Henderson County Master Gardeners Association (HCMGA)

May & June 2023

INSIDE DIRT

President's/Editor's Message

Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener

Hello Friends, and Happy Spring! Welcome to another edition of *Inside Dirt*. In this edition, we take you from growing your own butterflies (yes you read that right), to being schooled on poison ivy, oak, and sumac. In between we have a ton of information for you on roses, free horticultural training events, results and resources from our plant sale, what to do in the garden during May and June, and of course there is so much more.

Backyard gardening is making a strong come back. Studies, articles, and the number of YouTube channels emerging over the last few years that feature homesteading and gardening, show a reemerging interest in growing and supplementing one's own food supply. Once in the garden, people find it a relaxing pastime, but also a challenge as there is so much they don't yet know.

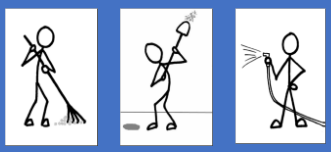
The reality for most people is that growing food for ourselves is not a skill or knowledge set that has been passed down from previous generations. Most have not grown up with a highly productive garden from which the family is fed. So, questions come up. "Ok, I can grow tomatoes, but why are my greens so hard to grow?" "How do I get my plants through the Texas heat?" "My fruit trees or veggies are struggling and seem to need some kind of nutrients, but what?" "How do I deal with gophers, bunnies, pests and deer that want what I grow?" "How do I save my surplus?" "My veggies plants are amazing, but they are not putting on fruit – Why?" There are soooo many questions.

That said, there are plenty of resources from which to learn, and the gardeners of the Henderson County Master Gardeners Association (HCMGA) are a knowledgeable resource. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service trained us to partner with them to volunteer our knowledge to you. As Master Gardeners, we keep learning and training and are ever growing in scope and depth of horticultural knowledge.

It is important that where you get your information be solid. Texas A&M and the EDU network of AgriLife resources around the country are solid. It is also important that the information you get pertains to your growing conditions. HCMGA can provide information relevant to your growing conditions because we are growing our own personal gardens, as well as the HCMGA's training garden, in the same growing conditions as you.

So, a couple of important pieces of information for you if you are struggling at making a go of your garden:

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



1. We can help and have multiple ways you can contact us.
    a. *Call 903-675-6130,*
    b. *Email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com,*
    c. *Visit txmg.org/hendersonmg*
    d. *Visit* https://www.facebook.com/HCmastergardener
2. We hold training events & informational opportunities. Visit our website or Facebook page to find out the latest. The margin on the right has more details.
    a. Harvest Garden Events
    b. Library Series
    c. Summer Series
    d. Farmer's Market
    e. Plant Sale
    f. Fall Festival
3. **Become a Master Gardener!** We sponsor the same AgriLife classes that trained us. Classes are once a week and start in August, going through November. Come join an amazing group of people who love to learn and garden. Contact us now and we can get you registered.
4. When you are researching your question:
    a. Go to the **Plant Files** on our website. There are hundreds of plant files! The information pertains to Henderson County.
    b. Search through the articles on our website
    c. If you decide to google search, in your search bar, type in your key words along with 'TAMU' to find out what Texas A&M has to say on the topic.
    d. Also, you can type in 'EDU' with your key words to find out what other extension services have to say on the topic. However, take into consideration the different growing conditions of the region in which that university resides.

Happy Gardening and we look forward to meeting you!

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/*

Library Series: Educational presentations are hosted by the HCMGA on the second Wednesday of each month. These programs are open to the public at the Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library in Athens. For up to date information https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/events/

Queen of the Garden

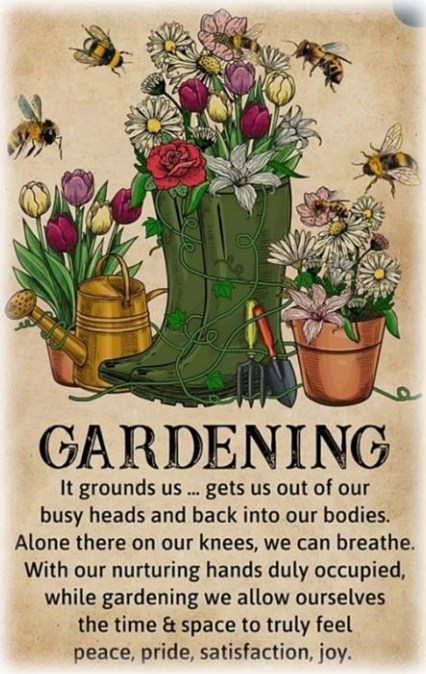
by Lydia Holley, Master Gardener

There is a reason the rose is the most popular flowering shrub. You can find roses which will fit almost any color scheme, in warm to cool tones, from pure white, purple, red, pink, apricot, yellow, and even green.

