

# Henderson County Master Gardeners Association

January – February 2022



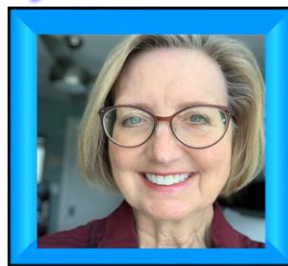
## INSIDE DIRT THIS ISSUE

### President's Message

Sara Drummond, Master Gardener

Happy 2022 to you!

(Exuberant *fanfare!*  
And now....*drum roll, please!*)



We are very pleased to announce there are nine newly certified Master Gardeners in Henderson County Master Gardener Association (HCMGA).

- Patricia Calderon
- Michelle Crocker
- Beverly Crow
- Elizabeth Crowe
- Alex Madison
- Debra Pascoe
- Anne Reese
- Sue Shoemaker
- Patti Wilson

This energetic group served as Interns in 2021. They all completed the minimum 50+ hour commitment of volunteer service. In fact, a number of them contributed many more hours than that. And many have already moved into various leadership positions for 2022. What a fantastic bunch they are!

We are also excited to welcome (*another drum roll, please!*) our Interns for 2022!

- Lisa Alexander
- Nancy Bruce
- Vicky Domingue
- Felisha Gilliam
- Melissa Henson
- Nancy Hubbard
- Ron Jackson
- Sue Krider
- Kelly McDowell
- Cathy Reagan
- Kathryn Stevens



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**“One kind word can warm three winter months ~ Japanese Proverb**

They all completed the intense and rigorous Texas Master Gardener Training course in the fall of 2021. They are now officially interns! In exchange for the 50+ hours of training they received from Texas A&M AgriLife in 2021, they will now contribute 50+ hours of volunteer service in 2022. Working through HCMGA, the interns will help the organization provide horticultural-related information to the community. We look forward to getting to know each of our interns better as we work alongside them for the benefit of Henderson County.

For most of us, the closing of one year and the start of a new year is a great time to take stock of where we are and prepare to get ourselves where we'd like to be in the coming months. It's definitely that way for Henderson County Master Gardener Association. As the year was drawing to a close, committees and individuals were reviewing the activities of 2021 and formulating plans for 2022.

Now, at the start of this new year, the planning has stepped up a notch and we're springing into action. Presentations, hands-on demonstrations and consultations to be given, newspaper articles to be written, information booths to be staffed, plants to be nurtured for our sale, and much, much more.

You can learn more about our upcoming events:

- ✓ in this issue of *Inside Dirt*,
- ✓ on our Facebook page, [Henderson County Master Gardener - Home | Facebook](#)
- ✓ at our website [Henderson County Master Gardener Association – Texas AgriLife Extension Service \(txmg.org\)](#)
- ✓ from our newspaper articles in *Athens Review*,
- ✓ and through announcements delivered to your inbox. (To sign up for our emails contact us at: [hendersonCMGA@gmail.com](mailto:hendersonCMGA@gmail.com))

I encourage you to check out all those places.

We at HCMGA are passionate about gardening *and* helping *you* get the information you need for your garden. May all your gardens flourish in 2022!

*Sara*



## HCMGA Projects

- **Children's Garden:** HCMGA is available for consultation on **school or teaching gardens**.
- **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**.
- **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.
- **Inside Dirt:** The mission of HCMGA newsletter, *Inside Dirt*, is to educate the community on gardening topics. In this free newsletter, we feature educational articles, events the public can attend, and an inside look as to what it means to be a Master Gardener. Past issues are kept on file on our website at: <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/re-sources/inside-dirt/>
- **Weekly Newspaper Articles:** HCMGA contributes gardening articles to local newspapers. You can find back articles on our website at: <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg>

# Gardens Should Fit Your Lifestyle

Lydia Holley, Master Gardener



You may have heard the old saying that gardens are never finished. And perhaps they never should be. As your lifestyle changes, so should your garden. Now is the perfect time to evaluate any changes you may wish to have done.

