



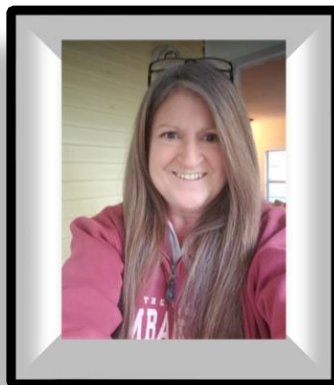
INSIDE DIRT

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Editor's Desk...

Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener

Henderson County Master Gardeners are busy preparing for a few upcoming educational community events that are bound to be fascinating, informative and fun. In this edition you'll find details on this year's third and last **2022 Summer Series** event (page 2) as well as September and October's **Harvest Garden** educational events (page 6 and 12).



If you have you ever been to Hawaii and smelled a plumeria flower, you might wish you could bring this exquisitely beautiful and exotically scented plant home. The flower's intoxicating and lovely scent is one of my favorites. With special care, we can grow them right here in East Texas. On page 3, Master Gardener Cindy Beck brings us the information we need to keep them alive through the winter.

Hummingbirds are headed our way on their migration journey south. Enhance the peaceful contentment of your morning cup of coffee this fall, by helping these flying wonders on their journey. Master Gardener Judy Haldeman tells us all about them on page 8.

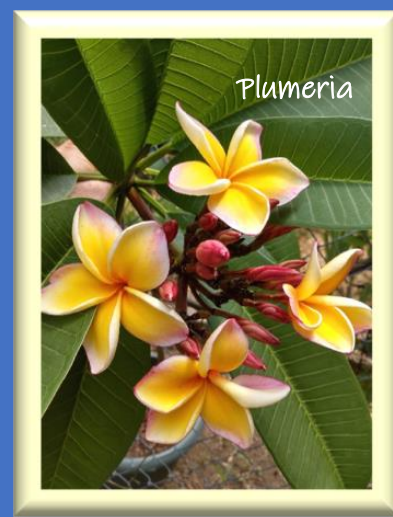
Can you have a green thumb **and** your hands in writing? Master Gardener Lydia Holley sure does! She writes not only for the Henderson County Master Gardener Association, but for newspapers as well, where she offers a weekly article on gardening. This edition of **Inside Dirt** features two informative articles on producing winter greenery and introducing us to the **Pink Rain Lady** on pages 5 and 11. To read back editions of her weekly articles similar to these, go to the HCMGA website at <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/publicity/>.

Every edition of **Inside Dirt** offers information on caring for your gardens, vegetables, shrubs, trees, and lawn. This September/October edition offers helpful ideas on growing vegetables and flowers in your fall garden, preparing your lawn for winter, and so much more. See page 12 for helpful guidance on each topic. Lastly, don't miss **From the Garden to the Table** on page 14, where we explore how to grow and cook turnips, turnip greens, rutabagas, and parsnips.

Happy Gardening!



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HCMGA Projects

- **Children's Programing:** HCMGA is available for consultation on school or teaching gardens.
- **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.
- **Summer Series:** Workshops are provided in the summer months to share expertise and educate the public on various gardening topics.

Summer Series 3.0

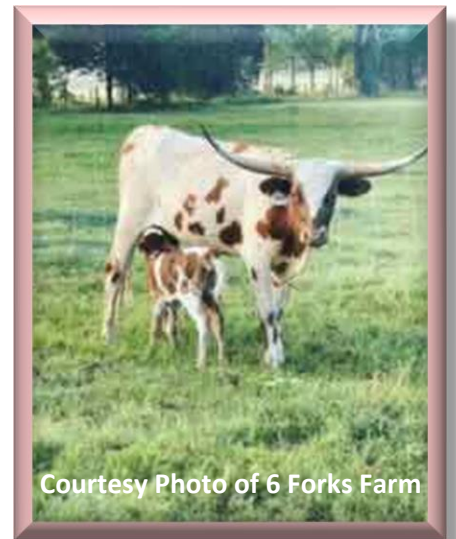
By Yvonne Sparks, Henderson County Master Gardener

The third installment of the **2022 Summer Series** is *"The Whats and Whys of Regenerative Farming"* on **Thursday, September 15, 2022 at 6:00 pm**. Lindsay and John DeVivo will be hosting this presentation at their farm off North Hwy 19. The **2022 Farm and Ranch Tour** showcased **6 Forks Farm** earlier this year. At this presentation attendees will learn about regenerative farming, what makes it different from other methods and why it is important to the future of farming. This presentation gives Henderson County residents another opportunity to view this innovative farming practice.

To further explain what Regenerative farming is, I did some research to get a basic description. Here goes:

"In simple terms, regenerative agriculture is a holistic approach to agriculture that focuses on the interconnection of farming systems and the ecological system as a whole. The concept of regenerative farming is not new. It was used by Indigenous communities centuries ago, long before industrial agriculture occurred."

The presentation is free to the public; however, due to limited space, attendees will be issued tickets to this event. To register, login to our website, <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg>, or Facebook page, facebook.com/HCMastergardener, after September 1. Event tickets and directions will be sent prior to the event.



