

Henderson County Master Gardeners Association

January – February 2023



INSIDE DIRT THIS ISSUE



President's Message

Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener

**Hey Everybody! Happy 2023!
Are you ready!?!**

Yes, I am the new HCMGA President for 2023. (...and at this point I'm still the editor of this newsletter!)

A bit about me before we get on to you and 2023... I am a 2018 HCMG graduate. My areas of love are greenhouse beds, and veggies. In the last year or so, I've become very interested in pollinator plants. Initially it was for the sake of producing veggies, but how do you not fall in love with flowers?

I've accumulated a vast and interesting array of experiences and hobbies. If you become a Henderson County Master Gardener, I'm sure you'll start to figure out what some of those interests are. I have this philosophy that master gardeners become master gardeners because they want to learn, make friends, and get connected through a mutual love – gardening. It is my honor to be able to test out that philosophy this year as president. I invite you to join us in our sandbox of fun, friends and learning about a plethora of fascinating gardening topics. You can do this by becoming a Master Gardener, or by joining us at our community education outreach events. These are free to the public and may give you answers to your gardening challenges.

Without further Ado, I introduce you to our newest members that have just graduated from their internship:



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- Annalisa (Lisa) Alexander
- Nancy Bruce
- Vicky Domingue
- Melissa Henson



- Ronald (Ron) Jackson
- Sue Krider
- Kelly McDowell
- Cathy Reagan

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

I would also like to introduce you to our newest interns:



- Amy Johnson
- Don Penner
 - Terry Sanders

HCMGA applauds these 3 for completing the **Texas Master Gardener Training Course** in the fall of 2022. They are now officially interns! In exchange for the 50+ hours of training they received from Texas A&M AgriLife, they will now contribute 50+ hours of volunteer service in 2023. Working through HCMGA, the interns will help the organization provide horticultural-related information to the community. We are excited that we will get to know these interns, as we work alongside them for the benefit of Henderson County.

You can learn more about our upcoming events in multiple ways:

- In each issue of *Inside Dirt*,
- on our Facebook page, [Henderson County Master Gardener - Home | Facebook](#)
- at our website <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/>
- 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)



HCMGA Projects

- **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/resources/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/publicity/>

Pansies: Jesters of the Winter Gardens

By Lydia Holley, Master Gardener



Pansies are the jesters of the winter garden; with their cheerful faces every child adores seeing. They laugh in the face of winter, and dress in a variety of color combinations. Pansies are a hybrid of *Viola* (*Viola x wittrockiana*), bred for over 200 years in order to achieve the face which makes them famous, multiple colors, a larger-sized bloom, and even recently, some with crinkled edges on their petals. Another recent development is the loss of their 'face' which makes them so recognizable, should you want a more sophisticated look.

Although Pansies may bloom for up to six months out of the year, they may not bloom consistently. They will go dormant in very cold weather, blooming again when temperatures become milder. They

are the perfect annual plant for winters in East Texas since they can survive temperatures below 0 degrees F.

Pansies have large blooms while the blooms of Johnny Jump Ups are tiny. Johnny Jump Ups (*Viola cornuta* or *v. tricolor*) are also used as a winter annual in East Texas. However, in spring, you will find Johnny Jump Ups will tolerate more heat.

Both Pansies and Johnny Jump Ups can be susceptible to fungus. It is recommended that you not plant them in the same soil more than three years in a row. Still, you can place them in containers or move them around various areas as a bedding plant to give your garden color throughout the winter.

They are best planted in East Texas during the months of October, November, December, or February. Because they come in such a wide variety of blue, purple, white, yellow, and bronze, sometimes the hardest thing about growing Pansies and Johnny Jump Ups is deciding which color to choose. If you find it impossible, you can also purchase them in mixed shades.

Add a little fun to your garden this winter by planting Pansies, Johnny Jump Ups, or both. Their faces will bring a smile to yours and add a bit of cheer in the coldest season of the year.