If you love soft, perfume-like fragrances or spicy, fruity scents, there is a rose that is perfect for you. Or, if you prefer scentless roses, they can be found, too. Roses can bloom wide open or keep furled with multiple petals. Some rose blooms are large. Others are quite dainty.

Additionally, rose bushes grow to various sizes, so if you want something short and compact, get a miniature, dwarf, or low-spreading rose. If you need a large bush, those can be found, too. Some will even climb on posts or arbors, though they need a little help tying themselves to the structure.

Roses look good in a formal setting with boxwoods, or in a cottage garden surrounded by various plantings. They only ask for full sun. Some prefer to be pruned, some do not mind being hedged, while others appreciate being left to grow bushy. You can choose a rose for its name, too, and since there are so many, you can probably find one that reminds you of a loved one. Worried about thorns? There are thornless varieties, though I still would not run my hands up the stem.



No wonder so many start a flower garden by choosing a rose first. It can be hard to venture away from roses since they seem to fit in almost any spot in the garden. Many only start growing annuals and perennials as companion plantings to their roses.

Some gardeners will not grow roses because they learned in the 60s that all roses have to be sprayed with chemicals. It is true that some need it. However, due to modern rose breeders selecting introductions based upon disease resistance, many do not need spraying. If you are wanting to give roses a try but have been reluctant to do so, look for roses which are resistant to blackspot and powdery mildew. Some roses have a resistance to rust, but rust is not prevalent in East Texas, even though it is best to grow roses away from cedar trees. It is important to look for signs of rose rosette virus, though, as there is no known cure.

Most roses bloom at least twice a year, some constantly throughout the summer. If you add roses to your garden, you will delight in these bushes filled with flowers. In no time at all you should be able to understand why they are called the Queen of the Garden.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com, visit our website at txmg.org/hendersonmg, or our Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/HCmastergardener

Growing Butterflies in your Garden

Ellen Sokolovic, Master Gardener


Queen Butterfly

Few can deny the calming effects that the wonders of nature have upon our souls. The soothing smells of a pine-scented forest, the quiet majesty of a snow-capped mountain range, the peaceful bubbling of a clear blue stream, the splashing sounds of a bird in a birdbath, the mist surrounding a waterfall cascading over a cliff, the sight and sound of ocean waves lapping onto sandy beaches are among the many. Included in these natural wonders is the joyful experience of watching butterflies as they flutter liltingly from flower to flower.

While some people are blessed with life's opportunities to share these magical wonders on a regular basis, EVERYONE can experience the joy of butterflies in their own backyard! Planting a butterfly garden is easy, fun and rewarding.

A successful butterfly garden provides food and shelter for the insect through the (4) stages of its life cycle: Egg, Larva, Pupa (Chrysalis) and Butterfly. It provides nectar plants (flowers) for the adult butterfly. And host plants (food) for the caterpillar to grow and transform into a pupa. There are different host plants for different butterflies. Some are more selective. Some like a variety of plants. Whatever plants you select you need both edibles (host plants) and flowers (nectar plants), and lots of them!


Great Leopard Moth Caterpillar

Easily confused with the Wooly Bear caterpillar

Butterflies were the last major group of insects to appear on the planet! They evolved from moths and are among the most successful groups of insects. The butterfly is in the Lepidopteran family which includes butterflies, moths and "skippers". Skippers are tiny and are named for their quick, darting flight habits. Butterflies are found all over the world and in all types of environments: hot, cold, dry and moist. They are found at sea level and high in the mountains. However, most are found in tropical areas and rainforests. The name Lepidoptera is derived from the Greek, meaning "scaly winged," and refers to the characteristic covering of microscopic dust-like scales on the wings. Lepidoptera are the only insects that have scaly wings. Lepidopterans are both important pollinators and food sources**.** There are roughly 174,250 lepidopteran species in the world, with butterflies and skippers estimated to comprise around 17,950 and moths making up the rest. 750 species of butterflies are in North America, with 432 in Texas!


