



INSIDE DIRT



President's Message

Yvonne Sparks, Master Gardener

Good Day to All,

I am writing this as I depart Northwest Wisconsin. It is 61 degrees outside and sunny. We attended a family reunion. While there, I visited a cousin's organic farm. She has made many additions to the farm since the first time I visited ten years ago. Her garden has zucchini, broccoli, kale, tomatoes, cabbage, raspberries, strawberries, onions, assorted herbs, and 6 apple trees in the pasture.



The front of the garden is a pollinator garden full of many plants that attract butterflies and bees and a plant new to me called Monarda (*Manarda didyma*). (Note: See the next page for the picture.) Common names are bergamot, bee balm, horsemint, oswego tea. It is a large plant with large pink blooms. Her raspberry bushes are as tall as I am. Susan cans and freezes the vegetables and fruits to eat during the cold Wisconsin winters. To control weeds, hay is put down. The growing season in this area is very



Raspberries

short, as it begins after the last frost (end of May) and ends with the first frost (middle September). Unknown to me previously, Susan is a Master Gardener in Washburn County. Her



Garden from the house

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husband worked for the Forest Service. They built a 12-foot-tall wood slat fence around the main garden to keep out the deer and other wandering animals.

On another note, our next Master Gardener class started in August. The class is a combination of person-to-person and online platforms. The online classes will be presented by some of the top experts in a variety of subjects while the person-to-person classes feature Master Gardeners and local gardening experts. The feedback from the 2020 class was positive, which convinced the state MG to offer it again. The combination method of the class should provide many educational opportunities and information.



Monardo with pink blooms (upper left)



Susan in her pollinator garden

Yvonne Sparks, President



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.

How to Say Goodbye to One so Precious: Honoring Master Gardener Nina Ellis

By Master Gardeners Who Knew Her

It was a sad day when we received notice that longtime Henderson County Master Gardener and Master Gardener Emeritus, Nina Ellis, passed back in July. She was a knowledgeable gardener who loved sharing her love of Texas natives and perennials. In this article, several Master Gardeners share their memories of Nina.



Dodie Tucker (now living in Crandall, TX):

Over the years Nina and I exchanged many plants. My favorites are the White Queen and Sangria crinums. When the blooming time for the shared plants arrived, the first of us to get a bloom would call the other! I was amazed to see that on the day that Nina passed, the White Queen crinum was blooming when its normal bloom time has been in spring and fall. Many good memories.



Cecilia Bowles (now living in Streetman, TX):

I don't know what year Nina became a Master Gardener, but I know that during my intern year, 2005, she was already a well-respected, knowledgeable and kind plant lady. One of the highlights that I remember from my Master Gardener internship was the field trip to Nina's rural home and gardens. She so impressed me with her intimate relationship to nature in her

own surroundings, explaining how she would take a morning walk throughout her gardens (or yard), noting any changes in her flora and fauna. In my busy suburban life that seemed like a utopian dream. However, I always kept that vision in the back of my mind and I am grateful to say that today, I make that a morning ritual of my own. What a wonderful way to bring peace and wonder into your life!

I also first heard of the Native Plant Society of Texas from Nina and remember that she was an active member, going to the headquarters in Nacogdoches, to their gardens and plant sales. She also encouraged all of us to learn the Latin names of plants, which at the time I thought was just too difficult. Now that I am doing more plant ID of native grasses (which you can't always easily ID by looking, as you can with wildflowers or trees), I am learning the value of botanical nomenclature, and at least reading the Latin names!

Nina impressed me as someone for whom age was just a number. She certainly never believed you were too old to learn or try something new! What a great legacy she leaves to everyone who knew her!



Nancy Martin: I was the last one to be in charge of the plant sale during our Spring Conference. (The next plant sale was at the court house.) It was indoors and I was so scared that I would not be able to carry it off. Nina (and Dodie) was

instrumental in its success. Nina helped me determine prices, labeling and kept encouraging me. We ended up selling every single plant. A group of us visited her home. She gave us a tour with information on all her native plants. What amazed me is that she had a bush that reached up to the roof of her house. It was a gardenia bush. I had never seen one that large. Nina said that her husband had given it to her for one of their anniversaries.



Cherie Tanneberger: My memories of Nina begin in my 2012 Intern year. My first volunteer hours were at the Master Gardener booth at the Keep Athens Beautiful Home and Garden Show when it was still held in the Cain Center in Athens. I was amazed that anyone knew every common AND scientific name of every plant any booth visitor asked about.