Courtesy Photo of 6 Forks Farm

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com, or visit txmg.org/hendersonmg.

Over Wintering Your Plumerias

By Cindy Beck, Henderson County Master Gardener



With 100-degree days barely behind us, this may seem a peculiar time to discuss overwintering anything. However, if you are the proud owner of this exotically beautiful and fragrant small tree, some advance planning may be advisable.

Plumeria, also known as frangipani or Hawaiian lei plant, is a tropical shrub or tree which grows best in USDA zones 10-12, preferring 65-80F and full sun. Although it thrives during our hot Texas summers, it will not survive freezing winter temperatures. For that reason, most gardeners in Central and East Texas choose to grow plumerias in pots.

The key to when and how to overwinter plumerias is temperature and sunlight hours. If you don't have room to bring your large plants inside, or if you want to propagate to enlarge your collection or share with friends, the time to take cuttings is now. This will allow time for roots to grow before dormancy.

Plumerias naturally begin to go dormant when overnight temperatures drop to 60F. Dormant plants do not need any light or water over our short winter months. They can literally be stored in your closet. Their only requirement is to be kept from freezing. To

avoid losing your plants each winter, there are three ways you can easily preserve them indoors.

1. Continue growing them as indoor houseplants.
2. Store mature potted plants in their dormant state.
3. Overwinter them as dry or potted cuttings.

To continue growing your plumerias as indoor houseplants, you must have a warm room with direct sunlight and good ventilation. A south facing window that will give at least 6 hours of sun daily is necessary. Grow lights are also an option. Cut off any dead, diseased or damaged growth, remove debris from the pot, then check for and eliminate any insect pests.

To prevent dormancy, move your plants inside before overnight temperatures drop below 60F, typically at least one month before frost is expected. Some minimal leaf drop will occur initially, but if all the leaves are beginning to yellow and drop, there's not enough light. Go to option 2.

To store dormant plants, you can either force dormancy or allow it to occur naturally. Natural dormancy will occur outside when you stop watering your plants and overnight temperatures drop below 60F. To keep your plants healthy, be sure to move them inside when overnight temperatures drop below 50F.





To force dormancy, stop watering and place your potted plants in a dark corner, garage, shed or closet. You can avoid continually picking up naturally falling leaves by cutting them off about ½ inch from the stem and discarding them all at once. Cutting, vs. pulling, leaves off will reduce sap release and stem scarring. If your initial storage place is unheated, be sure you don't forget to move them again or provide heat as overnight temperatures drop below 40F. I made that mistake my first year by storing my precious plants in the attic. They froze! It has also been suggested that storing your pots directly on a concrete garage or greenhouse floor may damage the roots, especially in a damp environment. By the time overnight temperatures approach 40F, your plants should be in a warm, dry, dark place for the winter. At this point you are in storage mode. Defoliated plants may be placed close together to maximize space. They will not need any light or water while dormant. Do not water until you are ready for the plants to awaken in the Spring.

To overwinter as dry or potted cuttings, you must first be willing to prune your beautiful tree. Cut 12 - 18 inch growing stems from your plant. The stem can be one long stick or branched, as you prefer. Clean your cutting shears with alcohol before each cut. The cut stem will initially "bleed" a heavy white sap, which may be a minor skin irritant

for some people. At this point, you can either cut off the leaves as discussed above or leave them on the stem to fall off naturally. Lay the stem aside to harden off. These hardened stems can be gathered together or stacked and left as-is for several months, then potted in the Spring. They should be kept in a dark, dry, warm place while storing. Stems that you don't plan to root before storing do not need to be harvested as early those you wish to root in advance. You can let your plants go dormant before cutting stems for "dry" storage. Then, when overnight temperatures rise above 60F once again, pot your overwintered dry stems the same as you would your Fall cuttings as follows.

Cuttings to be rooted before storage are best taken no later than early Fall. Use a well-draining soil mix such as 50% potting soil and 50% perlite. Pack damp soil into your pot, then poke a hole down through the middle. Dip the stem's cut end into rooting hormone (available at any garden store) and, without disturbing the hormone, drop your cut stem deeply into the hole you've made. Add and pack in additional soil, water thoroughly, and discard any excess water. Leave the potted cuttings outside in a hot, sunny place. Water only when the soil becomes dry, as overwatering at this stage can cause rot. Roots should begin to develop in three to six weeks, and your new plants can be overwintered inside when temperatures drop. NOTE: I have potted stems immediately after cutting ("wet") and also after hardening off the cut end ("dry"). Both ways have worked well for me, but professionals say potting "wet" cut ends may inhibit root growth.



To allow time for dormant plants to "wake up" and begin to leaf out again, move them to a sunny, warm indoor location a month or two before the expected last frost date. Water deeply and discard excess water. Do not water again until

leaves begin to grow. Once leaves begin to show, you can add a ¼ dilution of an organic liquid fertilizer each time you water. After all danger of frost has passed and overnight temperatures are 50F or higher, move your plants to a shady outdoor spot for several days. Avoid direct sun to avoid burning leaves and stems, then gradually move your plants to ever-sunnier spots in your garden for the season.

