens Fairgrounds)
- 3/14 – Daylight Savings Time
- 3/20 – 1<sup>st</sup> Day of Spring
- 3/17 – St. Patrick's Day
- 3/27 – Passover begins at Sundown
- 3/28 – Palm Sunday



## April

- 4/02 – Good Friday
- 4/04 – Easter
- 4/09 – Online Plant Sale Ppens
- 4/16 – Online Plant Sale Closes
- 4/24 – Plant Pickup



## 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/>
- ✓ Treat yourself in Late March thru late April to a drive: **BLUEBONNET SIGHTINGS**



some websites to help plan your bluebonnet adventure for Spring of 2020.

- ✓ <https://www.wildflower.org/bluebonnet-faq>
- ✓ <https://texashillcountry.com/5-great-places-see-bluebonnets-texas/>
- ✓ <https://www.highlandlakes.com/wildflowers/>
- ✓ <https://www.visitennis.org/bluebonnet.htm>





# Assessing Freeze Damaged Plants

Lydia Holley, Master Gardener



If you have freeze-damaged plants, is there anything you can do for them? While you cannot save plants that have died from the cold, there are things you can do for those plants that lived but are just damaged. Some of these steps call for immediate action, while others require patience.

For damaged plants that are herbaceous—plants that do not have woody stems—you want to remove any dead leaves. This should be done as soon as possible since these dead leaves may promote disease, especially if they are touching the base of the plant.

For plants with woody stems, you need to be patient. Instead of pruning off what you feel may

be dead wood immediately, you want to give your plants time to grow again. This way, you can see where your plants are sprouting and can determine which parts need removing. Watering is one thing you can do after the immediate danger of continued freezes is over. The water will not help the plant to grow, but may thaw any ice which has formed in the soil.

You may find you have some damage on your trees. If you have a newly planted tree, its roots may have suffered, while a tree that has been in the ground for some time may only have damage to the ends of its stems. You will need to wait until spring to assess each tree individually. Follow the advice for woody-stemmed plants and wait until new growth appears to determine where damage has occurred. Trees may take more time to bud out than shrubs, and even one side or a portion of the tree may take more time than the rest of it, so be very patient with large plants. The worst damage that may occur on trees or woody plants is cracks in the trunk. If the crack extends to the base, prepare yourself for the possibility you may lose the plant entirely.

For vines that you feel have frozen, wait until the weather warms then cut the partially dead stems to new growth, as low as around six inches above the ground. Patience will be required since it may take months or possibly years for your vine to once again grow to its prior length.

Lastly, lawns may have suffered damage, too. It is best not to walk on grass that is frozen, so wait until temperatures warm before going out to check on your lawn. Although you may immediately see damage, again, this calls for patience. You can remove the damaged areas and replace with sod or plugs in the spring. Remember, many grasses turn brown in the winter naturally in their dormant state, so things may not be as bad as it initially looks. Also, the fact that these freezes came late in the winter may have helped insulate your lawn against damage since a longer blade length would help freeze damage from occurring.

The one thing that you do not want to do whether you are talking about lawns, shrubs, trees, perennials, or vines is to fertilize. Fertilizing now would only promote quick growth which might attract pests and would be more susceptible to

damage from future frosts later in the season. Let your plants rest now and later you may give them the appropriate amount and type of fertilization at the proper time.

What makes these latest freezes so damaging, besides the extremely low temperatures, is that the plants may have already been putting on new growth. The good thing is that by the middle of April, the possibility of another freeze should just be a memory.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email [hendersonCMGA@gmail.com](mailto:hendersonCMGA@gmail.com), or visit [txmq.org/hendersonmq](http://txmq.org/hendersonmq).



# March & April Gardening Tips

By Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener

## In General:

The damage savaged on our gardens by the week-long freeze, will not stop nature from waking up and trumpeting the arrival of spring! Though my rose bushes look petrified, bulbs are shooting up and flowering. Crepe Myrtles are silent, but Oaks are full of buds. Give it a couple more weeks and blooms will explode everywhere!