For a very long time I was intimidated by Nina. I knew so little while she was a mine of plant information. I believed I would never learn enough to be measure up as a Master Gardener in her eyes. How wrong I was to be intimidated. Once Nina saw that I was a willing volunteer for HCMGA, she began to share her knowledge of plants and invited me and others to visit her home garden. What a treat! I did not need to be a perfect gardener, just an enthusiastic one.

Over time, we exchanged a number emails - usually involving a photo I had sent her asking for identification and care information. Following is a small part of that email exchange. Due to space considerations, I've included only Nina's responses to me. She was a very special lady.

Date: April 9, 2018 at 4:52:48 PM CDT: *I am going out on a limb and say it is **Camassia Scilloides**. Someone gave me some bulbs several years ago. They didn't know what they were. They are blooming now. Look just like your pictures except not nearly so tall, if that is a 4-foot fence in the background. Nina*

Date: Apr 24, 2020, at 1:19 PM CDT: ***Murrayanus penstemon**. An East Texas native and quite hard to come by. **Treasure it!!** I have never seen the plants for sale commercially. I have the best success with harvesting seeds. Haven't had any viable seeds the last couple of years as they don't seem to like an overabundance of rainfall. Nina* (Trying to follow Nina's example, I shared my "treasure" with two other Master Gardeners.)

Date: March 25, 2021 at 10:05:14 AM CDT: *Always happy to hear from*



*you! I have been well despite coping with 8.5" snow and no power. Came thru but the garden not so much. Playing the waiting game to see what comes back to life. **That PLANT** (I had sent a photo asked if she identify it). A number of years ago we had a sale at the Senior Center in Athens. A lady (not an MG) brought those plants to the sale and had labeled them "dusty Miller". I knew they were not! A heated argument followed. This morning I cannot recall the proper name. They are a real nuisance. I finally got rid of them but they kept coming back like crazy. I've had my vaccines also. I am really looking forward to the HCMG plant list. Have been really busy selling my son's house but am nearly to closing. I dearly hope that after your sale, we can manage some time together to talk plants.*



Date: April 7, 2021 at 8:54:29 AM CDT: *Sorry I missed your call yesterday, was visiting with Shirley and Peggy, both not doing well, if you're not able to work in your garden that is the epitome of "not doing well". Judy answered my plant request and said she would send me a link to the sale. I believe she said on Thursday. I will order correctly on Friday so you can ignore the first order. Just thought I'd get in line for the NATIVES. Thanks for the offer to deliver the plants but since I got a new car and do not fear being stranded on the road, I thought I would pick up the plants and take the opportunity to visit. Hope to see you and Judy then. Nina*

Date: April 9, 2021 at 1:04:23 PM CDT: *My order for the plant sale is #31. Your site worked great, I had no problems and got my confirmation almost immediately. Thanks for the offer of help, but I made out fine. Are you familiar with white-veined pipevine? It is the host plant for the pipevine swallow tail butterfly. It is only 4-6 inches high and makes a great ground cover. I would like to share mine with you and Judy so in a year or two you can have it in the sale.*

(Regrettably, Judy Haldeman and I were not able to plan a visit to receive the pipevine Nina was saving for us.)



Date: April 27, 2021 at 7:43:05 AM CDT: *They (Star of Bethlehem) appeared in my garden several years ago and have not overly multiplied. I do not find my dog eating them. I see no reason to pot them up. It was lovely seeing the MG and visiting with them. The plants are great! When Sharon took me to the green house, I saw the annuals and house plants that didn't sell. That was my experience too. Concentrate on the plants that are perennials as the box stores don't sell them as a rule.*



John Maloch: It was raining the morning I met Nina. We sat in her kitchen drinking coffee and talking as we waited for the rain to let up. In addition to talking about plants, she shared how she and her husband had ended up living there in northern Anderson County and her love of the area.

Later, we put on our jackets and stepped out into the still dripping November morning. As we walked around her property, we would stop and talk about the various plants growing there. I remember her lamenting about the poor state

of her vegetable garden, and as all of us do, describing how much better it would be next year. I went away that day with several pots containing new plants and the promise of a Pride of Barbados that she had "found growing in a ditch."

Over the years, Nina would contact me when she had some new plants she thought I might enjoy. She would also set aside plants for me at the Anderson County Master Gardener plant sale. It was always a good day when we could reconnect.

While the Pride of Barbados did not recover from last winter's cold snap, most of the others did well. My favorite, a Buckeye tree she gave me at that first meeting, grows near the lake where I can see it from my swing when I'm being lazy on those long summer evenings. It reminds me of a good person and a cool November morning.