Usually, gardeners are encouraged to look at their garden in winter to see if they need to add more evergreens, take out diseased or dying plants, or to make changes for a more pleasing appearance. But now is also the perfect time to determine whether the entire landscape should be changed to fit the gardener's lifestyle.

Since every garden is different, and every gardener different, each one's needs will be different. You may be looking to expand your ornamental garden. Perhaps a new landscape plan is in order. Do you want to add vegetable beds? Should they be raised or in-ground? How many do you need for the size of your family? Expanding is exciting and may be the right decision at this time in your life.

On the other hand, you may need to reduce the time spent in your garden. If you need to lower your garden's maintenance requirements, do not be discouraged. There are several ways to do this. Consider your garden's size first. Is it too large? Do you take enjoyment in your garden or has it become a chore? Consider the types of plants you have. Shrubs usually require less maintenance than annuals or perennials. Perhaps the shrubs you have require pruning too often or have outgrown their intended space. Replacing certain plants may be all you need to get your maintenance needs in line with your time restraints.

Are you constantly weeding? Even though I know of no garden which stays weed-free, you can reduce weeds in your garden with a thick layer of mulch. Hire out the job if this seems too much of a chore. Use ground covers to blanket areas; weeds popping up through them will be rare. Even though it may sound counter-productive, you may need to add more plants to reduce the amount of space available for weeds to sprout.

Hopefully, if you evaluate your garden every year, the changes it needs to have done, whether expanding or reducing, will be small. Do not ignore the lifestyle changes you need to have done, or the idea of making a lot of changes all at once will be a chore in and of itself. Match your garden to your lifestyle. Remember, gardens are rarely, if ever, finished.

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

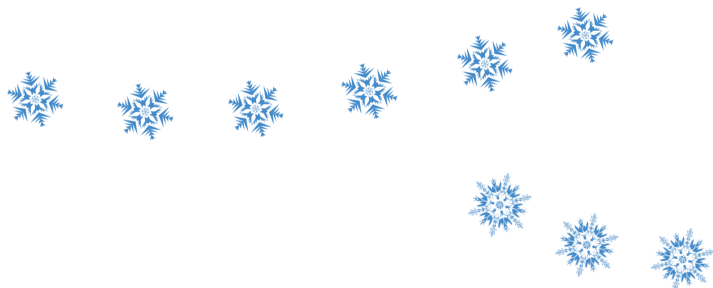


**Editor's Note:** Lydia Holley, Henderson County Master Gardener, is a prolific writer on gardening topics. Her articles are full of great information and can be very witty. She contributes a weekly article, not only to the HCMGA website, but to several local papers. All of her articles can be found on the HCMGA website at <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/publicity/>. The following links will take you to her December articles directly. Enjoy!

- [Cardboard Boxes – A Gardener’s Gift – December 27, 2021](#)
- [HCMGA Holds Annual Awards Luncheon – December 20, 2021](#)
- [Using Natural Elements During the Holiday Season – December 13, 2021](#)
- [Yaupon in Its Many Forms – December 6, 2021](#)



*“My garden is my most beautiful masterpiece”*  
~~ Claude Monet



## Frost Fabric

Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener

This winter is turning out to be a rollercoaster ride. We lost 40 degrees in one day recently. The range has bounced between the low 20s at night to mid-60s during the day. If you have any cold weather plants or veggie seeds started, that you can't bring inside, you are going to want to have frost fabric handy. To keep from breaking plants, you can put hoops over your garden, and then draw the frost

fabric over the hoops. Since frost fabric is so light weight, many just put the frost fabric right over the garden or individual plants.



Frost blanket is a general term, of which frost fabric is one type. So what materials should frost blankets be and where do you find them? Outside of an emergency, using sheets or cloth are not a great idea, as they will absorb the moisture and weigh down your plants, causing them to break. In terms of plastic, greenhouse film is best. However, once

the sun comes out, plastic heats up quickly. Be sure to monitor your plants and take off the plastic if there are many warmer days in a row. Frost fabric is the ideal, because it does not absorb water and lets in the air and sun during the day. Frost fabric can be left on plants for weeks, as temperature fluctuations yo-yo.