Though the thought will make you groan, still be careful and watch for that unexpected frost or last freeze. Keep the frost blankets ready. As long as the temperature does not dip into the single digits again, did you know you can just lay opaque or clear plastic over plants for a short period of time? When you do so, moisture and warmth build up underneath the plastic and provides just the protection you need in the middle of a frost. At this point in the season, (crossing my fingers as I say this) a frost or freezes should not last very long. Plants can survive for quite a few days under this kind of plastic. The hardware section in Walmart carries rolls of it. Painter's think it's for them, but it's really for gardeners. It's called Husky Plastic Sheeting. the roll is 10' by 25' of 3.5 mil opaque plastic. There is a very thin clear plastic in the paint section. That is not the one you want. This is a heavy opaque plastic. The roll is about 5-6 inches in diameter and about a foot and a half long. The plastic unfolds into widths of 10 feet, and can be draped over raised beds, laid out over rows of cold hardy veggies, tented over early blooming bushes and flowers, and any other favorite tender green thing you want to protect from frost.

Don't mow or fertilize quite yet, but clearing dead leaves, mulching, planting and propagating will keep you pretty busy. Before March is out, mowing will be on your agenda. Wait until you have had 3 - 4 good mows of real grass before you even begin to think of fertilizing.

As March rolls into April, the main tasks of spring fill our garden-time: planting, weeding and thinning. Let the sun fall on your face and remember the freeze. Have fun as you watch your tender shoots grow and flowers bloom. That's why we're out there.

Did you know that you can share your upcoming projects? Include photos and you'll be published in the next edition of **Inside Dirt**. Send submissions to the editor, Susan Skommesa, at [susanloves1life@gmail.com](mailto:susanloves1life@gmail.com).

## veggie and herb Care:



Let's talk about Herbs. If you grow more than you can use, you can always dry your fresh herbs. Doing so will mean herbs for the rest of the year. You can start herbs either through seed, division or propagation. When starting annual and biennial herbs, if not starting seeds indoors, start outside after the last frost. In general, you can propagate herbs via cuttings, by taking 4"- 6" cuttings in the spring for rooting. You can propagate perennial herbs via division. Simply separate the plants, in the early spring, into 3 to 4 clumps.

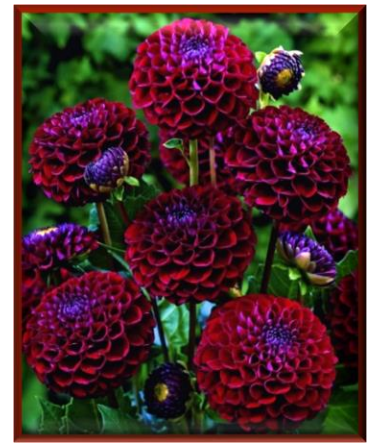
Moving on to veggies, cool-season crops should be in the ground by March 1. Sow seeds for summer vegetables and put in transplants after the average last frost date (March 15 for Henderson County). Again, be ready to cover them in case of a late frost.

Here are some general dates for planting veggies: Starting in early March, plant Bush Beans, Cucumber, Summer Squash, and Winter Squash. Starting in Mid-March, start planting Lima Beans (bush and pole), Pole Beans, Cantaloupe, Eggplant, Pepper transplants, Summer Muskmelons, and Watermelon. In early April, plant Pumpkin and Sweet Potato slips. In mid-April, plant Southern Peas and Okra. How is that for variety?

## Flower Care:

This might sound silly, but though I love flowers, I didn't think they were worth planting ...because you can't eat them! Oh, how wrong I was. Not only are they beautiful and mesmerizing to look deeply at their details, but they bring pollinators. If you are a veggie gardener, you need your pollinator magnets planted all around your veggie garden. These visitors, that may be highly drawn to a vining South Carolina Jasmine, will stop by to enjoy your cucumber flowers. In so doing, you increase your cucumber harvest!

So let's talk flowers. How about planting Dahlia and Caladium tubers? Or Gladiolus? I bet your porch would love hanging baskets of Begonias, Impatients, Petunias, and other annuals. Just be prepared to bring them indoors as weather dictates.