Henderson County Master Gardeners Presents:

Rainwater Harvesting Catchment Installation Class

The Henderson County Master Gardener Association (HCMGA) will be installing a 500-gallon rainwater catchment system at the Harvest Garden, next to their storage building at the Henderson County Fair Park Complex. The public is invited to observe and learn about the benefits of rainwater harvesting. A short class will be held to describe what rainwater harvesting is and its benefits. A handout will be available with a list of resources for people to find more information.



Saturday, September 11, 2012

9:00am → Completion of installation

May be as long as four hours

Bring water to drink, a folding camp chair to sit in and wear a hat for shade

PUBLIC INVITED

HCMGA Harvest Garden @ the Henderson County Fair Park Complex

3356 State Highway 31 E, Athens, TX 75751

The Harvest Garden is located ¼ mile east and south of the Complex. It is approximately 1/10 of a mile due south of the Complex's parking lot.

IMPORTANT PARKING NOTE: The Texas Palomino Exhibitors Association will be having an event in the Complex, so they may be collecting parking fees. Tell them that you are attending a class at the Harvest Garden and they will let you through without paying.



The **Henderson County Master Gardener Association's Monthly Gardening Guide**, features monthly gardening tasks, tips, and amazing resource lists. Each month features some special article important to successful gardening, or planning for the migration of butterflies, or tips for pruning plants like roses or hydrangeas. All guidance is specific to East Texas, and every month has a page for making notes.

As an example, the month of **May** features a great article on effective watering, while **June** gives you details on HCMGA projects. Both months are filled with a ton of helpful information in the **Tips and Tricks** section.

If you would like this guide, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com, or visit txmg.org/hendersonmg



The Scourge of the Squash Bug

Susan Skommesa, Henderson County Master Gardener



Squash bug with freshly laid eggs. The closer to hatching the eggs get the bronzer in color they become.

Believe it or not, there is a difference between a bug and an insect.¹ A bug is a subset of the insect world. True bugs (*Hemiptera*) have piercing sucking mouth parts. Some are predators and some feed off of plants. The squash bug (*Anasa tristis*) is one such bug that feeds off of plants. This pervasive pest uses its straw-like sucking mouth parts to tap directly into the plant's vessels, where the plant takes up water and nutrients from the soil and from photosynthesis. The goodies found in the plant's vessels are normally moved around the plant to produce new leaves, vine growth, and fruit. However, when the squash bug population increases, and eats deeply of these nutrients, the result can be a

great deal of damage to the plant and its fruit. The stress may even kill the plant.

At first, the noticeable damage is yellowing and then graying of leaves, as well as spots on the leaves and stems. As feeding on the plant continues, these spots or lesions grow in size. In addition, the edges of the leaves dry out as the squash bugs deprive the leaves of sufficient water. The next stage of stress is sudden wilt.² One day the plant looks healthy and the next day the plant is severely wilted. This is due to the heavy feeding and probing of the bug into the tissue where water flow is disrupted.³

A squash bug infestation is easy to spot, not only by the condition of the plant, but in the visibility of the bugs themselves. They lay their eggs on the underside of leaves and roam all over the base, stem and leaves of the plant. They are active, and they move fast when threatened.

The squash bug's preferred dining hosts are the cucurbits, with favor bestowed upon the straight and crook neck yellow squash, Zucchini and pumpkin.² Less attractive to a squash bug, though certainly not immune, are winter squash, melons and cucumber.

You may wonder how squash bugs find your squash. Cucurbitacin are a class of biochemical compounds that some plants produce to defend against herbivores, or animals that eat plants. These compounds are that which draw the squash bug. In addition, adult squash bugs over-winter in organic debris, waiting on the warm weather and the new plants they bring.

Squash bugs are difficult to treat. Professor Diane Alston, an entomologist and pest management specialist at Utah State University, who heads the biology department, recommends an integrated approach.⁴ She suggests that an important strategy in the fight against the squash bug begins with clearing the garden of plant debris as it dies and in the fall after all plants are spent.

Rotten leaves on the ground make an ideal hangout for the adult bugs. After the growing season, they over-winter as adults in plant debris, under piles of leaf litter, firewood, boards, and other protected sites.^{3,4} Cleaning up old infested squash vines during and after season is very important. If you compost the old vines, be sure your compost reaches sufficient temperatures to destroy the squash bugs. Otherwise, they will survive winter and be ready for your garden in the spring as you refresh your garden with the compost. It is much safer to dispose of the old vines as you would weeds, thus hopefully reducing the number of squash bugs awaiting spring. If an adult population survives winter in your garden, they will have an early start laying eggs right after the threat of frost is over.