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



Editor's Note:

Lydia Holley, 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://txmq.org/hendersonmq/publicity/>.



"My garden is my most beautiful masterpiece" ~ Claude Monet

Resources for Native 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/>



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



Make sure your tools are sharp and clean. Dip in a mild bleach solution between cuts. 



Judge each day not by
the harvest you reap but
by the seeds you plant.

~
William A. Ward

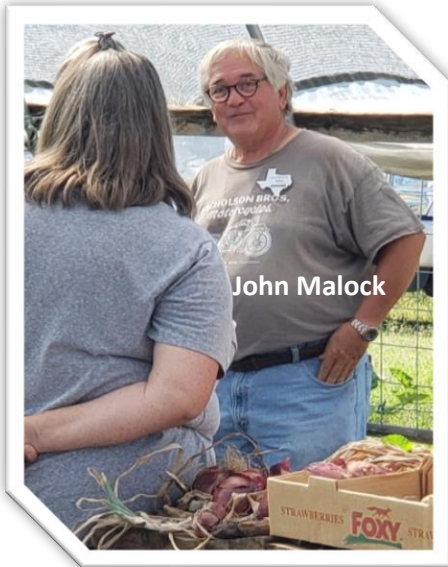
*"When people will not weed
their own minds, they are
apt to be overrun by
nettles."*

~ Horace Walpole



Master Gardeners Hold Annual Awards Banquet

By Lydia Holley, Master Gardener



John Malock

Henderson County Master Gardener Association held its annual awards banquet on Wednesday, December 14.

John Malock was named Master Gardener of the Year, a prestigious recognition voted by fellow Master Gardeners.

Ron Jackson was named Intern of the Year. Interns volunteer a set number of hours before becoming certified as a Master Gardener. Interns who completed intern requirements and graduated to certified Master Gardener status were: Lisa Alexander, Nancy Bruce, Vicky Domingue, Melissa Henson, Ron Jackson, Sue Krider, Kelly McDowell, and Cathy Reagan.



Ron Jackson and Dub Hirst

Class members who graduated to intern status were: Amy Johnson, Don Penner, and Terry Sanders.

Master Gardeners receive service pins after certain milestones. Sharon Barrett received a pin for **20 years of service.**



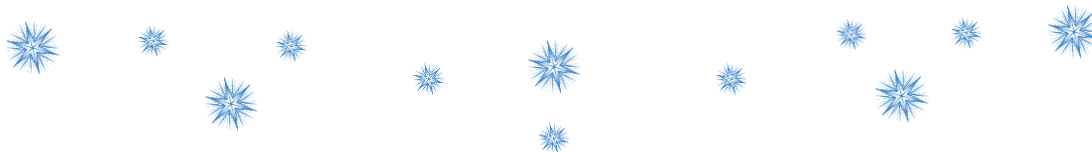
Dub Hirst and Sharon Barrett

Margaret Dansby received a pin for 15 years of service. Judy Haldeman and Cherie Tanneberger were recognized for 10 years of service. Claudia Durham and John Maloch were awarded pins for five years of service. Rachel Bayless, Carl Beck, Cindy Beck, Cindy Carter, Rebecca Chapa, Rita "Honey" Hammond, Dub Hirst, Cindy Oliver, and Ellen Sokolovic were thanked for their 3 years of service.

Because of a glitch on receiving the pins, service pins were not awarded last year. Master Gardeners recognized this year for the number of service years completed in 2021 were: Elmer Belssner, Christy Warnock, and Beverly "Bev" Weidenfeller for 15 years; Linda Belssner, Jeanne Brown, Sara Drummond, Addie Matney, and Kathy Murphy-Boley for five years; Shery Damuth, Susan Skommesa, Sherry Sorrell, and Barbara Thompson for three years.

