

Inside Dirt



A Note from our President

By Susan Skommesa

Fall is on its way and soon the heat will break for good. Not only is the fall season fabulous for working outdoors, but perfect weather for growing cruciferous and leafy green vegetables, as well as preparing your flower gardens for winter color.

In this edition, find resources for growing a fall garden as well as details on the November Fall Flower Festival, where you can hear speakers teach on making a colorful winter garden.

Enjoy the cooling weather and happy fall gardening!



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

Texas Drought Update

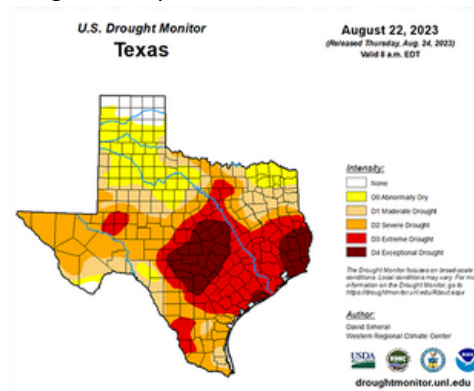
As an unforgettable August comes to a close, Texas' groundwater and surface water supplies continue to show the impacts of drought conditions and record-breaking heat.

The U.S. Drought Monitor's Aug. 22 report showed:

- 62.10% of Texas in severe drought conditions or worse
- 33.99% in extreme drought conditions or worse
- 11.67% in exceptional drought conditions.

Drought and extreme heat impact every part of the Texas communities and economies — agricultural production is stressed and requires more water, many municipal utilities must enact water restrictions, outdoor recreation and athletics for children require restrictions and safety precautions, river- and lake-based tourism is impacted, industries that require outdoor labor face intense conditions and safety concerns, and residents must grapple with higher utility bills.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension district reporters around the state reported stressed livestock, drying stock ponds, decreased crop yields and more in the latest Crop and Weather Report.



Upcoming Events

Fall Family Flower Festival

11/04/23 @ 9am-2pm

Save the Date!
 Details on Page 4

Regular Meeting 09/20/23 @ 11am

Regular Meeting 10/18/23 @ 11am

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Gardening Hints for September & October:

In **September**, summer is reluctant to give way to fall and there is a mixture of undecided days that call for continued summer watering and weeding while making plans for fall gardening. **October** and autumn days represent a new gardening season with timely gardening activities to be accomplished.

- Dig and Store Caladiums.
- Prepare beds for planting Pansies and Violas in September. Obtain healthy plants to plant in Oct/Nov.
- Prepare spring bulb beds now. Spring bulbs begin in the fall; select bulbs to plant in Oct/Nov.
- Continue to water plants as they go into the autumn season.
- Divide, transplant, and establish perennials.
- Store leftover seeds.
- Plant fall annuals in September.
- Do not prune or cut back spring flowering trees and shrubs.
- Compost. Start a compost pile to receive the leaves of fall.
- Begin to prepare houseplants for over-wintering indoors.
- Sow annual ryegrass seed in mid-to-late **October**.
- Clean-up.
- Plan for new plantings.
- Enjoy the color of the season!
- Mulch down for winter protection.
- Fall fertilization. Research has proven that fall feeding is very beneficial on lawns and ornamental plants.
- Order fruit catalogs and make variety selections for a winter (January-February) planting.
- Tag native plants while still in leaf while they may easily be identified when transplanted in the winter.



For a complete list of Fall Gardening Tips, [click here to view our monthly Gardening Guide.](#)

The Accidental Composter

by Deb Pascoe

Although I have been to several sessions about composting, I have always been intimidated by it. Where to put it? How to get started? What to put in it? What not to put in it? Last year I attended MG Bob Erickson’s session about composting. He helped reduce some of my anxiety when he said – and I’m paraphrasing a bit – stuff is going to rot, it just will, so whether you fuss over your compost pile or you don’t, eventually organic material will rot. What an epiphany! I had been way overthinking it.