Besides prevention, there are other actions that can help reduce the impact of squash bugs, and help keep their population down. First, plant as early as possible so that the plants are larger and more resilient to damage. Egg removal is an important strategy. Look on the underside of leaves, along a vein, for the egg clusters. I've seen it recommended that you can use duct tape to remove the eggs. I smash them with my garden gloves on. In the nymph stage, the newly hatched squash bugs tend to hang out together, again, making it pretty easy to smooch them. The adults are faster, take a bit more courage to squash since they crunch, but can also be disposed of mechanically. Large farms practice crop rotation. In so doing, it's important to keep in mind all plants in the cucurbit's family need to be rotated away from the previous season's cucurbit locations. Raised beds can also be rotated, but will

have little effect in hiding your summer squash from these annoying creatures.

There are some parasitic insects that can be of assistance. Tachinid flies lay their eggs in between the armor of the head and body. Once hatched the fly larva tunnel down into the body of the squash bug killing it.

Due to its armor. There are no effective horticultural oils that can suffocate the adults. However, Horticultural oil, which is a petroleum mineral oil can suffocate eggs, and the organic product Pyrethrin can destroy nymphs.

In summary, the best control is prevention through the active regiment of removing plant debris throughout the season, as well as a weekly session of squash bug squishing.

References:

1. <https://askabiologist.asu.edu/explore/true-bugs>
2. <https://extension.usu.edu/pests/research/squash-bugs>
3. https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension_curall/964/
4. <https://texasinsects.tamu.edu/squash-bug/>

This is one of the many, many flowers on my **Adam's Needle**, *Yucca filamentosa*. Absolutely stunning after a rainfall, as the droplets create a sense of crystal trim. Since the flowers hang down like bells up a sturdy stem, this picture is actually upside down, and was taken from underneath. Due to the spikey leaves of the plant, it is hard to see inside the bell-shaped flower. The blossoms are almost closed during the day, yet open at night.

~ Susan Skomma, Master Gardener



Library Series Has Returned!

The 2nd Tuesday of the month at 5:30 pm
at the *Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library* 121 S. Prairieville St. Athens

September 14th "Pollinators and the Garden" Presentation by Henderson County Master Gardener Janelle Cole.

October 12th Henderson County Master Gardener Jeanne Brown will talk about popular varieties of tomatoes and peppers to begin planning for spring gardens.

Wow, I didn't

Did you know that the 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/free-horticultural-presentations/>

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!

Chickens + Organic Materials = Compost

I love it when one garden task serves 5 purposes. I'm raking areas in the yard as thatch is starting to build up. (1) Not only is it great for the grass, but all that raked-up goodness goes into my (2) compost pile. I'll add table scraps and other organic matter as it becomes available in the course of life. All the (3) microbes and goodies in the leaves and grass clippings are a treat for my chickens, who break everything down as they scratch and peck thru the pile. They will break down and scatter this pile over the course of 2 weeks. After they decimate it, I'll wet the pile and rebuild it. Then they'll break it down again. We'll do this dance for 3 months. The end result is (4) rich organic soil that I use in my gardens. I made/use a hand sifter to sift out the big pieces that go back into the compost pile. (5) Last but not least, I got my workout in for the day.

~ Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener



Calendar of Events



Events Around Town

Here are some websites I usually comb through to find events for this section on **Events Around Town**. Feel free to visit these websites to see if there is something going on. I've highlighted a few events that I found on some of the site's events calendars.

- ✓ **Henderson County Master Gardener Association:** <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/>
 - ***Class for the Public*** 9/11/21 @ 9am “**Rainwater Catchment Installation Class**” The **Henderson County Master Gardener Association** (HCMGA) will be installing a 500-gallon rainwater catchment system at the **Harvest Garden**, next to their storage building at the **Henderson County Fair Park Complex**. The public is invited to observe and learn about the benefits of rainwater harvesting. A short class will be held to describe what rainwater harvesting is and its benefits. A handout will be available with a list of resources for people to find more information.
 - ***Library Series*** 9/14/21 @ 5:30Pm “**Pollinators and the Garden**” Presentation by Henderson County Master Gardener Janelle Cole.
 - ***Library Series*** 10/12/21 @ 5:30Pm **Henderson County Master Gardener Jeanne Brown** will talk about popular varieties of tomatoes and peppers to begin planning for spring gardens
- ✓ **East Texas Arboretum and Botanical Society:** <http://www.easttexasarboretum.org/>
 - ***Plant Sale*** 9/18/21 @ 08:00 - 15:00
- ✓ **Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Gardens:** <https://www.dallasarboretum.org/>
 - ***Special Tips and Presentations on Seasonal Gardening*** Every Friday 11am – 12pm. **Fee:** Price of Admission. Presented by the Dallas County Master Gardeners and the Dallas Arboretum Horticulture Staff. Enjoy special tips and presentations on gardening.
 - **August 20** Plant Propagation
 - **August 27** Spring Flowering Bulbs – Time to Start Planning
 - **September 3** Walking tour of the garden: Meet in the A Tasteful Place Garden
 - **September 10** Grow North Texas discusses Sustainable Food Systems
 - **September 24** Insects in your garden with Judy Meagher, Dallas County Master Gardener and North Texas Master Naturalist
 - **October 1** Texas Bees in your garden with Ryan Giescke
 - **October 8** Attracting butterflies to your garden with Janet Smith
 - **October 15** Dallas Gourd Patch Annual Show
 - **October 22** Bugs in your compost with Lauren Clarke
 - **October 29** Wicked plants and insects with Kevin Burns
- ✓ **Texas Parks and Wildlife:** <https://tpwd.texas.gov/>

