

Inside Dirt



A Note from our President

By Susan Skommesa

Hello Gardeners,

Spring is coming up on us fast. My winter garden is producing broccoli, lettuces, kale, cauliflower, and Brussel sprouts like crazy. My spring garden seed starts are very successful and waiting to be planted. However, no matter how wonderful these temperatures are, don't be fooled or unprepared for that last frost. Keep the frost blankets handy and remember, for our area, the AVERAGE last frost is March 15th.



HCMGA held its first educational opportunity on Tuesday February 27th, at the Cain Center in Athens. We had a 3-person panel speak on Starting Your Spring Garden. Bob Erickson spoke on soil composition, Ph and amendments. I demonstrated seed starting. John Maloch spoke on planting by season and which plants are best in the early spring, late spring, summer and fall gardens. Check out our [Facebook page](#) for the pictures.

If teaching events like this sound interesting to you, keep in mind that we sponsor a teaching event almost every month during the year. For details, watch our Facebook page and [website](#) for the topic, date and location.

April always features our plant sale. Be prepared to fill your garden with beautiful plants that grow best in our region. We will give you more details as the event draws closer.

Happy Gardening, Friends!

Find us online! <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/>

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

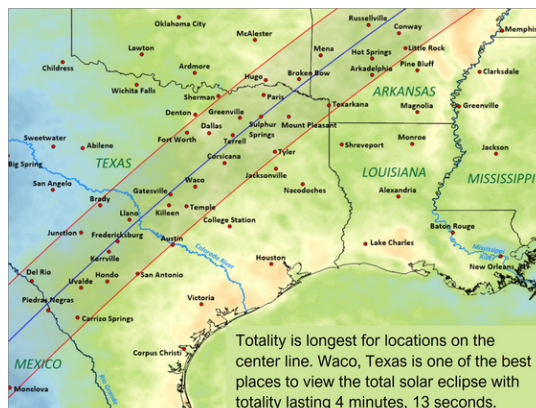
Henderson County Master Gardeners Prep for the Eclipse

On Monday, April 8, Henderson County will be in the direct path of the total Eclipse. Eclipses don't have a lot of effect on gardening. Still we would be remiss if we did not mention this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for those of us living in East Texas. Numerous online stores are selling Eclipse glasses – be sure to get yours before the big last-minute rush.

Some of our neighboring towns including Tyler and Canton have announced festivals and activities leading up to and on the day of the Eclipse.

Hotel prices have skyrocketed, and some individuals with acreage are renting out camping spots. Let's all hope for sunny skies on the day!

For more information and a live-stream of the Eclipse, follow this link to Astronomy.com's website. The Discovery Channel is also set to live broadcast.



Upcoming Events

Regular Meeting 3/20/24 @ 11am

Let's Grow Series 3/26/24 @ 6 pm

Regular Meeting 4/17/24 @ 11am

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Gardening Hints for March & April:

March - new life; the earth awakens and responds to a new season. It's time now to till, to sow, and to contribute to the newness. Amazing April – Showers and flowers as Mother nature returns from her winter vacation. Time to get out and help her showcase the wonders she can provide.

- Look for and begin to control insects.
- Continue to plant the vegetable garden.
- Prune back overgrown and/or winter ground cover beds.
- Plant ground covers such as ivy, liriopse, confederate jasmine, vinca, dwarf junipers.
- Repot overgrown potted plants in late March.
- Clean, thin out and transplant overcrowded perennial beds such as daylily, mum, liriopse, shasta daisy, etc.
- Prepare the lawnmower for its spring and summer workout.
- Control spring weeds, which quickly seed for next year's crop.
- Prune spring flowering plants immediately after bloom and just prior to spring growth.
- Continue to plant woody trees and shrubs.
- Select and plant azaleas while in bloom.
- Plant lawn grasses in April.
- Plant spring and summer annuals after danger of frost and freeze.
- Plant flowering perennials for garden color.
- Prune overgrown, spring flowering trees and shrubs once they have completed bloom.
- Complete spring fertilization of lawn grasses and plants.



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

Is It or Ain't It?

It's that time of year again - plants are waking up from their winter nap, poking their heads up for the first time, and people are posing the annual question: Is this poison ivy or poison oak? Why are they called poisonous? They carry an oil called urushiol which causes an allergic reaction in many - but not all - people.



NO!

This is virginia creeper. While new leaves on a new vine may have 3 leaves, follow the vine back to older growth and you will see 5 leaves is the norm.



YES!

Poison ivy has 3 leaves. Notice that the three leaves are not the same shape. The left and right ones have a notch on the top side. The leaves are shiny.



NO!

This is dewberry. Although it has three leaves, they are "hairy" and the vines thorny.



YES!

Poison oak has 3 leaves. The three leaves are more symmetrical than poison ivy. Unlike dewberry leaves, they are shiny, not "hairy".

What's new at the Harvest Garden?