Usually frost fabric is better found at local nurseries, feed stores, local hardware stores (usually can't be found at box store), Amazon or online greenhouse supply stores. Recently I saw a presentation where the presenter used individual tents designed to stand over a single plant. He used them in both his ornamental garden and veggie garden. He said they come in a variety of sizes, are reusable year after year, and stack for easy storage. I've seen pictures of gallon milk jugs with the tops cut off turned upside down over small plants. There are many creative ways to keep your plants safe during frost. Experiment with what you have or can find in stores around you, and have a safe winter.



*“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

# Poinsettias

Anne Wood, Master Gardener



Did you know that Poinsettias have become one of the highest selling potted plants in the United States and that they have a rich history?

These vibrant and colorful plants are native to the rocky canyons of Guatemala and Mexico. They were originally named “cuetlaxochitl” and were cultivated by the Mayans and Aztecs who valued the red bracts as colorful (red and purple) fabric dyes and the sap for its medicinal qualities. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Franciscan monks in the town of Taxco de Alarcon used the plant’s vibrant leaves and bracts to adorn extravagant nativity scenes and in their nativity processions.

And then in 1828, the first U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Joel Roberts Poinsett, a skilled botanist, was introduced to the plant on a diplomatic trip to Mexico. So, he shipped some of the plants back home to his greenhouse for further study and cultivation. Soon, the plant was being cultivated and sold in the Pennsylvania area under its botanical name, *Euphorbia Pulcherrima*. But by 1836, the bright red plant came to be known as a “Poinsettia”, named after the man who introduced the species to the US.

And finally, Hollywood had a big role in popularizing the poinsettia as an indoor holiday staple in the early 1920’s. But they didn’t become a star in the movies as you might think, they were sold at roadside stands in Hollywood. Paul Ecke developed the first poinsettias that were able to be grown indoors in pots; and he opened a nursery in 1923 that to this day supplies most of the potted poinsettias to markets in the United States.



## Resources for Natives Plants

Filling your garden with native plants may seem like quite the challenge. Which plants are native? Where do you find them? How do you care for them? The HCMGA **Monthly Gardening Guide** has an article on Earth-Kind from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. In that article are listed many native grasses, groundcovers, perennials, shrubs and trees of all sizes, as well as vines. The index lists about 325 plants, trees, shrubs, and vines, by both their common name, as well as their scientific name. The natives all have stars next to them. Here are a couple more awesome resources:

- Native Plant Society of Texas: <https://npsot.org/wp/>
- Ladybird Johnson Wild Flower Center: <https://www.wildflower.org/magazine/landscapes/natural-accents> - click on “South Central Plains”
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/> and <https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/solutions/best-plants-trees-grow-texas-landscapes/>
- Texas A&M Agriculture Program: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamentals/nativeshrubs/>
- Texas A&M East Texas Gardening: <https://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu/east-texas-home-gardening/plants-for-east-texas/>

# HCMGA 2022 Interns

Lisa Alexander



"I have traveled and lived all over the world and it is so nice to retire with my husband on Cedar Creek. It is a beautiful place in the world and it is so nice to have a garden. I LOVE tomatoes, but I have not had the opportunity to start a garden with some of my friends. I am excited for the next edition of *Inside Dirt*. A heartfelt apology is extended to the Interns." ~ Editor, Susan Skommessa



"I have been wanting to start a garden for some time, but have not had the opportunity to do so. The MG program is a year ago. The information and is giving me the opportunity to start a garden with my friends. I am excited for the next edition of *Inside Dirt*. A heartfelt apology is extended to the Interns." ~ Editor, Susan Skommessa

**There was a tremendous mix-up between the pictures and the Intern's name and statement. Please see the corrected article in the next edition (March/April) of *Inside Dirt*. A heartfelt apology is extended to the Interns.**



Vicky Domingue



"For me there never was a time before gardening. Some of my earliest and fondest memories include the magic of soil, seeds, water and sunshine... And my amazement at what happens when you blend those ingredients, a little TLC and a little touch from GOD has never wavered or diminished.