- ✓ **Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center:** <https://www.wildflower.org/>
 - ***Native Plants I*** 9/11/21 @ 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm. **Fee:** \$45.00. Dig deeper into the world of native plant ID and knowledge
 - ***Native Plants II*** 9/11/21 18 @ 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm. **Fee:** \$45.00. Dig deeper into the world of Texas flora
 - ***Fall Native Plant Sale*** 9/24/21 Through 9/26/21 and every weekend in October
- ✓ **Smith County Master Gardeners:** <https://txmg.org/smith/coming-events/>
 - ***First Tuesday in the Garden:*** 9/7/21 @ 12pm – 1pm [Tyler Rose Garden](#), 420 Rose Park Drive Tyler, TX 75702 “Join us at Noon on the patio in the IDEA Garden the first Tuesday in **September, October and November** for our Fall Gardening series of programs. Seating is limited, so you may want to bring a lawn chair. The lectures run about 30 to 40 minutes, followed by a question-and-answer session. All lectures begin at noon.”
- ✓ **Kaufman County Master Gardener Association:** <https://www.kcmga.org/events-4/>
- ✓ **Free State Master Gardeners Association of Van Zandt County:** <https://txmg.org/freestatemastergardeners/>
- ✓ **New to the list:** **Pineywoods Native Plant Center:** <http://sfagardens.sfasu.edu> **Address:** 2900 Raguet St. Nacogdoches TX 75961. Check out all the adventures to be had.



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/>

Have you seen our videos on Facebook? Go check them out at
<https://www.facebook.com/Hcmastergardener>

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.

Henderson County Master Gardener Association

~ Members Page ~

2021 HCMGA Meetings

3rd Wednesday of the month

New Time & Location

10:00am @ St. Edwards Catholic Church
1310 S. Palestine St. Athens TX

September 15th

October 20th

November 17th

December 15th



*Master Gardeners,
remember to
record your hours!*



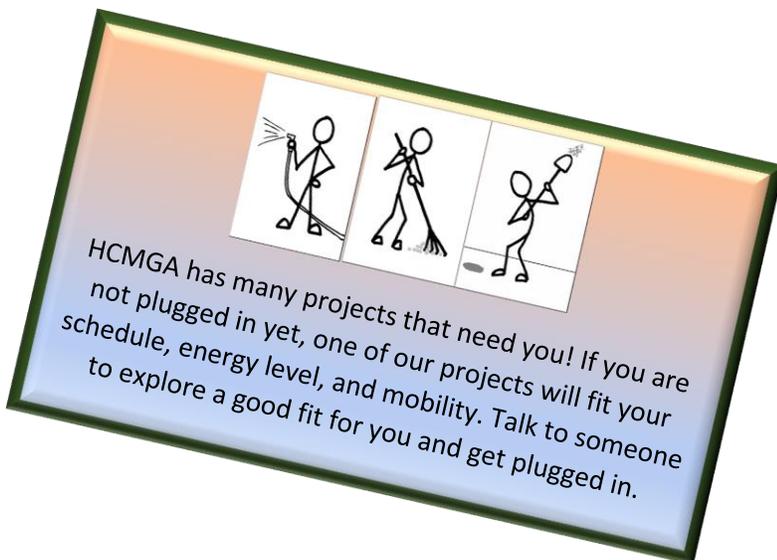
Member and Intern Requirements: Members need 12 hours of **volunteer service**, 6 hours of **continuing education**, and attendance at 5 **meetings**. Interns need 50 hours of **volunteer service**.

Greenhouse: Work days on hold. Watch for notification.

DREAM Garden: Member volunteers are welcome on Mondays 9am-12pm.

Harvest Garden: Member volunteers are welcome on Tuesdays 8am – 11am.