New officers were also installed. Officers for 2023 are: Susan Skommesa, President; Pat Calderon, Vice President Programs and Administration; Deb Pascoe, Vice President Member and Community Education; Lisa Alexander, Secretary; Barbara Thompson, Treasurer; Melissa Henson, Historian.

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



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!



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/>

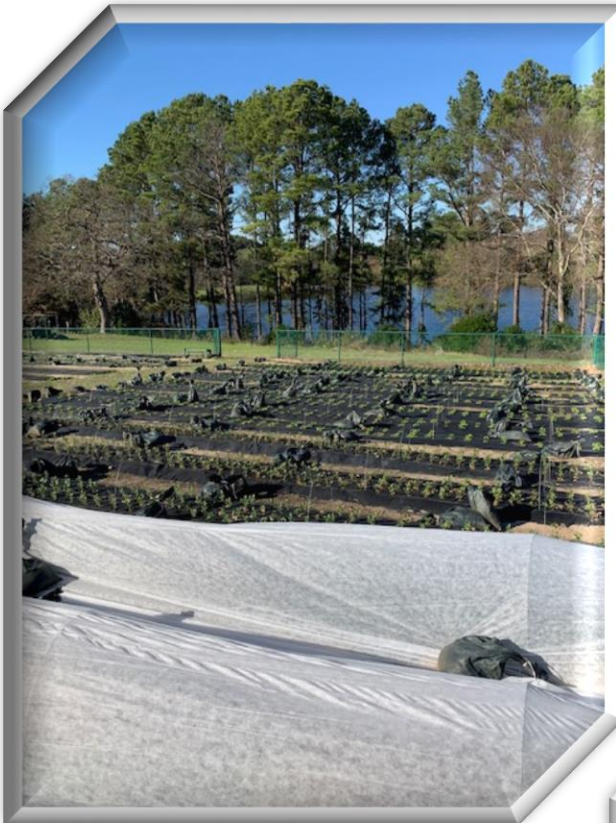
Have you seen our videos on Facebook? Go check them out at

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



A Winter Flower Garden

By Cindy Oliver, Master Gardener of R/C Flower Farm



In mid-November I planted around 4500 “cool flower” plugs – solidago, ornamental kale, yarrow, rudbeckia, snapdragons, campanula, Bells of Ireland, dianthus, statice and ammi. Planting cool season hardy annuals in the late fall and early spring produces the easiest and earliest-blooming garden ever. The key is to allow them to get established during cool weather. Now that they are planted, I just sit back and watch the weather very closely. If the temps are going to dip down to the 20s for several days, then I will put the row covers over the beds and secure with lots of sandbags. When it warms up, I take the row covers down and lay them on the side of each row under the sandbags. I have 26 beds of “cool flowers” that are 3’ X 30’. That is what I do all winter: cover and uncover the rows. :/

FREEZE tip: watering plants a few days in advance of a cold snap is beneficial. Watering just before a freeze can help too, by creating warmth. The water will lose its heat slowly over the



hours into the colder temperatures. Water acts as an insulator. So, I always water the garden well before there is a freeze!

I will plant another round of “cool flowers” in the early spring (late February/early March) including lisianthus, ammi, marigolds, strawflower and scabiosa.

In the winter of 2021 (Snowmageddon) the ice came first and froze the row cover. So, when it snowed, the row covers were frozen solid and could hold the snow. They looked like little igloos 😊. I didn’t lose one flower.

Last winter, however, we had really warm days in November and December and then





intermittent freezes. And this happened several times. The flowers didn't like that, and I lost about 500 snapdragons and a few other flowers.

So, I'm always keeping my fingers crossed that we have an easy winter and look forward to a beautiful spring garden with plenty of flowers!



FIG TREES

Editor's Note:

Following this note is the majority of an article by **George Ray McEachern**, Extension Horticulturist at Texas A & M University. The article is dated December 9, 1996. This article is a bit longer than we normally include in this newsletter, so the portion on propagation has been edited out to reduce the length a bit. However, if you have fig trees or want to try growing them, this article is an amazing source of all you need to know. The full version, including the section on propagation, can be found at <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/fruit/Figs/figs.html> Enjoy this truly well researched and beautifully written article on a Texas favorite: the **Fig Tree**.