Giant Swallowtail Butterfly

Like all insects, the butterfly goes through the 4 stages of the life cycle or metamorphosis. It starts with the mature female butterfly laying her eggs on a particular host plant. Within 3 to 6 days the egg hatches into a larva (caterpillar) and proceeds to eat…and eat…and eat. They eat a lot! (That's why it's called a host plant.) The caterpillar can increase their body mass by as much as 1000 times. It has an exoskeleton, or "skin", that does not grow with the caterpillar. As the caterpillar continues to grow it sheds this skin, like a snake. This is called molting. The stages between molts are called instars. Most caterpillars can go through 3 to 5 instars before pupating, or metamorphosis. After 2 to 5 weeks of continuing to grow the caterpillar will reach adulthood, stop eating, and go into its last and final instar stage, to become a chrysalis. To make this chrysalis the caterpillar makes a button of silk which it uses to fasten its

body to. Then the caterpillar skin comes off for the final time. Under this old skin is a hard skin called the chrysalis. It's during the pupation that the larval structures are broken down and go through their transformation into the adult structures of the insect.


Cloudless Sulphur

One of the differences between a moth and a butterfly is the pupal stage. After the last instar both the caterpillar and moth come out as a chrysalis. A moth caterpillar spins a casing of silk around its chrysalis, which is a protective covering, or cocoon. Butterfly chrysalis do not spin cocoons to protect them. Therefore, the chrysalis refers only to the butterfly pupa.

Pupation, or metamorphosis, may last weeks, months or even years depending on temperature and the species. This is the resting stage and most often occurs over winter. Brush piles and stored firewood make excellent shelter for overwintering butterflies. They tend to be under leaves hanging on trees, bushes, and just about anywhere. They often fall with the leaves in the fall season and are often scooped up to be thrown away as neighborhood yards are cleared.

When the adult butterfly emerges from the chrysalis, usually at dawn, it secretes a liquid which softens the shell. Having emerged the butterfly will often sit on the empty shell expanding and drying its wings. When its wings are dry it will fly off looking for a nectar plant.


Tomato Hornworm

will become

Spotted Hawkmoth

The butterfly has the broadest spectrum of color vision of all insects. They can even see ultra-violet light! Once they are able to fly, they are looking for an expanse of color. They are most attracted to white, pink, orange, yellow, red and purple. Their least favorites are green and blue. They use their antennas (like a GPS system) to navigate towards this color. They will land on a flower and use their feet to taste. The butterfly doesn't have a mouth. It has a long tube-like 'tongue', called a proboscis, to sip nectar up through like a straw.

If all that seems complex, it is! And the butterfly garden is the medium that enables the life cycle miracle to happen.

Butterflies fly best in temperatures between 82 and 100 degrees so plant your butterfly garden in full sun with some shade options nearby. During cooler temperatures they like to bask in the sun on stones warming their little bodies up to fly. (They go dormant and are unable to fly at 55 degrees).


American Lady Butterfly

They also use these stones for 'puddling', so provide a source of water collection nearby in your butterfly garden. Male butterflies get minerals from small amounts of water on these stones, as well as from the ground – hence, 'puddling'.

A butterfly garden layout can be structured, or not! The mature butterflies need nectar plants – flowers – and they will find them! Your nectar plants can be in the ground, or in container pots. They can be in hanging baskets. You can have them all in one area or scattered around. The more nectar plants the more butterflies you will have. Just remember that large areas of color are easier for butterflies to see.

Anyone can have flowers to attract butterflies. If you want to ***grow*** butterflies, you need host plants! Host plants are the key ingredient to a butterfly garden. Butterflies lay their eggs on a specific host plant. Those eggs hatch into caterpillars.

The caterpillars then eat (devours) the host plant. Having lots of caterpillars crawling all over your plants isn't always the most appealing sight, so having them in a separate location other than with the nectar plants is often desirable.

This Butterfly Garden is one of the author's many gardens. There are zinnia, black-eyed Susan's, cleome, and blue mist flower. Notice how both flower beds and pots comprise this Butterfly Garden.