Fast forward to this year. Our house sits on a slope. A few years ago, my husband put in a French drain on the uphill side of the house. It channels water around the house and into a meandering dry creek bed when the heavy rains come. We have a lot of oak trees, so we have lots of leaves in the fall. Because of the location (on the backside) we had not been too attentive to the leaf fall... for about three years. The drain was plugged up, so we had to suck it up and clean out 4 feet of leaves. Imagine my delight when I realized that under a big layer of intact leaves was a 2-inch layer of already rotted ones- compost! A foot wide and 20 feet long!

Now I realize that, without even really trying, I have compost. We dug all of it out, created a pile and are now letting it do its thing a little while longer.

So, the big lesson here is that, whether you actively do it or not, nature is constantly making compost all around you. Look around – you might discover that, like me, you have some of that “garden gold” right under your nose.



Leaf debris to Compost! -->

What's new at the Harvest Garden?



Butterfly Garden Certified

The HCMGA Butterfly Garden is now recognized as a Certified Butterfly Garden. To be certified, the garden must meet these requirements:

- At least three different native caterpillar food plants
- At least three different native butterfly nectar sources
- Do not use pesticides on the butterfly garden plants

In addition, the garden has been expanded and will include even more plants going forward. A big thanks to MG Ellen Sokolovic for her work on the garden and securing the certification.

Hoop House

Hey MG John Maloch! What's happening at the Harvest Garden right now?

In the fall and winter months, many/most activities move into the Hoop House. During September and October:



- We are adding compost to the hoop house and raised beds in preparation for fall planting.
- We are starting transplants for end of September planting
- All seeds have been purchased - carrots, beets, various lettuces, collards, broccoli, cauliflower, etc. These will be planted from the end of September through mid-October.
- Garlic is here, and we are on a wait list for onion orders. These won't be planted until November.

A big thanks to all our MGs that come out every week and make the HG the amazing place that it is.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are on the Move!

by Anne Wood

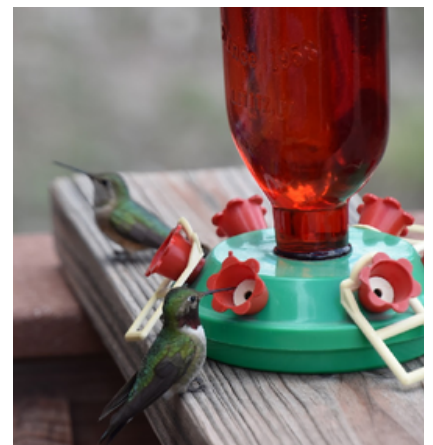
Within the next few weeks, an influx of these fluttery feathered friends will be making a stop across East Texas as part of their instinctive South-bound migration route.

To help these frequent fliers on their journey, it's easy to make your own nectar for hummingbird feeders:

Mix 1 part (1/4 cup) white table sugar into 4 parts (1 cup) water; stir until sugar is dissolved. I use hot water out of the tap and let the mixture cool to room temperature. **Never use red dye** in hummingbird feeders. It's not something hummingbirds would ever eat in nature. Don't worry, the red color on hummingbird feeders should be enough to attract them.

According to the [National Audubon Society](https://www.audubon.org/), the hummingbird feeder should be emptied and cleaned with hot tap water or a weak vinegar solution twice a week in hot weather.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds are known to consume up to half their body weight in nectar between sunrise and sunset; they can also visit more than 1,000 flowers in a single day.



Fall Family Flower Festival



SAVE THE DATE!

Don't miss our upcoming **Fall Family Flower Festival!**

Saturday, November 4 from 9 am to 2 pm.

- There will be a fall plant sale - flats of Pansies for beautiful winter color. We will take orders during the month of October. You'll pick them up at the Festival.
- Activities include a bounce house, food trucks, face painting, an Origami workshop, and two speakers sharing tips on fall gardens.
- Plan to bring the kids!
- Be watching our [Facebook page](#) and [website](#) for more information.