Figs (*Ficus carica*, L.) have been a part of Texas homesteads since the early development of the state. Figs grow extremely well along the Texas Gulf Coast, but dooryard trees can be grown in any section of Texas. In the northern portions of the state, fig trees will require some cold protection and supplemental irrigation will be needed in arid areas or during extended dry periods.

The fig fruit is unique. Unlike most fruit, in which the edible structure is matured ovary tissue, the fig's edible structure is actually stem tissue. The fig fruit is an inverted flower with both the male and female flower parts enclosed in stem tissue. The structure is known botanically as a syconium. At maturity the interior of the fig contains only the remains of

these flower structures, including the small gritty structures commonly called seeds. Actually, these so-called seeds are usually nothing more than unfertilized ovaries that failed to develop, and they impart the resin-like flavor associated with figs.

Site Requirements: Figs require full sunlight for maximum fruit production. When choosing a site for figs, select an area that has sun for most of the day, or, expect reduced performance from the trees. Early morning sun is particularly important to dry dew from the plants, thereby reducing the incidence of diseases. Figs are frost and freeze sensitive and perform best south of the 800-hour chilling zone. Mature figs which are fully dormant can endure temperatures of 10 degrees F with little damage.

Soils: Although figs can be grown in all types of soil, they do not tolerate poorly drained sites. Avoid sites and soils where water stands for more than 24 hours after a rain. In areas of poor drainage, roots receive insufficient oxygen, which results in stunted growth and eventual death of the tree. Figs are relatively salt-tolerant and can be grown along the coast near brackish water.

Fig Types: There are four distinct types of figs; however, the only one that is significant to commercial growers in Texas is the Common Fig.

1. **Common Fig**

These figs develop parthenocarpically (without pollination) and are by far the most prevalent type of fig grown in Texas. The fruit does not have true seeds and is primarily produced on current season wood. Varieties recommended for Texas are of the Common Fig type.

2. **Caprifig**

The Caprifig produces a small non-edible fruit; however, the flowers inside the Caprifig produce pollen. This pollen is essential for fertilizing fruit of the Smyrna and San Pedro types. The pollen is transported from the Caprifig to the pollen-sterile types by a Blastophaga wasp. Commercial growers hang baskets of Blastophaga-infested Caprifigs so that the wasps can effectively fertilize the fruit. Caprifigs were grown successfully at Del Rio before 1901.

3. **Smyrna**

The Smyrna fig varieties produce large edible fruit with true seeds. The Blastophaga wasp and Caprifigs are required for pollination and normal fruit development. If this fertilization process does not occur, fruit will not develop properly and will fall from the tree. Smyrna-type figs are commonly sold as dried figs.

4. **San Pedro**

This type of fig bears two crops of fruit in one season--one crop on the previous season's growth and a second crop on current growth. The first crop, called the Breba crop, is parthenocarpic and does not require pollination. Fruit of the second crop is the Smyrna type and requires pollination from the Caprifig. Breba crops are produced early in the spring on last season's wood. However, the second crop of the Smyrna type may fail to set because of lack of pollination from Blastophaga and Caprifig. This second crop fruit drop frequently discourages homeowners.



Varieties: There are a number of Common Fig varieties recommended for Texas.

1. **Celeste (Malta):** The Celeste fig is small, brown to purple colored, and adapted to all areas of Texas. Celeste is the most cold-hardy of all Texas fig varieties. The tree is large, vigorous, and very productive. Celeste usually does not have a Breba crop; the main crop ripens in mid-June before the main crop of other Texas fig varieties. Celeste has a tight closed eye which inhibits the entry of the dried fruit beetle. The fruit does not have excessive souring on the tree. Celeste has excellent fresh dessert



quality with a rich sweet flavor. It is an excellent processing fig, either frozen or processed as fig preserves. Do not prune mature Celeste trees heavily since this can reduce the crop.