During the growing season, plumerias are heavy feeders. To promote flowering, fertilize every one to three weeks and water deeply when dry. Keep them in the sunniest, warmest spot on your property. However, when temperatures rise to 100F or more, they prefer light dappled shade in the afternoon.

Resources:

- Theplumeriasociety.org
- Getbusygardening.com
- Plumeria101.com

Pink Rain Lily

By Lydia Holley, Henderson County Master Gardener



It is always so exciting to see the rain lilies emerge in late summer. This usually indicates the end of the dry season and the beginning of cooler weather. In my garden, I have white rain lilies and pink rain lilies. The pink ones, *Zephyranthes grandiflora*, are native to Central America, but do well in East Texas. They are perennial in zones 7 through 10. Thus, they can take our summer heat as well as our cold winters.

Plant rain lily bulbs in spring. Because they are a bulb, they can be planted among other flowers or plants, or in containers if you prefer. Should you grow them in containers, you may need to divide them every few years so they do not get too root bound. You may also wish to

plant them in masses, along an edging, or scatter them throughout the garden. No matter where you plant them, they will bring a smile to your face when they begin to bloom.

Rain lilies have various common names including rain flower, zephyr lilies, and fairy lilies. As their name implies, rain lilies usually bloom after a rain. A member of the Amaryllidaceae family, like Amaryllis, rain lilies do well planted in our East Texas soil.

There are numerous species of *Zephyranthes*. Some are larger than others. If you do not like white or pink, they also come in yellow and rarely, some other colors such as apricot. After you have some planted, you may wish to collect others. I have some pink rain lilies planted by my front door, so I will be certain to see them when they bloom. Their flowers are fleeting, but are worth growing because they are so delightful to see.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com, or visit txmq.org/hendersonmq.



Harvest Garden

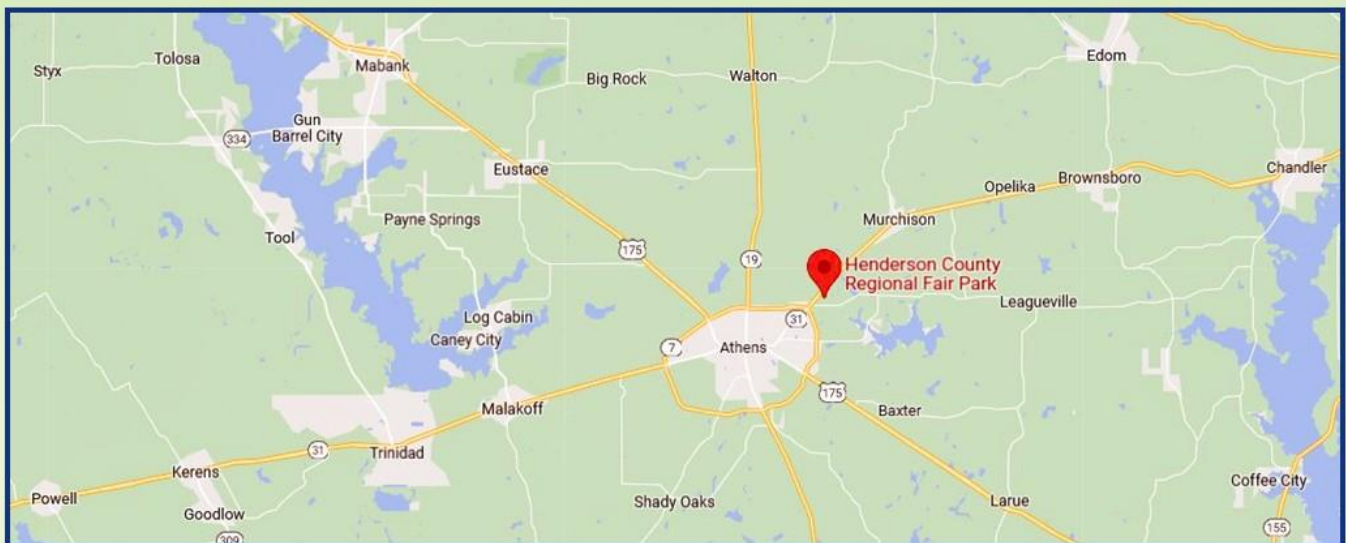
Soil Types: Sandy Loamy, Clay What's under your nails?

Saturday September 10, 2022

10:00 am

- **What type of soil do you have? How do you know if your soil needs something? What does it need?**
- **Go home with soil testing bags, and methods to test how well your soil drains, and how much water your soil holds per watering session. ...and so much more.**
- **Master Gardeners will be available to answer your questions**
- **Bring your own camp chair - seating is limited!**

⇒ Find the Harvest Garden at Henderson County Regional Fair Park ⇐



Henderson County Master Gardener Association

~~ Members Page ~~

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: Starting September 12th, Members are welcome to volunteer on Mondays from 9am – 11am.

Harvest Garden: Members are welcome to volunteer on Tuesdays 9am – 11am.