When you love something as much as I love gardening you want to know everything there is to know about it. And there is SO much that I don't know about gardening that for me the question "why do I want to become a master gardener" might be replaced with "what took you so long? Haha"



## Melissa Henson

"I've always enjoyed gardening, growing mostly ornamentals and a few vegetables. My husband and I moved to Cedar Creek Lake from Plano 2 years ago. I have a good friend that is a Master Gardener in Collin County and always wanted to pursue the program, but it never seemed like the right time. Seems like the perfect time now. I signed up for the program to meet some like minded friends, get involved in my new area and of course learn more about gardening."



## Ron Jackson



"After retiring and moving to Athens from the Houston area, I chose to change my home landscape maintenance to a more environmentally friendly program. A good friend who is already a Master Gardener encouraged me to consider the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service training and education program. After enrolling in the Henderson County Master Gardener program, I am convinced I made a good decision. Upon completion and by following the Earth-Kind landscaping program, I will be much better prepared to produce a low maintenance and environmentally sustainable landscape. I will also have the opportunity to provide educational resources to others and work with those who share my interest."



## Sue Krider

"I have always loved to plant and grow things. When we moved to Athens 4 years ago and built a new house I wanted to really know what I was doing with all new landscaping, lawn, etc. Pollinator issues are also important to me as we are keeping bees on our land. I'm also an eternal student....I love learning new things. I also looked forward to opportunity to make new friends in a new town."



## Cathy Reagan



“As a child, I always enjoyed helping my grandmothers with gardening, preserving food, and working in their flower beds. I felt that Master Garden would be a great opportunity to learn about the things I love to do and make new friends in the community.”



## Kat Stevens

Moved here from the Dallas area to help my Dad who is ill with Lewybody’s Disease, with his blueberry farm. Since he is a MG, I wanted to study to become one so I could better understand how to help keep his farm going. I would go to his house every Thursday so we could watch class together and I would ask him for clarification on anything I didn’t understand. It was such a joy and special bonding time for us.”



## Nancy Hubbard



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.



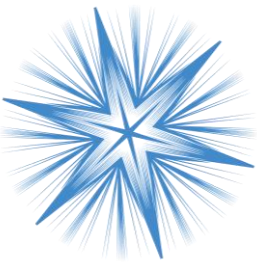


## Felisha Gilliam

I enjoy getting my hands in the soil and working in the garden. It is very comfortable and relaxing to me. My grandmother and my great grandma were both old school gardeners, which inspired me to do the same.



## Kelly McDowell



“Over a year ago I began my gardening journey. I had always loved flowers, but had never tried to grow them myself. I started experimenting in my parent’s garden in the summer of 2020, and by fall of 2020 I chose to leave my job as a probation officer. During this time, I started dreaming about a career in gardening. Since March 2021, I have worked at a garden center, a greenhouse, and on a pepper farm. My goal was to learn as much as possible, but I wanted more. So, I signed up for several

online courses through the Gardener’s Workshop with Lisa Mason Ziegler, as well as enrolled in the Henderson County Master Gardener program. I have learned so much and met so many that have the same passion about gardening! My goal is to grow flowers and vegetables for my immediate community in Poynor.”



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

~~ Horace Walpole



## Members and Friends! Raise money for HCMGA 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!

# "Cool Flower" Garden Ready for Winter

Cindy Oliver, Master Gardener



"Cool flowers" are hardy annuals planted in the fall, that winter-over and bloom in the early spring. Flowers planted during cool weather will become well established and grow a strong root system long before they are expected to bloom. They actually thrive in cold weather!

Here at R/C Flower Farm, we turn over our entire garden of 35 rows, each row measuring 3 feet by 35feet, in October. That includes removing all flowers, taking up the landscape fabric and the irrigation. We then add compost and fertilizer and till all the rows. The irrigation hardware and landscape fabric is replaced over the renewed soil.