2. **Texas Everbearing (Brown Turkey):** Texas Everbearing is a **medium sized fig adapted to Central and East Texas**. It is the most common variety in Central Texas. The tree is vigorous, very large, and productive. The early crop ripens in May; the main crop ripens in late June and continues to ripen into August. The fruit has a short, plump stem and moderately closed eye which reduces souring on the tree. The fruit is nearly seedless and has a mild sweet flavor. Early crop fruit is very large, sometimes 2 inches in diameter.
3. **Alma:** Alma is a Common Fig variety released by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station in 1974. Alma resulted from a cross between the female Allison and the male Hamma Caprifig. It is a late season variety with very high fruit quality. The fruit skin is rather unattractive; however, the flesh has an excellent rich, sweet flavor. The tree is moderately vigorous, very productive, and comes into production at a very early age. The eye of Alma fruit is sealed with a drop of thick resin that inhibits the entry of the dried fruit beetle, thus reducing on-the-tree fruit souring. **Alma is very frost sensitive, especially as a young tree, and typically survives best when grown within 200 miles from the Gulf of Mexico.**
4. **Magnolia:** This variety (Madonna, Dalmatia, Brunswick) is the most popular commercial canning fig in the South. It is a weak growing tree with fruit that sours and splits badly during wet weather. Splitting and souring can be reduced, however, if its fruits are picked just before full maturity and used as preserves. This variety also produces fair-to-good crops on sucker wood the season after freeze injury. The fruit is medium to large with brown skin and light amber pulp. It is prominently swollen at the fruit base with a very open eye. Fruiting is spread over a long period if the tree is pruned heavily. Figs will appear on both current and previous season's growth. This variety is widely used as a dooryard variety in Texas **but because of its splitting and souring problems, it is no longer recommended.**
5. **Kadota:** This variety (Gentile, White Endich, Dottato) is the commercial fig of California. Varietal trials show it **does well in Texas, particularly in South Texas**. The fruit becomes rubbery in drier and hotter areas. The eye is open but it is characteristically filled with a honey-like substance which prevents entry of insects and subsequent souring. Fruiting characteristics are similar to those of Magnolia and Everbearing. It will produce on sucker wood the year after cold injury. The fruit is yellow to green with seeds and amber pulp. The fruit is excellent canned or preserved. Do not plant this variety in drier areas of Texas.



Cultural practices: Figs should be spaced 12 to 20 feet apart and should not be fertilized at planting. Figs should be cut back when they are transplanted and survive better if set 2 to 4 inches deeper than they were grown in the nursery. The "heading back" develops lateral branches and reduces water loss from the above ground portion. Since the root system may be damaged during transplanting operations, water uptake may be reduced until they become established. Fig trees planted in late fall often develop root systems before leafing out in the spring, but because young trees are more susceptible to cold injury, it is often advisable to delay transplanting until just before dormancy is broken in early spring. Young trees to be transplanted should be dug with care to prevent root damage. Inspect trees bought from nurseries to insure that roots are healthy and are not damaged. Remove any broken or dried roots and transplant young trees into a hole deeper and wider than necessary for the root system. Crumble the soil around the roots, and pack it down several times during the filling operation to bring all roots into contact with moist soil. After planting, water the tree to settle

the soil firmly around the roots. If conditions are extremely dry, watering before the hole is completely filled is beneficial.

Training: Figs should be trained into a single trunk, open vase-type tree if planted in the 200-hour chilling zone. The stool multi-trunk system is by far the most frequently used in Texas because freezes occasionally kill the upper part of the plant. The stool system is common where freezes occasionally kill the upper part of the tree. Figure 1 illustrates the two types of training methods.