Dahli



impatiens

My Crocus refused to be intimidated by the freezing temperatures and are blooming like crazy! Most bulbs are following suit. A tip on Daffodils: when they start to wear out, don't remove the Daffodil bulb foliage, as the foliage feeds the bulb; therefore, it should brown or "ripen" on the plant before removal. If Daffodil foliage interferes with neighboring plants or become unsightly, braiding the foliage is an old English tradition!

The Caladium is a warm weather plant and does best when planted after the soil warms up to an average of 70 degrees or more. which could be within the next few weeks, or as late as May. To be safe you may want to wait until Mother's Day. Even though Caladiums like warm temperatures, they prefer cool, moist, well-drained soils in the landscape. The tubers should be planted approximately one and one-half to two inches deep and from 12 to 18 inches apart in loose, organic soil.

Be sure to plant spring and summer annuals after danger of frost and freeze.

Great ground cover plants include Confederate Jasmine, Dwarf Junipers, English Ivy, Liriope, and Vinca.

Come April, it should be safe to plant most ornamentals. Select and plant Mums for fall blooms. If planted now, Mums have time to develop deep roots before winter. However, the plant's tips should be lightly trimmed back through spring and summer to prevent blooming until fall.



Mums

### Caring for your trees and shrubs:

Once your trees and shrubs start to respond with new growth, finish pruning summer-flowering trees and shrubs. Prune evergreen shrubs and spring-flowering shrubs and trees after they have bloomed. Fertilize Azaleas and Camellias after they have finished blooming. Add more organic mulch underneath Azaleas and Camellias and other shrubs as needed. Begin fertilizing Roses every 4-6 weeks until September.

When fertilizing trees be sure to apply in the area beneath the ends of the tree branches and not against the trunk.

It is recommended not to use an all-in-one weed and feed product as they rarely coincide as to when it's time to weed and when it's time to feed.

### Grass Care:

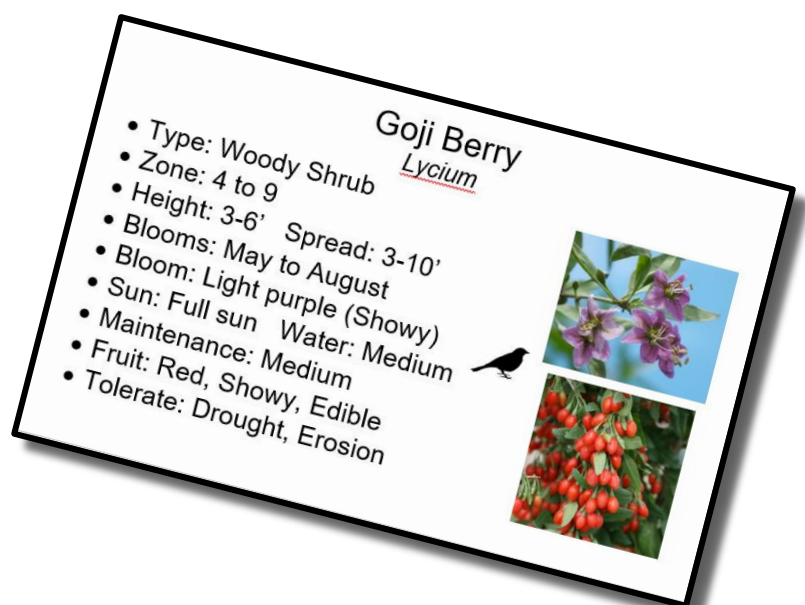
In March, while there is still the possibility of the temperatures dipping below freezing, hold off planting warm-season grasses. It may be a good idea to send in a lawn soil sample for testing, if it has been more than 2 years since you last did so.

Once your clover is big and plentiful, and you are without the advantages of cattle, it is time to mow...as soon as it is dry enough to do so. But really, mowing doesn't become a regular job until April. Did you know that there are recommended heights for your mower given the type of grass you have? Here they are:

- ✓ **Common Bermuda** 1 to 1 1/2 inches
- ✓ **Hybrid Bermuda** 1/2 to 1 inch
- ✓ **Centipede** 1 to 2 inches
- ✓ **St. Augustine** 2 to 3 inches
- ✓ **Zoysia** 1/2 to 1 1/2 inches

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The [Henderson County Master Gardener Association's Monthly Gardening Guide](#), features two amazing resource lists in the months of March and April.