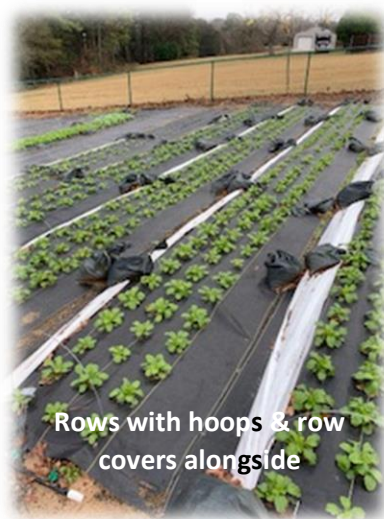
This year I have about 15 rows designated for "cool" flowers. I will cover the rows that I'm not using with solid landscape fabric to protect the soil. In addition, pathways are layered with leaves to suppress the weeds.

I bought 2000+ plugs and they arrived in late October, and planted them the first week of November. The plantings included Campanula, Dianthus, Scabiosa, Lisianthus, Snapdragons, Ammi Green Mist and Statice. Wire hoops and row covers were positioned alongside rows, in case the

temperatures should get down to the low 20s for a sustained period of time. During last year's Snowmageddon they did just fine!

With our warm weather this season, the plants are thriving and growing well. I will do a hard pinch in late January because I don't want

them blooming in March. Pinching will also give me more blooms. The goal is for the garden to bloom in late April, so flowering plants are ready for when the Athens Farmers Market opens in May.



Rows with hoops & row covers alongside





With the freeze, we pulled the covers up over the hoops.

I will do another early spring planting in late February with lots more Lisianthus, Strawflower, Marigolds, Scabiosa and more Ammi Green Mist. Staggering the planting gives a longer flower season.

Spring flowers are my favorite and the garden is at its prettiest in May!

**Editor's Note:** Cindy Oliver, a fabulous

Henderson County Master Gardener, is the owner and loving labor of *R/C Flower Farm* in Athens Texas. This Spring, after you visit HCMGA table at the Athens Farmers Market, swing by her booth. For a real treat, sweet talk her into an invitation to visit her farm in April or early May, when the gardens are in full bloom!



**In the spirit of hoping, planning, and preparing a better garden in 2022**

*Henderson County Master Gardeners Association*

**ANNUAL PLANT SALE**

is on for **April 23 2022**. Be watching for Details to come.



# 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/>
  - **Library Series** @ 5:30Pm at the **Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library** 121 S. Prairieville St. Athens
    - **January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022**
    - **February 15<sup>th</sup> 2022**
    - For details about the speaker and topic that will be covered, visit the HCMGA website [Free Horticulture Presentations \(txmg.org\)](#)
- ✓ **East Texas Arboretum and Botanical Society:** <http://www.easttexasarboretum.org/>
- ✓ **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:** [Upcoming Events \(txmg.org\)](#)
  - **East Texas Fruit, Nut, and Vegetable Conference January 14 @ 8:00 am - 3:00 pm** East Texas Fruit, Nut, and Vegetable Conference for research-based educational information on fire ant control, growing berries in East Texas, grafting pecan trees, and native fruits and nuts. **LOCATION:** *Cross Brand Cowboy Church*, 11915 FM 2015 Tyler, TX 75708 United States
  - **SCMGA at the Library: Trement: Arboriculture for the Homeowner January 21 @ 11:30 am - 1:00 pm** City of Tyler Arborist Madeline Burton will discuss how trees can be a valuable addition to your home and property, but they have their own set of obstacles. Proper selection and care of trees including the right tree for the right place, pruning and signs that a tree needs help will be discussed. **LOCATION:** *Tyler Public Library* 201 S. College Ave Tyler TX 75702
- ✓ **Kaufman County Master Gardener Association:** <https://www.kcmga.org/events-4/>
- ✓ **Free State Master Gardeners Association of Van Zandt County:** <https://txmg.org/freestatemastergardeners/>