Trees are also considered a top source of nectar and host plant for butterflies. 468 butterfly and moth species use oak trees as their host plants! The Red-Spotted Purple butterfly uses not only the oak tree, but also cottonwood, wild cherry, willows, aspens, poplars and hawthorns! Other trees used by butterflies are birch, ash, hackberry, sycamore, pecans, apple and tulip trees. Having any of these trees in and/or around your butterfly garden is an added bonus!

Plant your garden to welcome butterflies in every stage of their development! Provide host plants for laying eggs and hungry caterpillars. For the adult butterfly provide nectar plants and a sunny spot with a shallow water source for puddling. All this within a safe harbor for when the time comes for metamorphosis.

Reminder!! Do not use ANY pesticides in your butterfly garden or all your efforts will be wasted!

To start your butterfly garden, you'll need 3 hosts plants, and 3 nectar plants. The following list is only the beginning. You can add as many as you have room for! These are relatively easy plants to find at your local plant nurseries. The North American Butterfly Association website has a complete list of all the host and nectar plants. (nababutterfly.com)

Milkweed is both the host and nectar plant for the Monarch Butterfly!

Host Plants	Nectar Plants
✓ Parsley – Black Swallowtail ✓ Dill – Black Swallowtail ✓ Fennel – Black Swallowtail ✓ Passionflower - Gulf Fritillary ✓ Snap Dragon – Cabbage white, Common Buckeye, Grey Hairstreak, Pearl Crescent, Swallowtails ✓ Frog Fruit – Phaon Crescent, Common Buckeye, White Peacock ✓ Rue – Swallowtails ✓ Milkweed - Monarchs	• Zinnia • Lantana • Butterfly Bush • Pentas • Phlox • Salvia • Mexican Sunflower • Milkweed

Athens Farmer's Market Activity

Athens Farmer's Market is open on Saturdays from 9am – 1pm. **HCMGA** has a booth. Stop by to ask questions, pick up resources or just talk gardening. We have soil test kits and are also recruiting for this year's Master Gardener class. Sign up at the booth if you're interested. See you there!

Library Series Activity

Master Gardener Deb Pascoe presents May's Library Series event on ***Shade Gardening***, held on May 10th

Did you know hostas are okay with cold weather and can grow to 6 feet tall and wide?

Thanks for a great presentation, Deb!

LIBRARY SERIES

2nd Wednesday of the month
12 noon

Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library
121 S. Prairieville, Athens TXZ 75751

The Poisons: Ivy, Oak and Sumac

Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener

Spring time! Flowers blooming! Wonderful temperatures! Sunshine at last! I was speeding along in the best work weather of the early spring season when the proverbial car crashed into a messy impact: I got a nasty case of poison ivy or oak – AGAIN! The plant source of this skin irritating, itchy, blistery mess did not matter for the first three weeks, until the worst of it past. Once again in my right mind, it became clear that an article was necessary. Interestingly, I got a message from fellow Master Gardener Deb Pascoe. She also suggested an article on this topic. Fascinating timing.

The best treatment for poison Ivy, Oak, or Sumac is to **IDENTIFY** and **AVOID.**

Avoiding however, does not mean you can't get your work done. If you have to mow or clear poison Ivy, Oak, or Sumac, and you are allergic, be sure to cover up **completely**. It is critical to note: **NEVER** burn poison Ivy, Oak, or Sumac as the toxins will be airborne and if inhaled, can cause anywhere from a mild to severe reaction. I'll get into more details shortly.

Identifying poison ivy, oak and sumac is the starting place. All three plants have compound leaves. This means that the leaves are made up of leaflets. Each leaf for ivy and oak are comprised of 3 leaflets. The leaflets can have jagged edges as pictured above, or more smooth edging as pictured here. This vine climbs an oak tree in the forest on my land. For both poison ivy and oak, notice how the leading leaf has a longer stem than the 2 leaves opposite each other. The stem of the 2 facing leaflets can be so small that they may not be visible. This is true for poison ivy as well as oak.

Poison ivy is known for climbing up trees, fences, and anything else it can get its tendrils into. Poison oak can be a shrub, or vine like poison ivy. The plants of both sprout babies from rhizomes, which are actually underground stems. This allows new plants to spread out all around the original plant. Additionally, vines that run along the ground can form roots, creating new plants that add to the lateral expansion of the plants. Older vines tend to look hairy, and can grow quite thick. When climbing, they put out tendrils that infiltrate and secure themselves to the tree or fence.