Figure 1. Mature figs trees trained to a multi-trunk stool type and single trunk, open vase type (click on image to see larger view).

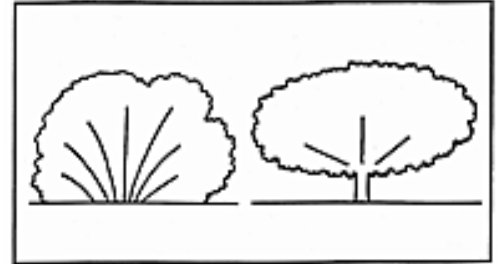


Figure 1. Mature figs trees trained to a multi-trunk stool type and single trunk, open vase type.

Pruning: Figs should be pruned very little. Do not prune mature Celeste and Alma trees because this reduces the crop size. Texas Everbearing produces a fair crop following a heavy winter pruning. To stimulate new growth thin out older trees which grow very little each year. Thinning also increases fruit size. Prune the trees enough to stimulate approximately 1 foot of growth each year. Remove all weak, diseased, or dead limbs each dormant season.

Irrigation: Soil moisture must be managed carefully because most roots of the fig trees are close to the soil surface and can easily dry out. Figs are very susceptible to soilborne nematodes that feed on small roots and reduce water movement into the tree. For these reasons, apply water to the trees as drought develops. Slight leaf wilting in the afternoon is a good indication of water stress. Mulching with straw or grass clippings helps maintain uniform soil moisture and reduces weed competition for available soil water. Water stress frequently causes premature fruit drop of Texas fig varieties which do not have true seeds. This problem is very common in hot, dry areas when the fig tree is grown in shallow soil and roots are nematode infested. Trees planted in shallow sites are subject to injury or death when the soil is saturated with water. Good water management, including regular irrigation and mulching, helps maintain tree health and vigor and reduces fruit drop.

Dormancy and Cold: Factors influencing a fig tree's susceptibility to cold injury are related to the tree's entrance into dormancy. A mature tree which has lost all of its leaves and becomes totally dormant can withstand much cooler temperatures than a rapidly growing tree at the time of first frost. Limiting irrigation in the fall of the year to reduce growth will encourage the onset of dormancy. A fully dormant fig tree can withstand temperatures as low as 10 degrees F. In North Texas, plant figs along the south side of a building to help reduce freeze damage. Straw mulches placed well over the base of the tree will help to insulate the tree during freezes and help prevent killing the crown of the tree (Figure 5). When trees or limbs freeze, give the tree ample time to grow before removing the frozen limbs; then new wood can be produced.

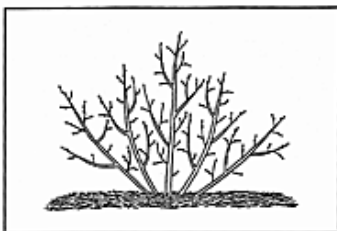


Figure 5. A well-mulched, dormant, mature fig tree.

Harvest: Figs should be allowed to ripen fully on the tree. They must be picked as they ripen; otherwise, spoilage from the dried fruit beetle can occur. On-the-tree spoilage or souring is caused by microorganisms in the fully ripe fruit. These organisms are usually carried into the open eye of the fig by insects, particularly the dried fruit beetle. Daily harvests and the removal of overripe, spoiled figs can greatly reduce spoilage problems. This is particularly true of varieties which have an open eye. Use gloves and long sleeves when harvesting figs to prevent skin irritation from the fig latex.

Pests: The major problems for figs in Texas are root-knot nematodes, fig rust, fig souring and cotton root rot.

1. **The root-knot nematode**, *Meloidogyne sp.*, the most important pest that affects Texas figs, is not readily noticed by the average person. They are microscopic soil-inhabiting worms which attack plant's root systems. They attack and feed on roots, causing them to swell or gall, thus interfering with normal uptake of water and nutrients. These galls are easily seen if root samples are observed. Nematode problems may go unnoticed for several years, but as the population builds up, the tree loses vigor and declines gradually. Nematodes infestations can contribute to premature fruit drop. To prevent root-knot nematodes in figs, obtain nematode-free plants and plant in nematode-free soil.