Inside Dirt: Member volunteers are welcome to contribute and send in articles, pictures, cartoons, gardening games, kid resources and upcoming events,



*Master Gardeners,
remember to record
your hours.*



2022 HCMGA Meetings

- ✓ 10:00 am 3rd Wednesday of the month
- ✓ **Location:** St. Edwards Catholic Church 1310 S. Palestine Athens TX 75751

- ♣ September 21st
- ♣ October 19th
- ♣ November 16th
- ♣ December 21st

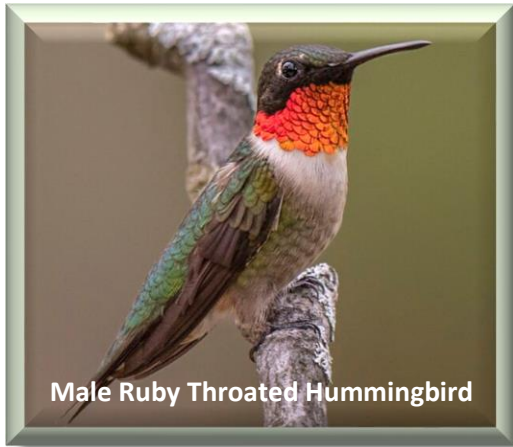


HCMGA has projects that need **you!** If you are not plugged in yet, one of our projects will fit your schedule, energy level, and mobility. Talk to someone to explore a good fit for you and get plugged in.

Hummingbirds In Your Garden

By Judy Haldeman, Henderson County Master Gardener

The Birds



Male Ruby Throated Hummingbird

Hummingbirds are fascinating creatures. A diverse family, hummingbirds include the world's smallest bird, the Bee Hummingbird of Cuba, and some of the strongest migrants. The Rufous Hummingbird undertakes the longest avian migration in the world, if based upon distance traveled in proportion to body size. Hummingbirds are the only bird that can fly backwards. They weigh less than a nickel and fly thousands of miles each year on their migration route. Their wings beat up to 70 times per second. Texas has around 20 species of hummingbirds, and the ones that you're most likely to see in our area of Texas are the ruby throated hummingbirds. They have golden green plumage on their back. The males have a brilliant red throat. Young males look similar to the female-until the red plumage appears. Every spring, hummingbirds arrive in Texas on their migration northward, and some set up camp in our backyards. To make this trip, they depend on

native flowers that have various blooming schedules. As winter gives way to spring, that flow starts in the south and moves to the north. In the fall, that flow is reversed, starting in the north and moving toward Mexico by late fall. Hummingbirds follow this flow, sipping nectar from flower to flower along the whole migration path, much like the monarch butterfly does. The life span of a ruby throated hummingbird is estimated to be 3-5 years.

The Flowers

To sustain their supercharged metabolisms, hummingbirds must eat once every 10 to 15 minutes and visit between 1,000 and 2,000 flowers per day. Hummingbirds have specialized gear for nectar-eating. They have long bills and grooved tongues ideal for probing flowers. Sugary nectar supplies them with fast energy and makes up 90 percent of a hummingbird's diet. Unfortunately, due to development and recent extreme weather, hummingbird-friendly habitats may be changing across many hummingbird migration routes. You can create a healthy environment for hummingbirds with these steps:

1. Fill your yard with native flowering plants, vines, shrubs, and trees. Native plants provide much more nectar than hybrids and exotics. Natives more easily adapt to our weather extremes. The Native Plant Society of Texas lists plants native to our region at: https://npsot.org/plant_lists/NorthEastList.pdf
2. Plant native red or orange tubular flowers to attract hummingbirds, in addition to native plants rich in nectar.
3. Group similar plants together and choose species with different blooming periods so that there will be a steady supply of flowers nearly year-round.
4. Leave some sticks and small branches on bushes and trees to enable ready perches for hummingbirds.
5. Minimize or eliminate the use of pesticides in your yard.
6. Encourage your neighbors to make their yards hummingbird friendly. An entire corridor of habitat is much more valuable than scattered patches.



Female Ruby Throated Hummingbird



Unfortunately, due to weather and insect damage, your hummingbird-friendly habitat may be in trouble this year. The lack of rain and, in our case, an influx of leaf-cutters ants and voracious grasshoppers have done real damage to our wild-escape gardens. In an effort to be pesticide responsible, we have not used toxic chemicals to rid our gardens of these pests. We plan to replace lost natives and/or add new natives next year. The following natives are especially attractive to hummingbirds. They are listed as native to our area on the Lady Bird Wildflower Center (<https://www.wildflower.org>) or the Native Plant Society of Texas.

If you add to your gardens, try to include plants that overlap in bloom times and use plants that are blooming from March to as late as November. The plants listed below are generally considered the **best** plants for hummingbirds in our area. Those

bolded are native to east Texas and have been included in several of our Master Gardener Plant Sales. Specific information on these plants can be found on the Henderson County Master Gardener Website under the Plant Library tab: <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/plant-library/>

In the search box, type hummingbird. Any plants we have sold in the past several years that are magnets for hummingbirds will be shown. You can get more detail by clicking the individual plant(s).