- ✓ **Pineywoods Native Plant Center:** <https://www.sfasu.edu/academics/colleges/forestry-agriculture/research-outreach/sfa-gardens/facilities-resources/pineywoods-native-plant-center>
  - **Address:** 2900 Raguet St. Nacogdoches TX 75961. Check out all the adventures to be had.
- ✓ **NEWLY OPENED Longview Arboretum and Nature Center:** <https://www.longviewtexas.gov/4110/Longview-Arboretum-and-Nature-Center>
  - Free & Open to the Public, donations appreciated. 706 W. Cotton St. (44.14 mi) Longview, Texas 75608, (903) 237-1398 October

Wow, I didn't know!

## 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. click on:

<https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/welcome/our-impact/publicity/> and go exploring!

**Have you seen our videos on Facebook? Go check them out at**

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

# Seven Tenets for Creating an Eco-Friendly Garden and Landscape

Many of you had landscapes destroyed in February 2021 during 'Snowmageddon'. Several landscape programs suggested waiting until later to determine which plants and trees were not going to survive. This winter is also a good time to reassess your landscape and make improvements to it.

I recently listened to a Joe Lamp'l Podcast from 2018. If you are unfamiliar with Lamp'l, he is the founder of [joegardener.com](http://joegardener.com) which is garden-intensive website focused on how-to videos, podcasts, and classes. He is also the host of the Emmy-winning PBS program *Growing a Greener World*.

The following is based in part on Lamp'l's book, [Green Gardener's Guide, Simple, Significant Actions to Protect and Preserve Our Planet](#). The book covers 7 tenants that gardeners should strive to incorporate in their gardens.

## Tenet 1: Eliminate Water Waste



Knockout Roses - Debbie Pascoe

Earth is called the 'water planet'. 75% of the planet is water. Of that water, 97% is salt water; 3% is fresh. But most of the fresh water is either frozen or not accessible. That leaves roughly 1% for everything else, like drinking, bathing, irrigating, etc. We can't create more water. If you lived in this part of Texas in 2011, you remember how scarce water was. On our grass farm, we piped water to our fields from a spring fed pond in order to keep the grass alive so we could cut hay for livestock. Today, the western US is in the grip of a record-breaking drought. Bad water management is becoming a large issue. Water conservation is primarily about protecting your *local* water resource so that it continues to be available locally. During the past century, Earth's population has quadrupled in size. That's a lot to be sure, but when you consider that water usage during the same period has increased sevenfold, it's easy to see why it's important for all of us to be more mindful of our water use.

There are several things a homeowner can do to be better stewards of our limited water supply. Outdoor irrigation comprises the largest part of our water use. Watering lawns using overhead sprinklers is huge waste of water. The best time of day to do it in the dew time of early morning. Landscape bed-drip irrigation is a better plan because it is targeted water which cuts down on watering weeds. This does not work well if, like us, you have sugar sand, but mending the soil will help with this issue. If your roof covers 1000 square feet of living space, a one-inch rain would provide a little over 600 gallons of water. And once the system is in place, it's free water.

## Tenet 2: Protect Watersheds from Runoff

As water moves across your lawn or garden beds, it's carrying with it residue and particles of whatever is there. If you or a neighbor ever had a lawn care professional treat your lawn with fertilizer you, or the neighbor, have been left with those little signs warning you to keep kids and pets off the grass for 24 hours. Remember that those chemicals move across your lawn with water from rain or over sprinkling, and they move on into the nearest watershed. If you live in a flat area with little runoff, eventually some of those chemicals will reach your aquifer. If chemically treated lawns is not an issue in your area, a quick and easy way to reduce water runoff is to add mulch to any exposed soil. The best part of your soil is right at the surface, and mulch will protect that great soil from eroding away with water or in the wind. Mulch protects the soil surface to keep it from crusting over and becoming a hard, impermeable surface. The best mulch is organic material – like shredded leaves or wood chips. Over time, the mulch will break down and add nutrients to your soil.