Despite its name, poison oak is not a true oak. It is part of the sumac family. The leaves of true oaks grow singly, not as compound groupings of 3 leaflets. Oak tree babies, can be mistaken for poison oak as the leaves are shaped similarly, and when young, have a bit of a sheen to them. However, the tell is the grouping. As the saying goes: ‘‘leaves of three, let them be’’. True oaks don’t have grouped leaflets of 3. Each leaf is singular.

Poison sumac is a shrub that ranges in size from small to as large as 25 feet in height. The toxic resin can be more irritating than poison ivy and oak. Sumac has smooth shiny compound leaves. Rather than 3 leaflets like ivy and oak, sumac can range from 7-13 leaflets. The whole grouping of leaflets can range in length from 5 to 15 inches. The shrub produces little white flowers in the spring that later become berries the birds love to eat in the fall when the leaves have become brightly colored. Sumac frequently grows in boggy areas here in East Texas.

Clearly, not every vine in the forest is poisonous. Below are pictured typical vines that are not poisonous.

According to an article on the Mayo Clinic website, a skin irritation may occur when coming in contact with the leaves, stems, or roots of poison Ivy, Oak, or Sumac, due to an oily resin on all parts of the plant called urushiol. If you do come in contact with any part of the plant, wash the oil off immediately. The oil can spread easily, as it can transfer from clothing, animal fur, and your fingers if you scratch yourself. Until spreading stops, I toss any towel I use in the laundry right after each use, as well as my work clothes and regular-wear clothing.

I take lots of precautions, but I'm so allergic, every time I work where there are poison Ivy, Oak, or Sumac, I treat my skin as if I've had contact. I'll jump in the shower and apply a scrub to arms, legs and any skin exposed while working. The scrubs are designed to remove the poisonous oils, and can be found on the shelf in any first aid section of the pharmacy. Since I am not a medical practitioner I give no medical advice. However, I strongly encourage you to get medical care if the blisters are severe and/or are spreading over lots of areas. Interestingly, not everyone reacts to poison Ivy, Oak, or Sumac.

As noted earlier, if you burn poison Ivy, Oak, or Sumac, the oils become airborne much like oil does in the diffusers we use in our homes. If you burn these plants, you risk inhaling the oils. If you have any difficulty breathing after being exposed, seek medical help immediately.

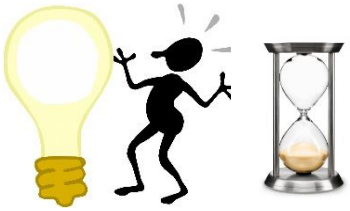
With new found knowledge and a sharp eye, may your gardening be safe and poison free.

RESOUCES:

- https://aggie-hort.tamu.edu/ornamentals/nativeshrubs/toxicodendronvern.htm
- https://extension.umd.edu/resource/how-identify-poison-ivy
- https://extension.unh.edu/blog/2019/07/beware-poison-sumac-rhus-vernix
- https://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7431.html
- https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/poison-ivy/symptoms-causes/syc-20376485

Henderson County Master Gardener Association

~~ Members Page ~~



Master Gardeners, remember to record your hours for the month to qualify for the raffle at the next meeting!

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.

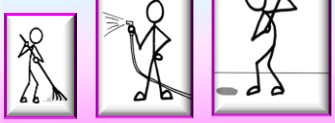
Inside Dirt: Member volunteers are welcome to contribute and send in articles, pictures, cartoons, gardening games, kid resources and upcoming events, to Susan Skommesa at susanloves1life@gmail.com.

2023 HCMGA Meetings

- **11am-1pm** 3rd Wednesday of the month
- **Location:** St. Edwards Catholic Church 1310 S. Palestine Athens TX

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

REMEMBER: bring a sack lunch!



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.

From the Garden to the Table:
Potatoes, Onions, & Garlic

Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener

Author's onions are in the foreground raised bed and potatoes are in the background raised bed.

Imagine what kind of tasty meals can be created from fresh home-grown potatoes, onions, and garlic. That is what is being harvested, or close to being harvested in my garden, my neighbor's garden, and at the Henderson County Master Gardener's training garden.