**March** features a list of resources such as gardens, event, and festivals for you to explore, with their website link so you can get the information you need to attend. The resource list also offers a list of Master Gardener associations all around us, also with their



website links, so you can see what events they are sponsoring. In addition, there is a plethora of other related resources such as the Monarch Watch. That's March!

In **April**, the guide offers a list of plants, shrubs and trees that attract bees and butterflies. This resource offers great host plants you can provide for caterpillars to feed off of so they'll hopefully leave your favorite flowers and vegetable plants alone. Additionally, the resource provides a list of Texas native plants that provide nectar for butterflies.

Note that there will be plants at the April plant sale that will cater to nectar loving critters, as well as Texas native plants.

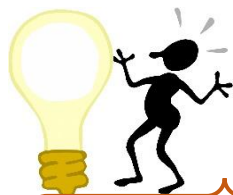
If you would like this guide, call 903-675-6130, email [hendersonCMGA@gmail.com](mailto:hendersonCMGA@gmail.com), or visit [txmg.org/hendersonmg](http://txmg.org/hendersonmg)

For more info on the **2021 Annual Plant Sale**, see page 3 of this edition of the Inside Dirt, or visit our website at <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/welcome/plant-sale/>.



# Henderson County Master Gardener Association

## ~~ Members Page ~~



*Master Gardeners,  
remember to  
record your hours!*



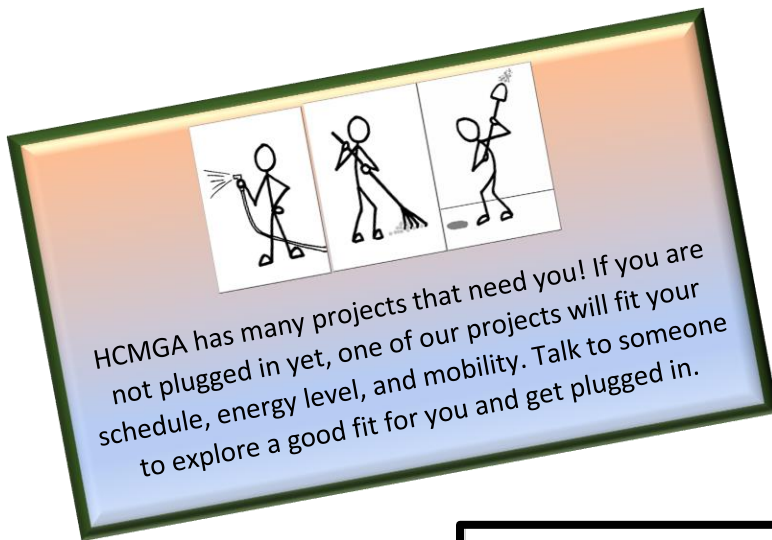
### 2021 HCMGA Meetings

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

March 17 <sup>th</sup>	August 18 <sup>th</sup>
April 21 <sup>st</sup>	September 15 <sup>th</sup>
May 19 <sup>th</sup>	October 20 <sup>th</sup>
June 23 <sup>rd</sup>	November 17 <sup>th</sup>
July 21 <sup>st</sup>	December 15 <sup>th</sup>


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

## ~~ Members Page Continued ~~



**'Seascape' Strawberry**  
*Fragaria x ananassa 'Seascape'*

- Type: Fruit, Hardy Perennial
- Zone: 4 to 9
- Height: 12" Spread: 12 to 24"
- Bloom Time: Spring to fall
- Sun: Full sun
- Soil: Evenly moist Maintenance: High
- Fruit: Showy, Edible (late spring to frost)
- Attracts: Birds Pollinators
- Tolerate: Deer



**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**.

**Greenhouse:** Members volunteers are welcome on Wednesdays from 9:00 -11:00.

**DREAM Garden:** Member volunteers are welcome on Monday mornings.

**Plant Sale:** Member Volunteers will be needed to transport plant orders from the Greenhouse to the pavilion on **Thursday (April 22)** and **Friday (April 23)**. Volunteers are also needed for customer pickup day. Notify Judy Haldeman or Cherie Tanneberger by **March 15** of the plants you are donating to the plant sale. Bring no more than 20 plants. Label each plant with common name, scientific name and color (especially if it blooms). Bring plants to the greenhouse any Wednesday from 9:00 - 11:00 am.