Inside Dirt: Member volunteers are welcome to contribute and send in articles, pictures, cartoons, gardening games, kid resources and upcoming events, to Susan Skomma at susanloves1life@gmail.com.



#HerbMania – Onion Chives

Deb Pascoe, Master Gardener Intern

Onion Chive (*Allium schoenoprasum*) - that wonderful little condiment of green tubes that tastes like a mild onion – is a great herb to grow in fall. Chives are related to garlic, onions, leeks, scallions, and shallots.



Chives can be started from seeds or by division. Chives multiply by producing additional bulbs underneath the soil, so it is likely that somebody with an established patch will be happy to share! They like rich well-drained soil. They love a sunny spot but can tolerate part-sun.

Chives are cold hardy - a nice addition to a perennial garden in zone 8. The tops will die back in winter, but don't worry. When spring comes and the weather begins to warm, you will see their little heads poking up, reaching for the sun and looking forward to summer.

Apids and Japanese beetles don't like chives, but bees love their flowers. If allowed to flower (or "bolt" in gardenspeak), seeds that fall on fertile ground may also produce more for you.

To harvest chives, use kitchen scissors and cut them off about 3 inches above the ground. Even the flowers are edible.

Compound Chive and Garlic Butter

Compound butter is simply butter that has been softened, had something added to it, and resolidified. This recipe creates a nice one that can be used on steak, fish, chicken, scallops, in potatoes or rice, or just slathered on a nice crusty slice of bread.

- 1 Cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter
- 1/3 cup chives, snipped into small pieces
- ½ tsp kosher salt
- 2 purple chive flowers, (optional, but a beautiful addition of you have them)
- 1 clove finely minced garlic

Set the butter out and allow it to soften until workable. Do not get in a hurry and soften in the microwave. This is an opportunity to practice patience!

- Rinse and thoroughly dry chives. Snip into small pieces.
- Remove the delicate flower petals by hand.
- Finely mince one clove of garlic.
- Place all ingredients into a mixing bowl and use a spatula to combine.
- Place mixture onto parchment paper. Fold the parchment paper over the mixture, creating a tube shape around the roll of butter. Twist ends of the paper tube tightly.
- Wrap the tube in plastic wrap and place into refrigerator to re-solidify.

September & October Gardening Tips

By Susan Skomma, Master Gardener

In General:



Relief from the heat arrives in September as fall makes its entrance. The cool weather facilitates preparation for spring as bulbs are bought, wildflowers are sown and new shrubs and trees are planted or transplanted. For most of us with major projects sitting untouched over the last few months (and who doesn't have one), we'll find ourselves back out there. The reward comes with sitting on the porch and basking in the fruit of our hard work, which is once again pleasurable.

What's on deck for you once the weather cools? Send me a sketch of what you are working on and include photos if you can. I'm sure others will love you ideas and may find they work for them. Send submissions to the editor, Susan Skomma, at susanloves1life@gmail.com.

veggies and herbs

You may not be prepared to think about planting fall vegetable as you pickle your 50 pounds of cucumbers and make sauce out of your abundant harvest of tomatoes. It is however, time to do so, for the window will soon draw to a close.

But, do not despair! For it certainly is not too late to plant that fall garden, especially using transplants. Cool-weather loving vegetables are plentiful: beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, collard, English peas, garlic, kale, lettuce, mustard, parsley, radishes, spinach, Swiss chard, and turnips. **SEPTEMBER 20th** is the optimum last day to transplant veggies like broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and cauliflower, many salad makings can continue to be sown thru **OCTOBER**. Consider beets, collards, garlic, kale, lettuce, mustard, radishes, spinach and swiss chard.



Even though the weather is cooling, we still have plenty of heat in the middle of the day. Take good care of tender transplants and seedings. You will probably need to water transplants daily and seeds may need extra help germinating. Thought the soil is warm enough, the surface dries out easily. Here is an experiment you may want to try to help seeds germinate in the Texas heat. Before seeding, watering the soil very well. Place the seeds on the wet soil and cover with dry soil to the proper depth. Cover the soil with boards or wet burlap to keep the soil from crusting over. Check it every day and remove the cover as soon as the germinated plants appear. Keep the tender shoots well-watered, and consider draping shade cloth until the plants are well developed. This tip also works for tiny or shallow-planted seeds like

carrots, lettuce, and radishes, which tend to get blown away in the wind or move around while being watered.