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

- Because our green house is a hoop house it will withstand cold to about 20 degrees; and since we had a very cold snap in late January, Judy Shelton reported that we lost Cherokee lettuce and kohlrabi which we removed and replaced with sugar snap peas. The garlic, broccoli and cauliflower did excellent. Outside in the raised beds, the carrots and onions fared well as they were covered with freeze cloth. We took soil tests for the blueberry bed and weeded all areas. We had a good group of workers including an intern, Regina LaFleur, who is an experienced vegetable gardener.
- In early February, we planted purple top turnips and started tomato seeds in the hoop house. Tomato varieties included: Celebrity, Sweety Cherry, and Florida 91. Onions in the raised beds were fertilized. We prepared a new bed for our blueberries. Michelle Croker reported that hoop house vegetables are growing nicely, as you can see in the pictures below.



- In mid February, Ann Reese gave instruction on how to prune peach trees in a bowl shape, and then Interns and Master Gardeners helped out. Michelle Crocker along with Ron and Terry Sanders constructed a new trellis for our Raspberry bed. Interns and MGs also transplanted raspberries.
- Peas and garlic are coming up and tiny, tiny asparagus is peeking out! There are onions and more onions. We amended the soil for the newly planted blueberries, sprayed fruit and fig trees with anti-fungal. In addition, we pruned back all the ornamentals around the education area and butterfly and herb gardens. Ron made sure the relocated raspberries were watered in. Oh, and how about those fancy new trellises?
- Last week of February, we pruned grape vines, propagated cuttings, and cleaned-up the hoop house to prepare for spring planting.



Crustless Spinach and Mushroom Quiche

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 small sweet onion, diced
- 4 ounces mushrooms, sliced
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 10 ounces chopped frozen spinach, thawed and drained (fresh spinach* see below)
- 6 ounces crumbled feta cheese
- 8 ounces shredded cheddar cheese
- 5 large eggs
- 1/2 cup milk (1%, 2%, or whole)
- 1/4 teaspoon table salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper



Great for Brunch!

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease a 9-inch pie pan.
- Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions mushrooms and saute until softened, about 5 - 7 minutes. Add in garlic and cook 1 minute more. Turn off heat and stir in spinach, feta, and cheddar cheese. Spoon mixture into the prepared pie plate.
- Whisk together eggs, milk salt, and pepper in a large bowl; stir until well blended. Pour egg mixture over the spinach mixture in the prepared pie plate.
- Bake in the preheated oven for 40 to 45 minutes, until eggs are set. Remove from the oven and let cool for 10 minutes before slicing and serving. Serve hot and enjoy!

*Using fresh spinach? 1 lb fresh spinach - Remove stems and cook it in a skillet over medium-high heat for a few minutes, and then (just like frozen) remove as much liquid as possible from it.

Want to add a crust? Use frozen, pre-made, or make your own. Instead of spooning the pie filling into an empty pie plate, you'll spoon it directly into the crust. No par-baking required!

Nutrition:

Calories: 272kcal | Carbohydrates: 7g | Protein: 17g | Fat: 19g | Saturated Fat: 10g | Cholesterol: 182mg | Sodium: 573mg | Potassium: 326mg | Fiber: 1g | Sugar: 4g | Vitamin A: 4745IU | Vitamin C: 4.2mg | Calcium: 400mg | Iron: 1.8mg

Don't forget to



Sunday, March 10th
at 2 a.m

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.

Gardening by Moon Signs



Gardening according to moon signs is an ancient practice that aligns cultivation activities with the phases of the moon. Some people believe that the moon's gravitational pull influences the moisture content in the soil, affecting plant growth and development.

Dr. William Johnson, horticulturist with the Galveston County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, has written about this practice. While he acknowledges that there is little scientific evidence that supports it, he goes on to say "I would not castigate anyone who plants by moon phases. I find that condemning an age-old practice which has not been undoubtedly proven or disproved is risky and foolish... some of the best gardeners I know (including my parents and grandparents) plant by moon phases." Click here to read his full paper. <https://galveston.agrilife.org/files/2012/03/03-16-2016-PLANTING-BY-THE-MOON-DOES-IT-WORK-OR-IS-IT-FOLLY-by-Dr.-William-M.-Johnson.pdf>

The lunar calendar divides the month into four phases: new moon, first quarter, full moon, and last quarter. Each phase is associated with specific types of tasks.

- New moon, when the moon is not visible in the sky, is believed to be an optimal time for planting above-ground crops. Proponents argue that the gravitational pull is weaker during this phase, allowing for better absorption of nutrients by seeds.
- First quarter, characterized by a growing crescent shape, focus on activities that encourage leafy growth. This includes pruning, fertilizing, and transplanting. It's believed that the increasing gravitational pull during this phase supports upward movement, promoting healthy foliage.
- Full moon, when the moon is fully illuminated, is considered a time of peak energy. This is the time to harvest fruits and vegetables during this phase. Additionally, it is believed that the gravitational pull is strong during the full moon, making it an ideal time for root development and transplanting.
- Last quarter, as the moon wanes, perform tasks that do not involve active planting or harvesting. This phase is associated with activities like weeding, pest control, and soil preparation.

ICYMI (In Case You Missed It):

- [Virginia Springbeauty - February 26, 2024](#)
- [Gardening Guide Book Revised - February 12, 2024](#)
- [Lower Landscape Maintenance with Long-lived Perennials - February 5, 2024](#)
- [Berries Instead of Blooms - January 29, 2024](#)
- [Assessing Winter Damage - January 22, 2024](#)

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