Humming Bird Favorites Listed by earliest blooms times

1. **Scarlet sage, *Salvia coccinea*** Blooms February through October
2. **Coral honeysuckle (Trumpet honeysuckle), *Lonicera sempervirens*** Blooms March through June.
3. Autumn Sage, *Salvia greggii* Blooms March through November
4. **Purple Coneflower, *Echinacea purpurea*** Blooms April to September
5. Texas lantana, *Lantana urticoides* Blooms April through October
6. **Cardinal flower, *Lobelia cardinalis*** Blooms May through October
7. **Lemon beebalm, *Monarda citriodora*** Blooms May, June, July
8. **Mealy Cup Sage, *Salvia farinacea*** Blooms May to frost
9. **Standing Cypress, *Ipomopsis rubra*** Blooms May through July
10. **Wild Bergamot, *Monarda fistulosa*** Blooms May through September
11. **Turk's Cap, *Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*** Blooms June through November

There are other plants that grow well in our area that are native to Texas, but not native to east Texas. These include some petunias, hostas, hibiscus, several lantanas, daylilies and more. These plants have 'trumpet-shaped' flowers that are ideally suited to the hummingbird.

The Feeders

Backyard hummingbird feeders provide hummingbirds with nectar critical to their survival, especially during fall and spring migration. Feeders are also important during droughts or times when flowers are not blooming. The first hummingbird sightings in our area occur in spring, usually in mid-March. Hang your feeders up a couple of weeks before that. In the fall, keep your feeders up for two weeks after you see the last bird using it, usually mid-November. Migration stragglers visiting on the southward migration may stay only a day or two. Having feeders in you fall garden will not encourage hummingbirds to delay migration.



Follow these guidelines to ensure your yard is a safe and nutritious stopover for hummingbirds:

1. Hang several feeders far enough apart that the hummingbirds cannot see one another; this will prevent one bird from dominating the rest.
2. Fill the feeders with sugar water, made by combining four parts hot water to one-part white sugar. Never use honey, artificial sweeteners, or red dye. Do not use distilled water. It has been stripped of minerals the hummingbirds need.
3. Hang your feeders in the shade to prevent the sugar solution from fermenting.
4. Be sure to change the sugar water regularly, before it gets cloudy, or about twice a week in warm weather.
5. Clean the feeders with a solution of one-part white vinegar to four-parts water about once a week.
6. Rinse your feeder well with warm water three times before refilling with a new sugar solution.
7. Left over sugar solution may be stored in the refrigerator for up to a week.

The Nest and The Other Food

As you might imagine, migration takes a lot of fuel, especially with wings that beat so fast you can't see them. They get that fuel by drinking a lot of nectar. They also eat a lot of gnats. Many think they just eat nectar, about 10-12 percent of their diet (especially when feeding young in the breeding season) consists of gnats and other small insects. They need protein. And if you're really lucky, you'll spot a nesting hummer who's chosen your yard to bring up the next generation.



Ruby-throated hummingbirds breed between March and July. Once a female accepts a male, the male 'disappears' and does not help with nest-building, incubation, the feeding of the female warming the eggs, or of the hatched hummers. The hummingbird nest is usually built near the tip of a long horizontal tree branch 15 to 50 feet above the ground. To build the nest, the female carefully gathers scraps of spider web to form a sticky pad on a branch. Next, she adds a flat pad of plant down before building up the sides of the nest with more of the same soft, pliable materials. It may take her hundreds of trips over a week or more to gather what she needs and press it into place. As a finishing touch, she'll select tiny flakes of lichen to camouflage the outside of the miraculous little cup.

After the nest is done, she lays a tiny egg and soon begins incubating it. One to three days later, she lays a second one. For the next 11-16 days she will sit on the nest all night and most of the day, only leaving the nest several times a day to feed herself. After the eggs have hatched, the nest will expand as the baby hummingbirds grow. Having a ready supply of nectar is critical at this phase, since the female is feeding herself and her brood.

At first, the fledglings can't feed themselves; it takes practice to be able to hover at a flower and drink nectar. The female will continue to feed them for up to a week after they leave the nest as they learn how to find food. And at the same time, the female may already be building another nest, preparing to raise a second brood for the season.

Since hummingbirds prefer to nest near a ready supply of nectar and other food, and you can encourage them to nest in your yard by maintaining some shrubbery and small deciduous trees in which they can seek protective cover, especially around the edges of your yard. The following are guidelines for establishing a hummingbird habitat in your yard.

Perches: Make sure you have plenty of safe places for hummingbirds to rest and sleep in your yard. Hummingbirds often perch to rest or survey their territory; some spots should be in the open and obvious for territorial birds, while others should be in protected areas, hidden from view and buffered from any cooler overnight temperatures.

Insects: Hummingbirds need protein from pollen and insects to maintain their bodies and grow new feathers. These birds are specialized aerial hunters and can catch small insect from the air. They also eat insects from leaves and spider webs.

To maintain a healthy ecosystem in your yard:

1. Eliminate pesticides. Spiders and insects (arthropods) are an important part of an adult bird's diet, and young hummingbirds still in the nest are almost exclusively fed arthropods.
2. Make sure your yard contains insect-pollinated flowers as well as hummingbird-pollinated plants.
3. Hang a basket with overripe fruit or banana peels close to a hummingbird feeder to attract tiny fruit flies.
4. Use native plants. Native plants will support a greater concentration of insects and spiders available as prey for hummingbirds and other birds, than do alien ornamentals.