2. **Fig rust** is an important fungal disease that attacks the leaves of figs caused by *Physopella fici*. Fig rust first appears as small yellowish-orange spots on the leaves. These lesions enlarge slightly and may become very numerous as the season progresses. Rust causes complete defoliation of many trees in the state each year, resulting in ragged-looking trees. In addition, trees defoliated early in the season may initiate new growth, increasing susceptibility to cold injury. Defoliation does not occur early enough to cause fruit loss except in late ripening varieties. Rust is controlled by neutral copper sprays. One or two applications made in May or early June usually keeps trees in fairly good condition until after fruit ripens. In very wet seasons, one or two additional applications may be necessary. A good index for spraying is when the first leaves on the tree have reached full size. The second spray should follow in 3 to 4 weeks. It is extremely important to get good leaf coverage with the spray material.
3. **Fig souring** is a constant problem in Texas. The first step in preventing losses attributed to souring is to grow recommended varieties, which have a closed eye, a drooping fruit characteristic, and resistance to fruit splitting. Controlling insects and using resistant varieties restrain most fruit souring problems most of the season. Late season infestations may be impractical to control.
4. **Cotton Root Rot** or *Phymatotrichum omnivorum* is the number one killer of figs in Texas. This organism is a fungus primarily associated with alkaline soils. This organism kills the roots causing the plant to wither and die in a short time. There is no resistant variety or rootstock. The only control, which is impractical at best, is to completely recondition the soil before planting. This means completely altering the soil pH in the area with a soil acidifier. This type of control is not permanent, however. Several other minor diseases associated with figs can be found but are a problem only in more humid areas.

COMMON CAUSES OF FIG FRUIT FAILURE

Condition	Probable Cause	Suggested Remedies
All fruit drops when one-third to two-thirds full size.	Wrong variety for area	Destroy tree and replant with recommended variety.
Leaves drop when mature; fruit withers and fails to mature.	Fig rust or other leaf-spot diseases, or a twig blight.	Use neutral copper spray. Rake up and burn old leaves.
Fruiting is poor; tree growth is retarded. Roots have knots or galls and are distorted.	Nematode damage, poor soil conditions or excess water.	Mulch and keep moisture level adequate.
Fruit fails to mature; leaves are small. Vigorous new wood arises from the base.	Low temperatures have killed some stem tissue.	Cut tree back to healthy tissue and develop a new top from suckers.
Fruit sours and many splits.	Unsuitable variety or unusually wet year.	If unsuitable variety, replant or pick fruit before maturity and preserve.
Fruit is tough and falls prematurely during hot, dry weather. (Celeste only)	Excessive heat.	No control.

Other pests--birds such as blue jays, mockingbirds, and grackles, cause fruit losses each year. There is no suitable control method; however, early morning harvests prevent losses to some extent. Also, there are a number of synthetic nettings available which may be used to cover trees during the ripening season.

January & February Gardening Tips

In General:

Winter can bring so many different configurations of freeze and warm; you never know what to expect. We need those freezing temperatures for our fruit trees to produce, but man how we love the warmer days of winter! The warmer days are ideal for preparing beds for spring, pruning trees and bushes, weeding, cleaning tools, sharpening or changing out blades, fixing fencing or garden trim and seed starting. Transitioning from a couple weeks of freeze to beautiful weather, as we have done this year, sparks motivation. But where to start?



Get 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:

Yeh, it's finally time to start seeds indoors for: Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Collards, Eggplant, Herbs, Kale, Lettuce, Peppers, and Tomatoes.