**Welcome new Interns:** All Interns are invited to an informal *Meet and Greet* meeting on **March 4** at the Ag Office beginning at 9:00 am.

**KAB (Keep Athens Beautiful) booth:** **March 6** at the Fairgrounds; Bob Erickson needs volunteers to staff the booth; contact Bob for more information.

# 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!



## Did you know?



The HCMGA Website has a lot of good information. We have articles on a variety of gardening topics and events our organization hosts. This newsletter (*Inside Dirt*) is but an appetizer for the depth and breadth of topics, pictures, and great practical information you will find in that treasure trove, which gets added to every week by member writers.

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



**Bronze Fennel**  
*Foeniculum vulgare*

- Type: Perennial
- Zone: 4-9
- Height: 1-2 Feet
- Bloom Time: Mid to late summer
- Bloom: Yellow
- Sun: Full
- Water: Medium
- Leaf: Dark Green or Bronze, Fragrant
- Host Plant for Eastern Black Swallowtail

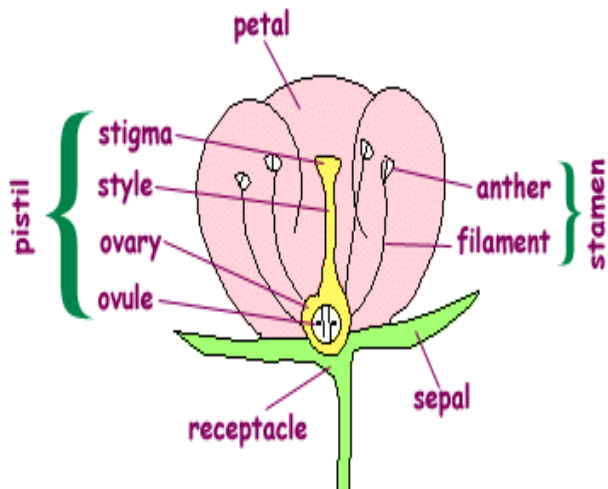


# Pollination: Up Close and Personal

Carolyne Savage, Master Gardener

I've always liked flowers. My whole life I have been told stories of how as a kid I would strip every single bloom if it was within my reach. However, it wasn't until I went through a master gardener class that I discovered a zeal for plant-life. Even though I've discovered this passion, so many of my friends don't know about it. It's not a secret, I love plants! Especially how plants make more plants. The reproduction of these species and a pollinator's role in it is a fascinating subject to study.

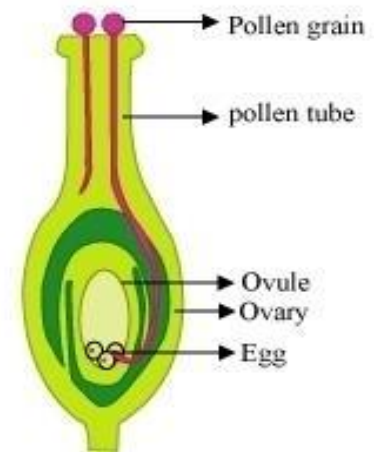
In order to understand the importance of honey bees in this natural process, one must first understand the specific role of a flower in the reproduction of plants. Basic reproductive portions of a flower are separated into male and female parts. Male parts are called **Stamens**, and are composed of an **anther** and **filament**. Anthers produce pollen which contains the genetic material of the plant, while filaments support the anthers. The female part of the flower is more complex than its counterpart, simply because there is more involved in this half of the equation. The **Carpel**, or pistil, contains the **stigma**, **style**, and **ovary**. The stigma produces a sticky substance to catch pollen and the style connects the ovary to the stigma. The ovary contains **ovules**, where seeds develop.