These three vegetables are sown in the late winter, February, for a mid to late spring harvest. Potatoes and onion can also be planted again before fall for a winter harvest. Garlic has 2 seasons as well, but harvest is spring & summer.

How do you learn about these things? The **Henderson County Master Gardener Association** (HCMGA) has a training garden. It is called the **Harvest Garden,** and is located in Athens at the **Henderson County Regional Fairpark**, located on 3356 Texas 31, Athens , TX 75751. We hold training events. This is the next event!

Harvest Garden Event

<u>Training Topic</u>: Planting a Fall Garden

June 24th at 10am

The next **Harvest Garden** event is on **June 24, 2023**! Learn how to plan for and plant a fall garden. This may seem early, but not really. Planning, seed ordering, and seed starting, needs to happen in the next month, so that your starter plants are ready for very early August planting. You can walk away from this seminar with a plan, needed materials list, and dates for action items.

John Maloch, Master Gardener & Harvest Garden Co-Chair

John, pictured to the right, holds onions recently harvested from the Harvest Garden, which is the HCMGA's Training Garden.

For more information:

- *Call 903-675-6130,*
- *Email <u>hendersonCMGA@gmail.com</u>,*
- *Visit <u>txmg.org/hendersonmg</u>*
- *Visit* <u>https://www.facebook.com/HCmastergardener</u>

2023 PLANT SALE: Thank You for your Support

Co – Chairs Master Gardeners Elizabeth Crowe & Judy Haldeman,

The Henderson County Master Gardeners would like to extend a warm and grateful thank you to the members of the community who participated in our 2023 Plant Sale! Your support will help fund many of the educational programs we have planned for the rest of this year. We know you will enjoy the plants you purchased.

I hoped that when you logged into our third online plant sale, you were able to find the perfect plant to replenish your garden before they sold out. The Greenhouse Team worked tirelessly filling orders and was available for customers to pick up their plants over the course of two weeks. The plant pick-up was completed on April 22nd at the Trinity Valley Community College (TVCC) college Recreational Court in conjunction with an in-person plant sale held that morning. We had almost 145 online orders and over all sold 1067 plants. We don't yet have in-person plant sale totals or the number of visitors, but all Master Gardeners present agreed that visiting with customers and helping them pick appropriate plants was a pleasure, one that we have missed since online sales began in 2021.

An addition to our website last year, was the ability to search the Information Sheets for a more detailed description and care of your plants. All of the plants in this year's sale can be found at www.txmg.org/hendersonmg/. Just click on the Plant Sale tab. If you wanted to know which plants in the sale were a Texas Native, a Texas Superstar Plant, or a plant that attracts butterflies, bees, or hummingbirds, you will be able to input that in the search box. The plants from that search will have links to more information about them. The team working on that task spent many additional hours populating our Plant Library with plants that we sold in earlier sales or plants that have been planted in one of our Master Gardener Projects.

If you have questions about your plants and if the website doesn't answer your questions, please feel free to send us an email at hendersoncmga@gmail.com. We will answer your questions as soon as possible.

A special thank you goes to all of the Greenhouse volunteers who spent months caring for the plants through chilling and rainy weather. A special thank you is due to those involved in inputting data into the plant sale program and keeping track of the plant inventory. Thank you also to the people involved in Inside Dirt Articles, Newspaper Articles, Save the Date Card, Facebook posts and videos, and to those involved in the radio interview. We also owe a debt of gratitude to the members who shared wonderful plants from their personal gardens.

Enjoy your plants!

May & June Gardening Tips

Susan Skommesa, Master Gardener

In General: Regular activities in May and June include weeding, fertilizing, and mowing. Preserve the moisture in your soil by piling up that healthy mulch. Several sunny days will dry out your soil fast, so water as needed. Not only does mulch help the soil hold water, but it slows down those weeds.

Remember that Texas A&M (TAMU) offers a great online *Magazine* packed with articles offering information on how to care for your garden and lawn, at: https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/category/lawn-garden/. Also, a resource I love from TAMU's AgriLife Extension program can be found at https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/browse/featured-solutions/gardening-landscaping/. This link will take you to helpful articles on topics like ***How to Grow Vegetables*** (with extensive details on each vegetable)***, Vegetable and Fruit Resources, Small Acreage Horticultural Production, Earth-Kind Landscaping, AggieTurf,*** and information on the Master Gardener and Junior Master Gardener programs. To become a Henderson County Master Gardener, please visit our website at https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/about-us/.