## Tenet 3: Healthy Plants Are Not Chemically Dependent.

In order to thrive, plants just need healthy soil and the right location. When they have those things, they don't require much help from us in the form of pesticides, herbicides or fertilizer. Master Gardeners have often said, 'pick the right plant for the right place'. So, when you purchase plants to add to your landscape this spring, do a little homework. The plant tags will help you learn whether they prefer shade or sun or a mix of both. Make note of their preference for moist versus dry soil. Taking time to pay attention will prevent you from putting a plant in the wrong spot and battling for its survival afterward. If one of your plants does seem to struggle, think the situation through before assuming it requires fertilizer or chemical treatment. Have lighting conditions changed since you first planted it? Is it receiving enough or too much water? Provide the right conditions and [feed the soil so your soil can feed your plants](#). This will reduce your need for fertilizer and eliminate most plant problems.

#### **Tenet 4: If You Resort to Chemicals, Use Responsibly**

If you use chemicals, make sure you know how to apply them effectively and know what the impact of that pesticide will be. Only 1-3% of insects are considered pests. The rest are either beneficial or will do no harm. Pesticides don't know a good bug from a bad bug. When you spray indiscriminately with a broad-spectrum, non-selective pesticide, [you are inadvertently killing more good bugs than bad bugs](#). Identify the bugs with which you are dealing. Understand how a treatment works, so you can apply it properly. For example, insecticidal soap is effective at drying up soft-bodied insects, but it won't do a thing for a bug with a hard shell, like an adult bean beetle. Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), is an organic treatment for insects such as caterpillars. However, it will kill butterfly caterpillars just as quickly as pest caterpillars. The internet can be a great guide for recognizing butterfly caterpillars. Get familiar with butterfly caterpillars so you can protect them. Manual controls are as benign as it gets. Pick the pests off and squish them, or drown them in a cup of soapy water. Consider the upstream effects. Birds can also fall victim to pesticide use. The [National Audubon Society](#) estimates that at least 7 million songbirds die each year from eating insects which have been treated with a pesticide. Other estimates indicate that those songbird deaths may reach as high as 70 million if you count birds dying from pesticides in agricultural farmland. In addition to birds, the frogs, toads, and other insect feeding animals are often eaten by hawks and eagles who die or whose young are born with deformities. Pesticide effects are wide reaching.

#### **Tenet 5: Compost and Recycle to Reduce Waste**

[Compost is the single best soil amendment](#) you can add to your gardens and landscapes. It also drastically reduces the waste we throw into our landfills. Landfills are the single largest manmade source of methane gas, which is 20% more toxic to our atmosphere than carbon dioxide. 65% of what is added to landfills could be composted or recycled, and 40% of that is typically paper, which is a terrific source of carbon in the compost pile. Shred all your paper – printouts, junk mail, etc. – into strips by hand or by using an inexpensive shredder. These days, inks are vegetable-based, so don't worry about adding these materials to your compost bins. Food scraps and garden debris make up another large percentage of material added to landfills, but these items can all go into the compost bin. Exceptions are diseased garden debris, meat and fish scraps, dairy, fat, oil, weeds that have gone to seed, cat and dog waste, and charcoal ash. Be sure to gather your fallen leaves (and take any your neighbors will give you), chop and bag them by running over them with your lawnmower, and use them as mulch and compost material. Don't forget those grass clippings. If you don't use a mulching lawn mower to mulch clippings back into your lawn, bag the clippings and add them as an ideal nitrogen source to your compost. Remember, it is such a wasted resource when we add any of these materials to our landfills.



#### **Tenet 6: Landscaping to Protect Biodiversity**

It can be tempting to plant only what we think is prettiest in the landscape, and in this respect, native plants have gotten a bad reputation. Many gardeners think of natives as less attractive, but native plants are needed in our urban landscapes now more than ever. All wildlife and beneficial creatures have co-evolved with native plants. [They require these plants for shelter and food sources](#). There are many beautiful native species, and they all have ecological value. Since they have evolved in your area, they will also perform well for you and require less coddling. Just because a plant performs well in your area doesn't mean it's native. Many invasive species can gain a foothold, thrive and out-compete anything native to the area. Kudzu is a prime example. Strive for a healthy balance of native and non-native plantings. A diverse array of plant species in your garden will draw in a [wider range of beneficial insects](#) too.