Water: Hummingbirds like to bathe frequently-even in the pools of droplets that collect on leaves. Provide your yard with a constant source of water from a drip fountain attachment or a fine misting device. A misting device is an especially attractive water source for hummingbirds. You can also run a sprinkler for a short period each day.

Now that September is here, we should get a big push of northern ruby throated hummingbirds that are passing through Texas as they go to the Tropics. With this southbound migration you will probably need to use a lot more nectar than you would any other month of the year.

And, after the migration is complete and you turn your attention to planning your spring garden or replacing plants that didn't survive our hot, dry summer, consider adding native plants that will benefit next year's batch of hummingbirds.

Fantastic Foliage

By Lydia Holley, Henderson County Master Gardener

Most everyone wants flowers in their landscape, whether to bring inside to enjoy the sweet perfume, to attract



butterflies, or for brilliant color. But there are certain times of the year that foliage can be the star. One of those times is in winter; the other is during the hottest days of summer.

A garden filled with foliage on a winter's day keeps the landscape from looking so dead. Foliage also adds green to a summer garden, evoking a refreshing sense of coolness where they may be none. Whether viewed from indoors or out, a garden full of greenery in the summer will look fresh, and can delight even an overly warm visitor. When you look for plants for your landscape, the appearance of its foliage should be as important as its other qualities. Is its foliage variegated? It is a dull green or bright and cheerful? Does it go

dormant at certain times of the year? Does it brown in hot weather?

Does the plant have various issues with its foliage? Or can you count on it to stay green and pretty through almost any weather conditions?

Consider having one area of your garden be planted with a majority of evergreens. I have such an area outside my bedroom window. It is the first thing I see every morning, and the last thing I see at night. No matter what the rest of my garden looks like, I can count on it to be soothing and restful. It is a positive way to start the day, and an encouragement when the weather becomes challenging.

After so many years of only evergreens in that area, I planted a climbing rose to frolic along the top of a hedge. The rose's stems and foliage are covered by the evergreen plants, but its flowers bloom along the top of the hedge, giving me the best of both worlds.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com, or visit txmq.org/hendersonmq.



Harvest Garden

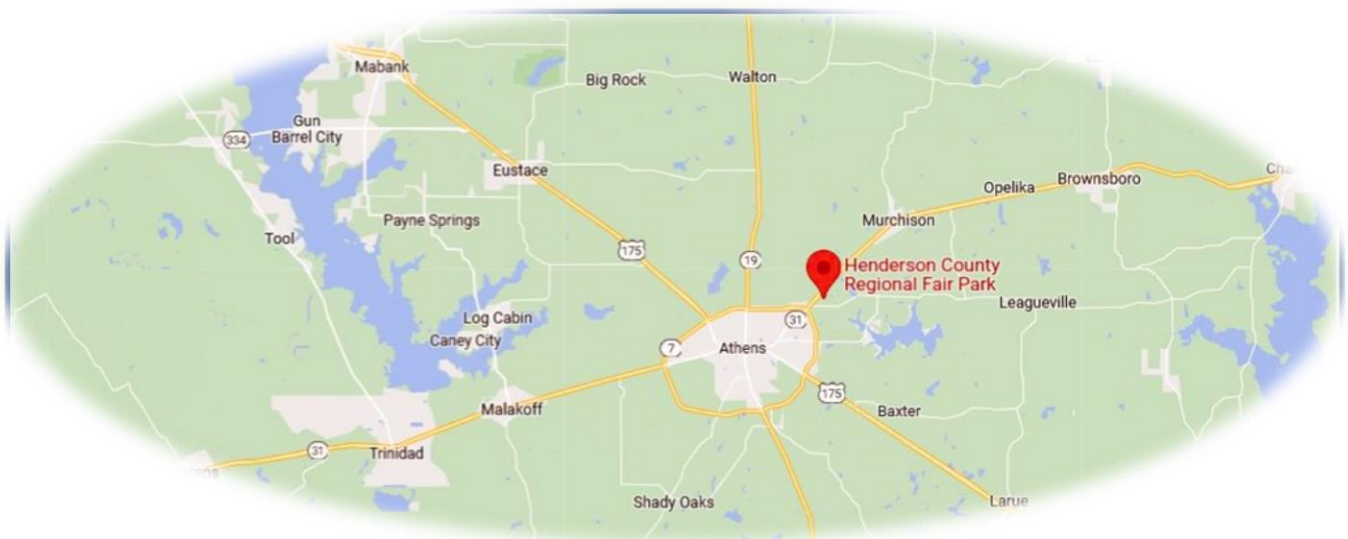
Henderson County Master Gardener Interns Present Keyhole Gardening!

Saturday October 15, 2022 at 10:00 am



Keyhole gardens can be made out almost any material. The garden's level of decorative impact is in relationship to the gardener's imagination and budget. Join us at the **Henderson County Harvest Garden**, located at the **Henderson County Regional Fair Park**, for a presentation on **Keyhole Gardening**. Learn basic principles of structure, benefits to this form of gardening, budgetary considerations and how this year's HCMG Interns went about building the Harvest Garden's Keyhole Garden.