Veggie & herb Care: Harvesting the greens will come to an end as the temperature climbs. Oh, so sad, because my spring garden is beautiful. The cool temperatures are bringing forth an amazing harvest. Compost your cool-season crops that have nothing left to offer.

However, one cannot be sad for long, because other veggies will be reaching maturity. As Tomatoes and Peppers set first fruit, a light application of side dressing will keep plants robust while producing the maximum amount of fruit. Continue to harvest and weed as needed.

Keep an eye out for pests, especially aphids which are happiest on new plant growth. Look under the leaves, and watch for holes or yellowing of the leaves to signal that you have visitors. Some beneficial insects that are natural enemies of aphids include ladybugs, lacewings, and parasitic wasps. You can order these online or inquire at your local garden center. Remember however, not all crawly things are pests. They are your friend if they eat what wants to eat your harvest. The goal is to keep your plants healthy, not eradicate all pests. If you are not sure what is a pest, contact the local AgriLife Extension Office for identification, and keep the good guys around.

Squash bug and eggs

The single, most important factor in a successful vegetable garden is water. Too much or not enough is never a good thing. Keep soil evenly moist. Add mulch to control evaporation and keep the ground cool. Make sure your water is getting past the mulch and into the depts of the soil. Do not mulch around Squash plants as mulch provides a hiding place for squash bugs.

If Tomatoes show signs of *Blossom End Rot* (BER), (sunken, brown, leathery bottoms where the blossom was), add calcium to the soil before the next crop is planted. BER results from cold ground, inconsistent water and wet

weather turning dry so that the plant cannot take up and distribute calcium throughout the fruit properly. BER usually affects the first set of tomatoes. Add calcium to the soil if you see signs of BER.

Flower Care: Continue to plant, water and deadhead flowers as needed. For fuller plants, pinch back Asters and Chrysanthemums. Establish new baskets for summer accents.

There are many flowers that can be seeded now through August, such as Cosmos, Marigolds, Ornamental Sweet Potato, Periwinkle, Portulaca, and Zinnias. Keep the old spent flowers pinched back to encourage reblooming.

There is still time to plant Mums for fall if you can obtain strong healthy container grown plants. Continue to pinch terminal growth on existing established plants to induce more branching.

Spider mites love hot, dry weather. Look for stippled leaves which may indicate the presence of spider mites. A strong stream of water or insecticidal soap should do the trick.

Don't cut back daffodil bulb foliage, as the foliage feeds the bulb. Let it brown or ripen on the plant before removal. If it is unsightly, try an old English tradition, and braid the drying foliage.

Trees and shrub Care: I love this time of year as trees take on a yellow-green hew one day, and seemingly the next, is full of leaves. Shrubs should be green and beautiful already. If a shrub had difficulty this past winter, have patience and give it time to really recover before cutting the dead branches back. Cut back no more than 1/3 of the shrub if you need to prune it back to health. Adequate organic mulch around trees and shrubs Helps conserve moisture and keep the soil cooler through the hot summer months. However, make sure the mulch does not touch the trunk so as to not produce rotting. Also, keep in mind that when watering, water as far out as the branches reach out.

Remove flowers regularly on Rose bushes as they fade to encourage new blooms.

Thin emerging fruit from trees in order to promote a healthy harvest. Remove fallen fruit and debris from beneath trees to eliminate sources of insects and fungus.

Grass Care: If your lawn has some low places in it, May is a good month for repair work. To repair your lawn, choose a soil which matches your native soil for the fill. Mow and fertilize the lawn prior to applying your selected soil. If needed, plant new sod or plugs. May is the last month to apply broadleaf weed killers before the weather becomes hot.

Once you have mowed your grass several times, and all the grass is in, you can start fertilizing. Continue to fertilize every six weeks in summer until September. Try to fertilize right before a rain or be sure to water well after fertilizing so you do not burn your lawn. Applying lawn fertilizer by hand is not recommended, as the results will be uneven and can damage the grass.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The ***Henderson County Master Gardener Association's Monthly Gardening Guide***, features an amazing article in **May** on the topic of ***Watering***.

Did you know?

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

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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