## Tenet 7: Garden to Protect Air Quality and to Reduce Energy

So many of the tools we use in our garden emit pollution into our air. Did you know that older model gas lawn mowers put out more pollution in one hour than 40 late model cars? If you have a smaller yard, I encourage you to consider an electric mower or go "old school" with a push mower. Newer push mowers are easy to use and they do a great job. Rather than pulling out the leaf blower, pull out the rake and get a little exercise in the bargain. Here again, it's simply about being mindful of your methods and asking yourself if there is a more eco-friendly way to get the same job done.

In conclusion, our collective efforts add up. Think outside your own space. Buy from your local farmer who isn't shipping his or her produce across the country. Support organizations which work on behalf of these ecological principles. The Native Plant Society of Texas ([npsot.org](http://npsot.org)) and The Lady Bird Johnson Wildlife Center ([wildflower.org](http://wildflower.org)) give valuable information about Texas natives and have extensive plant search information. Texas SmartScape ([txsmartscape.com](http://txsmartscape.com)) will let you search for native and adapted plants for northcentral Texas.



# January & February Gardening Tips

By Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener

## *In General:*

The warmer days of winter are ideal for preparing 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 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, tractor, and power tools. Sharpen blades. Check your irrigation system for missing and/or broken sprinkler heads, and lastly, clean the filters.

## *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 Crepe Myrtles so that all branches are level may be common, but it is not correct.

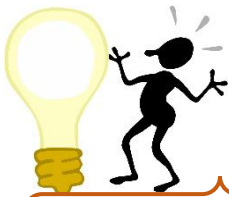
## Caring for Grass and Groundcover:

Water only when necessary. You may choose to mow back winter weeds that may be growing. Before you store your lawn mower, be sure to service it properly. However, if you over-seeded with Ryegrass, mow on a regular basis at a height of 2 inches. To control weeds in your lawn, you may want to apply a pre-emergent herbicide. From now through February, make & plant cuttings of English Ivy for ground cover.



# Henderson County Master Gardener Association

## ~~ Members Page ~~



*Master Gardeners,  
remember to  
record your hours!*



## 2022 HCMGA Meetings

- 10:00 am 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month
- **Location:** St. Edwards Catholic Church 1310 S. Palestine Athens TX

January 19<sup>th</sup>

July 20<sup>th</sup>

February 16<sup>th</sup>

August 17<sup>th</sup>

March 16<sup>th</sup>

September 21<sup>st</sup>

April 20<sup>th</sup>

October 19<sup>th</sup>

May 18<sup>th</sup>

November 16<sup>th</sup>

June 15<sup>th</sup>

December 21<sup>st</sup>

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

~~ Thomas Jefferson, The Quotable Jefferson

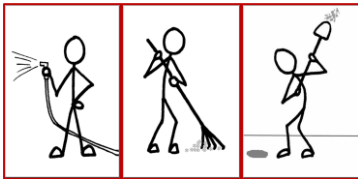


**Member and Intern Requirements:** Members need 12 hours of **volunteer service**, 6 hours of **continuing education**, and attendance at 5 **meetings**. Interns need 50 hours of **volunteer service**.

**Greenhouse:** Member volunteers are welcome on Monday 9am – 11am.

**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 Skommessa at [susanloves1life@gmail.com](mailto:susanloves1life@gmail.com).



HCMGA has 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.

# 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:



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Texas master gardeners



txmg.org/hendersonmg



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### 2022 Officers

**President,** Sara Drummond

**Past President,** Yvonne Sparks

**VP Program & Administration,** Dub Hirst

**VP Member & Community Ed.,** Deb Pascoe

**Secretary,** Sharon Barrett

**Treasurer,** Judy Haldeman

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**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.