Bring your own camp chair as seating is limited



September & October Gardening Tips

By Susan Skommesa, Henderson County 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 brutally humid and hot months (and who doesn't have at least one), we'll find ourselves back out there. The reward comes with sitting on the porch and basking in the fruit of hard work, which is once again pleasurable.

What's on deck for you once the weather cools? Send the editor a sketch of what you are working on and include photos if you can. There

are sure to be others who will love your ideas and may find that they are inspired. Send submissions to the editor, Susan Skommesa, at susanloves1life@gmail.com.

Veggies & Herbs

I find myself excited as I plant fall vegetables. Due to the intense sun and heat, I could not help my tomato plants last through the summer in anticipation of a second harvest this fall. That means new tomato plants are in the ground along with the vegetables that love cool weather, like greens, root vegetables, beans, and the cruciferous family.

Though the garden should be seeded already, do not despair for it certainly is not too late to plant that fall garden with transplants.

Cool-weather loving vegetables more specifically are: 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.

Consider try growing root vegetables too. They love the cold weather and add a heartiness to a couple of winter favorites like soups, stews and pot roasts. They store wonderfully in the ground right where they are growing until you are ready to use them. Cooking root vegetables like parsnip, rutabaga and turnip seem to almost be lost. When is the last time you picked them up at the grocery store or found them part of a dish in a restaurant? Check out page 15 for ideas on how to grow and cook these three nutrition packed, tasty root vegetables.





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 seedlings. You will probably need to water transplants daily and seeds may need extra help germinating. Though 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 or visit our website at txmq.org/hendersonmq, and scroll to the bottom of the opening page for details.

Flowers for Beauty, Cutting & 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 **2023 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 & Shrubs

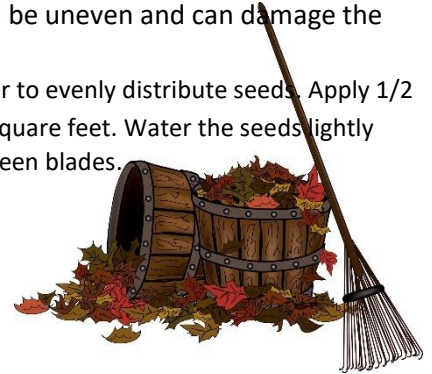
Through **SEPTEMBER**, keep watering your trees and shrubs as needed. However, transplanting and planting new trees and shrubs in **OCTOBER** gives their roots months to grow and become well established before new growth begins in the spring and summer heat and drought arrives.

Lawn & 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 fertilize 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 slightly 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!



From The Garden to The Table

By Susan Skommesa, Henderson County Master Gardener

You may not be very familiar with turnips, rutabagas and parsnips, as these root vegetables seem to have fallen out of popularity over the years. There is no point in growing vegetables the gardener and family won't eat. However, let's consider that perhaps we tend not to eat certain vegetables simply because they are not familiar. Heading into winter, these root vegetables are excellent in all the dishes we love when the temperatures drop and desire for hearty food surges. Root vegetables are easy to grow and store in the winter, and the internet is replete with tasty recipes.

Turnips:

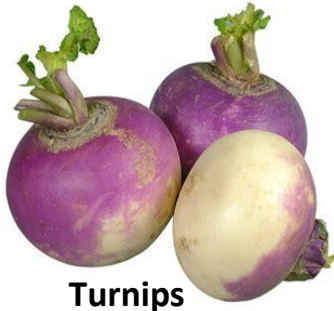
Now is a great time to plant turnips. Texas A&M has a great article that can be downloaded at <https://agrillifelearn.tamu.edu/s/product/easy-gardening-turnip-and-mustard-greens/01t4x000004Ofiz>. This information sheet contains all you need to know to grow turnips and mustard greens. In general Turnips like full sun and well-drained soil. The article says that for a fall crop, start planting 8 to 10 weeks before the first expected frost. *That's now!* Keep the plants weed free, and fertilize when they are 5 or 6 inches tall as the greens need the nitrogen. From the article:

"Sprinkle the planting regularly with water to prevent soil crusting until the small plants break through. Under good conditions, most of the plants should be up in 3 to 7 days."

If you are in it for the turnip greens, and protect the plants, you can harvest leaves well into the winter. Cut several leaves from different turnips, being sure to leave behind at least 2/3 of the plant. Much like lettuce, the turnip will keep sprouting leaves.

If it's the turnips you are after, try to harvest them while they are small or young, about the size of a large egg, as they have a milder and sweeter flavor than their older and larger counterparts.

If buying them at the store, look for leaves that are bright green and healthy. If the leaves are healthy, the turnips should be as well. In addition, choose turnips that are heavy for their size, as light ones will be woody when cooked.



Turnips

Turnip greens are filled with amazing nutrients. The dark leafy greens that top the turnip have a peppery zing to them, much like mustard greens or arugula. They work well in many cooked dishes. They add spice in Southern-style cuisine and a pleasing bite to stir-fry, quiche and stews. Turnip greens, cut bite size, also work well in soups. As they cook, or are braised for a long time, they wilt nicely and become tender. You may want to avoid eating them raw, as they tend to be tough and fibrous.