OCTOBER is a good time to separate perennial herbs. Herbs in this category are Catnip, Chives, Lavender, Lemon Verbena, Marjoram, Mint, Oregano, Rosemary, Sage, Salad Burnet, Sorrel, Texas Tarragon (Mexican Mint Marigold), Thyme, Yarrow. Remember, when harvesting herbs, don't cut more than 1/3 of the plant at a time. The best time to harvest is mid-morning and just before the plants flower. You can use any of these spices fresh. You can also dry them for storage and all year use.

For more specifics about herbs see the **SEPTEMBER** article in the **Henderson County Master Gardener Association Monthly Gardening Guide**. If you do not have this guide, call the **Henderson County Extension Office** at (903) 675-6130. For more information about the guide, see page 6 of our newsletter, or visit our website at txmq.org/hendersonmq, and scroll to the bottom of the opening page for the details.

Flowers for Beauty, Cutting, and Pollinators

On cooler mornings, the motivation returns to dig, divide and transplant the fading oxblood and spider lily bulbs. Similarly, divide and transplant any overcrowded bearded irises, daisies, daylilies, ground covers, liriopes, peonies, and phloxes. Henderson County Master Gardeners, don't forget to set some of these aside for the **2022 Plant Sale** next spring.

I just got my bulb magazine in the mail. Right on time. Plant spring bulbs like daffodils, crocus, Dutch iris, hyacinth, and narcissus. Tulip and Dutch hyacinths bulbs should be selected now so they can be stored in the refrigerator for 45-60 days prior to planting in December and early January. Don't freeze the bulbs or remove them from the refrigerator until it's time to plant them. Also, don't store your bulbs next to fruit as the ethylene gas emitted from the fruit will damage the bulbs.



Round out your gardens with cool-weather and sun loving annuals like pansies and violas. Pansies are beautiful with spring bulbs. The Crystal Bowl, Imperial and Universal series, all tolerate the heat well and flower longer in the spring. Other great cool-season flowers are English daisies, flowering cabbage, pinks, poppies, and snapdragons.

Sow wildflowers like bluebonnets, cornflower, larkspur, phlox, and poppies.

Trees and Shrubs

Through **SEPTEMBER**, keep watering your trees and shrubs as needed. However, transplanting and planting new trees and shrubs in **OCTOBER** gives their roots months to grow and become well established before new growth begins in the spring and summer heat and drought arrives.

Lawn and Ground Cover

SEPTEMBER: If you have been fertilizing your grass, you probably began fertilizing in June, after you had several good mows. From there the rule of thumb is, every six weeks up until September, when the last application of fertilizer is applied. Well, it's September. Try to fertilize right before a rain, or be certain to water very well afterwards. This is important so that you don't burn your lawn. Don't fertilizer by hand as the results will be uneven and can damage the grass.

OCTOBER: If you choose to over-seed with Ryegrass, now is the perfect time. Use a spreader to evenly distribute seeds. Apply 1/2 of the seeds walking east to west and the other 1/2 north to south. Use 5 to 10 lbs. per 1000 square feet. Water the seeds lightly every day for 7 to 10 days. Do not mow until the Ryegrass seed germinates and you can see green blades.

Happy, productive, and safe Gardening!



Mullein

Shannon Greene, Master Gardener



Mullein is considered an invasive weed and no wonder it's seed can last for 125 years. But after reading this article it may elbow its decorative, sage-colored, furry way into your garden.

Mullein is not a spice nor a source of food, but for breathing problems it is a heavy-weight medicinal herb. This herb is in the Scrophulariaceae family. This plant can play a strong role in respiratory health, affecting the lungs for stubborn congestion and cough. Mullein affects the upper and lower respiratory systems. Both the leaves, roots, and fully bloomed flowers have analgesic, antibacterial, antiviral, astringent, demulcent, diuretic, expectorant properties and more - but these are the ones that work for the lungs. Mullein works by adding a lubricant to stuck mucus, and soothes a tickle cough by making the lung's cilia function correctly. Mullein will relax restrictive tissue in the throat and lung which relieves asthma and Purace.

As I stated earlier, growing Mullein is effortless. It is happy in gravelly, sandy, dry soil with minimal water, and full sun. The plant grows up to 4+ feet tall in a single vertical stem. The first year you'll have a ground level rosette of furry, soft, blue-green, thick leaves. The second year it grows a center shoot that produces round petals of yellow flowers at the top. The whole

plant, roots, leaves, and fully bloomed flower can be used. The seeds however, are toxic to humans and animals but birds love the seeds. (I don't know why the birds aren't affected). If you use the roots make sure other plants are around.

The best form for the respiratory system is a cup of hot tea.