Pollination occurs when pollen is transferred from the anthers to the carpel of flowering plants. Once

contacted with the stigma, the pollen begins to form a path through the style to the ovary. One thing unique about the reproductive system of these organisms is the need for two pollen grains instead of one. One grain will fuse with a female cell to form the fruit, while the other will combine with another female cell and become a food source for the developing produce. This is known as double fertilization.

With all that said, it seems like nature has everything covered when it comes to the development of fruits and vegetables, so where do honey bees fit in? As it turns out, many plants are not self-fertile. They might not accept the pollen they produce, only have male or female blooms, or the two kinds of flowers develop at different times. Due to this, flora such as apples and sweet cherries are self-incompatible and need another plant for pollination services. Honey bees are an effective means for the transportation of pollen between individual plants. While visiting a flower, pollen clings to small hairs on the bee's body. Moving around a bloom causes the insect to brush against the stigma of the flower, depositing pollen. This is how cross-pollination occurs. Cross-pollinated crops tend to be healthier for the plant as greater genetic diversity leads to stronger seeds and higher disease resistance.





Flowering plants and honey bees were created to work together in perfect harmony to insure the survival of both organisms. Losing one of these systems would lead to the demise of the other. Through beekeeping efforts, people have been able to strengthen and increase honey bee colonies, helping many food crops in the process and leading to a better and brighter future for both wildlife and humans.



# Notes from Bob the Gardener:

## Potting Soil Mixes

Robert Erickson, Henderson County Master Gardener

I've made an observation recently which might be of interest to serious gardeners relating to commercial potting soil mixes. As a general rule, these mixes are excellent additions to the garden as they add important organic matter to both sandy and clay soils. As a serious composter, I've screened my raw compost every year to ensure that the compost I put in the garden is complete and doesn't include large, incomplete chunks of not completely composted material. At the compost class I took once, the instructor said, "Compost is what you want in your garden; mulch is what you want to put on top of your garden." Incompletely composted material makes great mulch.



I've recently noticed that the commercial potting soil mixes available have a high percentage of large chunks of mainly wood and bark pieces in the bag. Therefore, I decided to screen some of this commercial potting mix to see what I could get.

As the pictures show, it is an easy set up with two buckets. The larger one (14" diameter) I put the screen over and let the fine material fall into it. The smaller bucket (11 1/2" diameter) held the resulting larger chunks. The screen itself is simply 1/4" hardware cloth, which is my preferred screen. 1/2" hardware cloth would work just as well as you won't be screening a large, heavy amount at any one time. The thirty minutes I spent screening this created enough fine material to fill two 72-cell seed planting trays.

In the second picture that's on the next page, the original material is on the top half of the picture. The bottom half of the picture shows the screened material on the left and the bigger chunks on the right. Hopefully, you can see the difference.

The intent of segregating the larger pieces from the smaller is primarily to use the finer material as the seed planting soil or to use as the soil for transplanting tender seedlings into pots. The large chunks may interfere with seed germination or initial growth of seeds or the initial growth of the transplant. The big chunks don't go to waste either. Put them in your compost bin to complete composting or directly on your garden as mulch.

While it seems like a tedious task, it isn't really. I spent 30 minutes screening half a dozen scoops of raw mix and got about 3" of small, loose material and about 6 inches of larger pieces. And as I mentioned earlier, if your plants are ready to go in the ground, the material directly from the bag doesn't need to be screened.

One note to be totally honest, if you strive to be totally organic, avoid the potting mix which advertise "feeding the plants for several month." These have had fertilizer added and most of it is non-organic. However, it is usually a very small quantity. The bag I used for this lists Nitrogen at 0.1%, while phosphorous and potassium are shown to be 0.08% and 0.06% respectively. These are very small amounts but technically, you can't claim the plants to be organically grown. My intent is to add organic nutrients at the first transplant and thereafter.

As a side note, not long ago, most commercial bags of compost, potting mix, and garden soil were sold in cubic feet. Now they are sold as quarts. The conversion factor is 1 cubic foot equals 25.7 quarts. So that 64-quart bag is about 2.5 cu ft. As before, the weight of the bag depends on how wet the material inside is. Oh yes, the price hasn't gone down with the reduction of 1/2 cubic foot either.



## 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.



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Texas master gardeners



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