The turnip root can be cooked unpeeled and there are so many ways to prepare them. Anything from cutting into chunks and adding to a roast in the last hour of cooking, to boiling and puree with mashed potatoes and carrots.

An article from North Carolina University's Cooperative Extension website, cites the nutritional density of this vegetable:

"One cup of mashed turnips contains about 27 mg of vitamin C, an antioxidant. Adults should consume between 75 and 90 mg of vitamin C daily in order to support tissue repair and immunity. Turnips also provide most of the B vitamins, including riboflavin, thiamin, niacin, folate and pantothenic acid. One cup also has 0.2 mg of the 1.3 mg of vitamin B6 you need daily. The B vitamins help with fat, carbohydrate and protein metabolism; nervous system function; and healthy skin, hair, eyes and liver.

Turnip greens are an excellent source of vitamin K, vitamin A (in the form of beta-carotene), vitamin C, folate, copper, manganese, dietary fiber, calcium, vitamin E and vitamin B6. They are a very good source of potassium, magnesium, pantothenic acid, vitamin B2, iron and phosphorus."

To read the full article, which includes turnip recipes, go to: <https://lenoir.ces.ncsu.edu/2016/11/tune-in-to-turnips-and-turnip-greens/>

Rutabagas:

According to a Perdue University website, the rutabaga is thought to originate as a cross between a turnip and a wild cabbage, probably in Bohemia around the 17th century. It is an excellent livestock crop as well as densely nutritious for humans.

The rutabaga is similar to the turnip and comes from the same family; *Brassica napobrassica*. However, the rutabaga has yellower flesh, a larger tap root, a stronger sweeter flavor and is harvested when the bulb is larger; 4 – 6 inches. The leaves are waxier than the turnip, but can also be eaten when young. The older and bigger the leaves get, the tougher they get.

Rutabagas need the same growing conditions as the turnip, but require more time. Because of this, they grow faster in the fall than the spring as cool weather offers conditions that mean rapid growth and quality. Spring planting gets off to a slow start as the seeds prefer at least 50-degree soil. Once sprouted though, these plants are both cold hearty and drought tolerant. They like sunny, fertile, well-draining, slightly acidic soil.



Rutabaga

Use mulch to keep the soil cool. Plant 3- 6 inches apart. They are not prone to pests and can store in cool conditions for many months.

Rutabaga can be eaten raw, but should be blanched first. To cook, trim the top and bottom and then peel. They can be baked, roasted, boiled, braised, microwaved, steamed and stir-fried. Again, the internet contains lots of great recipes.

Resources:

- <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/guides/specialty-vegetables/rutabaga/>
- <https://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/afcm/rutabaga.html>
- <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/vegetables/rutabaga.html>

Parsnips:



Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*), a member of the carrot and parsley family, is a winter root vegetable. Other members of this family are fennel, dill, caraway, chervil, and cumin. Some sources say that the only edible part of the parsnip is the root; that the top, including the stem, flowers and leaves, emit a sap that can create irritation to the skin. These are referred to as wild parsnips. There are other varieties where the greens are edible. Without knowing the difference, I'd err on the side of caution. If any reader has more information on this aspect of the parsnip, please email the information to the editor and an update will be given in the next edition.

According to University of Massachusetts at Amherst, the flavor is not fully developed until the roots have been exposed to near freezing temperatures in the early winter. This is due to the fact that the starch in the parsnip changes into sugar, resulting in a strong sweet nutty flavor, and even more so when the root is young.

Though in the same family, the nutritional value of the parsnip is different than that of the carrot. Parsnips provide fiber, folate, vitamins C and K, manganese, potassium, and magnesium.

Parsnips grow best in well-draining, loose, sandy soil free of large rocks, as the root can grow 4 to 8 inches long. They require full sun, and do not tolerate heat well. They require plenty of moisture, organic matter and mulch to keep the soil moist and cool. Allow 2-4 inches between each plant. Harvest after the first light frost in fall when the tops of the plants have frozen. As mentioned earlier, the frost stimulates the conversion of starch in the roots to sugar, giving the roots a sweeter flavor. Parsnips need to be protected from the ground freezing if you are to harvest through the winter.

To harvest, brush the soil away from the top of the root and pull the root from the soil by the top of the root. Cut off the greens and wash to store in the refrigerator in an airtight bag. Parsnips may also be stored in moist sand to keep them fresh prior to use.

When cooking with parsnips, cut off the top and bottom, peel, split down the middle, and cut out the woody core. Parsnips are great with roast beef, added in the last hour of cooking, or in soups or stews, added in the last half hour of cooking.

Resources:

- <https://plantvillage.psu.edu/topics/parsnip/infos>
- <https://ag.umass.edu/nutrition/publication-resources/produce-spotlight/parsnips>



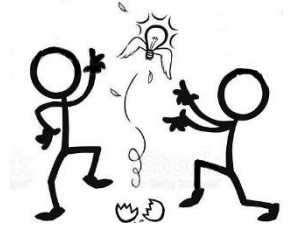
Did you know?

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, Plant Library 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/>

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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