Dry the leaves and flowers. The leaves are thick so extra drying time is required. Also, the hairs on the leaves can irritate the throat so extra filtering is needed before drinking. Two teaspoons per cup, steep for 10 minutes covered, 1-3 cups per day. The steam from the tea promotes sinus decongestion. The mild sedative can assist with a good night sleep. As always even with a mild sedative, driving is not recommended.

Here is some additional information about Mullein.

Mullein is useful for earaches and for replenishing cartilage in joints.

Mullein stalks have been dipped in wax and used as torches for miners, and ancient Greek games; notably the torches they carried into the original Olympic flame.

A funny for our region and these covid times is the other name used for Mullein, is Cowboy toilet paper.

I'll write more in coming articles about Breathe Easier Herbs.

Fabulous Fall Plants

What to Plant with Ornamental Grasses (Or Other Style Gardens)

Lydia Holley, Master Gardener



Fall has long been my favorite time of year. It's a breath of fresh, cool air after a hot, sweltering summer. Days are pleasant, nights are magical. And the ornamental grasses begin to bloom with plumes so spectacular and enticing, you may wish to have an entire garden filled with them and other plants which bloom in fall. If you are looking for autumn-blooming plants, try these:

Asters show off in fall, and many brag about their beauty. Some are annuals, others may return, but either way, they are not to be missed. Asters do well in containers, formal gardens, cottage gardens, and mixed with ornamental grasses. Butterflies appreciate them, too.

Angel's trumpet (*Brugmansia*) blooms hang, floating

in the breeze, releasing their heavenly scent. They may look a bit out of place mixed into a garden filled with ornamental grasses, but are worth finding a prominent place where you can appreciate their tropical flair.

The soft blooms of Gregg's mistflower (*Conoclinium greggii*) is known for attracting migrating butterflies. It loves to spread, so it mixes well in cottage-style gardens and those with ornamental grasses.

Firebush (*Hamelia patens*) entices hummingbirds to take one last meal before heading south. They may grow too tall to be placed with ornamental grasses. They are also very late in the spring to emerge green, so they should not be considered a focal point plant. The back of a border in a cottage-style garden is the perfect place for them to be grown.

A plant I have in my garden which I adore (and hate at the same time) is Tall Blazing Star (*Liatris aspera*). Growing taller and looking more dramatic than most of the other liatris I have planted, this one plant sports numerous stems with cotton-ball-sized powder-puff blooms. Tall Blazing Star blooms later than other liatris, so it works well in an autumn-focused garden, whether the garden is



Gregg's Mist flower

formal, cottage, or filled with ornamental grasses. Why do I hate it at times? The blooms are so full, some of the stems fall to the ground, which bothers me but not the bees which visit.

Spider lilies (*Lycoris*) pop open, with delicate features that look more like a work of art than a common bulb. They look perfect placed in the front of a garden with ornamental grasses, in a more traditional setting, or mixed throughout a cottage garden.

The dreamy lavender of a blooming Russian sage (*Salvia yangii*, previously known as *Perovskia atriplicifolia*) can be mixed into many different types of gardens. They look beautiful paired with ornamental grasses.

Other plants that mix well with ornamental grasses which are not necessarily considered fall plantings, but that continue to bloom throughout the fall, are: , Turk's Cap (*Malvaviscus*), Rock Rose (*Pavonia*), Sages, and Sedums.



Editor's Note:

We end this edition, and our tribute to Nina Ellis, with a clip from the 2011 *Inside Dirt*, advertising a presentation Nina made on creating your own Butterfly Garden. It includes 3 wonderful pictures of Nina in action. If you never had the pleasure of knowing her, we hope you loved getting to know about her.



Creating Your Own Butterfly Garden By Nina Ellis, HCMG

Nina Ellis, Henderson County Master Gardener of the Year 2010

Nina Ellis, in her extensive gardening experience has learned it is necessary to have native plants and sustainable plants in your butterfly gardens. She lives east of Montalba on the place they bought in the 1970's, she waters her yard from a gravity fed spring, so she has to be frugal with her water supply. She has worked with the Lady Bird Johnson Wild Flower Center and the SFA Native Plant Center, and knows how important native plants and sustainable plants are to a successful butterfly garden. Sustainable gardening plants works in harmony with nature. Most are easy and fun and will save you time in the long run. Sustainable gardening includes: organic gardening, native plants, and well adapted plants. She is looking for host plants, that will be available for butterflies to lay their eggs on during the entire year, and feed the caterpillars. And nectar plants that will have blooms from early spring until late fall, to feed the butterflies during the entire year.



Nina Ellis



In the picture to the left, Nina is in the green shirt making the presentation. Below, you can see her at the front of the room and her butterfly PowerPoint presentation on the screen. Notice the full room, as she shares her wealth of knowledge.



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.

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