Chile Relleno Soup

Ingredients

- 5 poblano chiles
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 onion chopped
- 4 cloves of garlic minced
- 1/4 cup of cilantro chopped
- 1/2 cup of flour
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon salt

Chile Relleno Topping

- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1/2 cup cooking oil
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup shredded jack cheese



Instructions

1. Clean and dry the poblano chiles. Place them on a cookie sheet covered in foil. Place under the broiler for 5 minutes. Turn the chiles over and broil for another 5 minutes. Chiles should be roasted with black skin. Remove from the oven and place the chiles in a sealable plastic bag. Set aside
2. In a large saucepan heat the olive oil and butter over medium heat. Add the onions and cook for about 2 minutes until softened. Add the garlic and cilantro. Cook for about 3 minutes.
3. Add the 1/2 cup of flour to the saucepan and stir to coat the veggies. Cook for about 2 minutes. Then add the chicken broth, cream, milk, salt and pepper. Bring to a low simmer.
4. Once the chiles have cooled to the touch, remove from the plastic bag. Cut off the top, remove the seeds, and then remove the skin. (I found it easiest to use a paring knife to remove the skin)
5. Set one of the chiles aside for the chile relleno topping. Chop up the other 4 chiles and add to the soup. Allow the soup to continue simmering approximately 15-20 minutes.

While the soup simmers make the chile relleno topping.

1. Slice the remaining chile in half (should already have the seeds and skin removed). This will give you two large pieces of chile.
2. Set up two small bowls. Using the two eggs separate so that whites are in one bowl and yolks are in the second bowl. Beat the egg whites for about a minute and add the 2 tablespoons of flour. In the other bowl beat the egg yolks. Set up a small frying pan and heat the cooking oil over medium heat. Dip one of the chile slices into the egg yolk, then into the egg white/flour mixture. Add to the cooking oil and fry on each side about 1-2 minutes until golden. Repeat with the other chile slice.
3. Just before serving the soup, add 1/2 cup of shredded Jack cheese and stir until completely melted. Serve the soup into bowls, top with the chile relleno and extra shredded jack cheese. You can place the bowls under the broiler if desired to melt the cheese on top, however, this step is not required.

About Henderson County Master Gardeners Association

Our Mission is to educate the community about a broad range of gardening topics.

- Find us online: <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/>
- Find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/HCmastergardener>
- Interested in becoming a Master Gardener? <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/about-us/>
- [Click here](#) to be added to our email distribution list.

Designing the Garden for your Future

by Lydia Holley

It is best to remember that, with luck, we will all become elderly one day. Even if you are young and are just now starting your garden, a little forethought into designing your garden for your golden years may be much appreciated by your future self.



The design and future maintenance of tall plantings is important to consider. Try to keep the mature height to one story level or below of any plantings that might need to be pruned or hedged. That way, you will not have to climb a ladder to keep plantings maintained. Used to be, it was easy for me to jaunt up to the top of a ladder, swinging pruners, electric hedge shears, chainsaw, or any other sharp tool that might cause bodily harm. Now, however, my hedges and climbing plants are getting trimmed shorter and shorter each year as I realize that it might not be in my best interest to take on such risk.

Weed maintenance is always a consideration, but even more so as bending over for long periods of time becomes harder on your back. If weed removal is a top priority for you, try to plant ground covers that will shade out weed seeds, or keep a deep mulch applied.

Pathways also need to be considered. There is no perfect path material, however. Footing is sure on concrete, but should you fall, it is hard and unforgiving. A pathway made from a thick layer of mulch will need to be replenished regularly. Grass is soft, but will need to be mown, and can be slippery when wet.

Gardens are made for enjoyment. To enjoy your garden for as long as possible, think about your garden's design, its plants, pathways, and maintenance, and what each will mean for you in the future.

ICYMI (In Case You Missed It):

- [Henderson County Master Gardener butterfly garden now certified through the North American Butterfly Association - August 3, 2023](#)
- [Shrugging off the Heat - August 28, 2023](#)
- [Battling the Destroyers – August 21, 2023](#)
- [Add a Ruellia to your Garden – August 14, 2023](#)
- [In the Garden: Muskmare-the Walkingstick's Cousin – August 7, 2023](#)

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