From now till the middle of February, plant English Peas & Garlic. During the first two weeks of February, plant Chinese Cabbage, Carrots, Collards, Kale, Irish Potatoes. Throughout February, plant Asparagus, Beets, Cabbage transplants, Kohlrabi, Leaf Lettuce, Mustard, Onion sets, Spinach, Swiss Chard, Radish, Turnips, Strawberry transplants.



Note: Keep your frost blankets handy!



Flower Care:

Flower seeds can also be started indoors. From now through the middle of February, try starting seeds for Begonias, Marigolds, Periwinkles, Petunias, and other summer flowers.



Plant cool season annuals like Balsam, Calendula, Cannas, Dianthus, Larkspur, Nasturtium, Pansies, Phlox, Snapdragons, and Stock. You can also plant summer bulbs and corms, like Dahlia and Gladiolus. Both of these like full sun in well-prepared soil.

There is dividing and pruning that can be done. Divide your Cannas, Daylilies, Mums, Ornamental Grasses and Summer Phlox once new spring growth appears. Prune your non-evergreen ornamental grasses to a height of about one foot. Prune Clematis and Hydrangeas. However, before pruning either, make sure you look up important pruning details in the HCMGA *Monthly Gardening Guide*. August's *Tips and Tricks* guide you through when to prune which kind of Hydrangeas. February's *Tips and Tricks* talk about the three kinds of Clematis and offers important tips for pruning them as well.

Caring for your trees and shrubs:



Refresh the mulch around your shrubs. If you are planning on planting new shrubs, prepare the soil now with compost and fertilizer. In early February, prune summer-flowering trees and shrubs before buds begin to swell for spring. Now that the leaves are off the trees, examine and evaluate your landscape. Notice the "bones" of your design and plan for any changes. You may move existing trees and shrubs to a different location in the landscape.



Clean out dead wood and remove dangerous or bothersome limbs on your property.



In mid to late January, weather permitting and as they become available in nurseries, feel free to start planting fruit trees, vines, Roses, and deciduous flowering plants.

Prune your fruit trees, as it keeps your harvest within reach. Thin crowded branches to allow the sun to stimulate new growth, as well as produce more fruit. Apricots, Peaches and Plums need pruning annually. You may spray with dormant oils.

Dormant oils on fruit trees dissolve the protective wax coating on, and/or smother, overwintering insects like aphids, scales and mites, as well as their eggs. It is applied in the winter months when fruit trees are in their inactive or dormant period. Hence the name of the oil. For dormant oil to provide proper control, the oil must come in contact with the pests. For more information on this topic, refer to the Texas A&M article found here: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/fruit/dormantoil.html>

Once February arrives, do not prune spring-flowering shrubs (Azaleas, Forsythia, Pearlbush, Quince, and Spirea) until after they bloom. Prune Roses around Valentine's Day, and love on your Crape Myrtles by using appropriate pruning techniques. Razoring Crape Myrtles so that all branches are level may be common, but it is not correct.

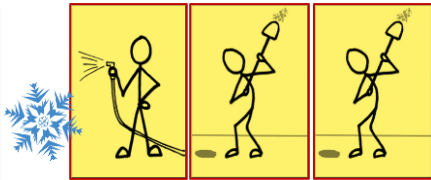
Caring for Grass and Groundcover:



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



Did you join HCMGA to meet people, belong and learn? There is no better way to meet people and learn than to join in and work on a project. If you are not connected 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 connected today!

2023 HCMGA Meetings

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

January 18 th	July 19 th
February 15 th	August 16 th
March 15 th	September 20 th
April 19 th	October 18 th
May 17 th	November 15 th
June 21 st	December 20 th

Note that once the board meets in January, meeting times and days may change. Watch your email for details!



Master Gardeners,
remember to
record your hours!



Member and Intern Requirements:

Members need:

- ✓ 12 hours of volunteer service
- ✓ 6 hours of continuing education
- ✓ attendance at a minimum of 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 Skomma at susanloves1life@gmail.com.

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

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



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2023 Officers

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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.

