

Inside Dirt



A Note from our President

By Susan Skommesa

Hello Summer Heat!!! I hope this July/August issue finds you with plenty of flowers and veggies, in gardens that have automatic watering systems. Too hot to weed and water! Do be careful if you are working outside as heat exhaustion can sneak up on you.



As strange as this may sound, it is not too soon to start thinking about your fall/winter garden. Check out our upcoming events. We will have educational opportunities that can help you walk thru the process of planning, setting up, and growing lush cold weather vegetables that will take you into the winter.

It is with deep sadness that I share with you that we lost a beloved Master Gardener this past month. John Maloch. There is no one like him, and this world is just not going to be the same without him. He was such a wealth of information on vegetable gardening, and his leadership in the Harvest Garden was extra ordinary. His kind nature made him instantly likeable. John, there are not enough words to do you justice. You are deeply missed! This is much too soon my friend!

Have a safe and wonderful summer everyone; and I hope to see you at one of our horticultural events!

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

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

Help Prevent Wildfires this Summer

- from Agrilife Today

As Texans make plans to celebrate the Fourth of July, Texas A&M Forest Service encourages everyone to be careful with any outdoor activity that may cause a spark. Almost 90% of wildfires are caused by humans and their activities, and the Fourth of July is one of the top days for reported wildfires because of activities like grilling and fireworks.

“As we start to observe typical summer weather with conditions becoming hotter and drier, we anticipate wildfire activity to increase,” said Wes Moorehead, Texas A&M Forest Service fire chief. “State and local firefighters are prepared to respond quickly but we need Texans to be careful and prevent wildfire ignitions while conditions are hot and dry.”

The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend a public show hosted by professionals. If you plan to set off your own fireworks: 1) Read and follow all warnings and instruction labels on fireworks. 2) Use fireworks only under close adult supervision and in safe areas away from structures, dry grass and brush. 3) Keep a hose, bucket of water and wet towels nearby in case of a malfunction or fire. 4) Dispose of used fireworks in a bucket of water. 5) Never ignite fireworks in a container, especially a glass or metal container.

To help prevent wildfires during hot and dry conditions: 1) Avoid parking and idling in tall, dry grass. Catalytic converters can get hot enough to ignite the grass under a vehicle. 2) Ensure chains and other metal parts aren't dragging from your vehicle — they throw sparks. 3) Avoid placing your grill near flammable vegetation or materials, never leave your grill unattended, and ensure coals are completely extinguished when you are done.

For additional wildfire prevention tips visit <https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/summerwildfires/>.



Upcoming Events

Regular Meeting 7/17/24 @ 11am

Let's Grow Gardening Series:
Bugs Q & A on 07/23/24 @ 6pm
The Library at Cedar Creek Lake

Regular Meeting 8/21/24 @ 11am

Inside:

Jul/Aug Gardening Hints • P2

Blueberry Bliss! Summer is Blueberry Time in East Texas • P2

Harvest Garden News • P3

Blueberry Cream crumble Pie • P4

Fun Blueberry Facts • P4

Who Gives a Fig about Wasps? We Do! • P5

ICYMI • P5

HCMGA Contact Info • P5

Gardening Hints for July & August:

July is the time the weather gets hot, and the rain disappears... Make sure that your plants have adequate moisture and pest protection. August is perhaps the most trying month for plants and people in East Texas, but late summer is a great time to plan your fall garden(s).

- Water lawns and gardens (especially new plantings); give a thorough soaking instead of many light sprinklings.
- Check plants for mulch; mulching conserves water.
- Keep garden pests under control.
- Don't leave landscape areas unattended for more than 4-5 days of vacation. Harvest fresh vegetables often. Prevent potted and tub plants and baskets from drying-out.
- Keep flowering trees watered; drought conditions can affect spring flowering.
- Feed houseplants often to keep them on the grow.
- Plant bluebonnet seeds this month into early September.
- Order spring bulbs for fall planting.
- Clean up vegetable garden areas and place organic material in the compost pile. Plan to plant fall vegetables.
- Turn compost pile and keep it moist for good decomposition. Add a bit of commercial fertilizer from time to time.
- Powdery mildew on crepe myrtle and roses can be controlled with Benomyl and funginex.
- White fly can be controlled with Diazinon and Orthene.
- Begin to plan and prepare beds for fall plantings.
- Water, water, water: Water deep! ...and less often.



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

Blueberry Bliss! Summer is Blueberry Time in East Texas

Blueberries, those small, round, and juicy fruits that burst with flavor, are not only a delight to the taste buds but also a treasure trove of health benefits. Packed with antioxidants, fiber, and vitamins, blueberries are a superfood that can boost your immune system, improve heart health, and even enhance brain function. Whether you grow them in your backyard or pick them up from the local farmers' market, blueberries are a versatile fruit that can be enjoyed in a variety of ways.

In East Texas, the best varieties of blueberries to grow are the southern highbush and rabbiteye varieties. The southern highbush varieties, such as 'Legacy,' 'Bluecrop,' and 'O'Neal,' are early-season berries that ripen in May and June. They are more tolerant of heat and humidity than other blueberry varieties, making them well-suited for the warm climate of East Texas. The rabbiteye varieties, such as 'Tifblue,' 'Climax,' and 'Premier,' are mid-season berries that ripen in June and July. They are more cold-hardy than southern highbush varieties and can withstand the occasional frost.

There are several blueberry farms within easy driving distance in and around Henderson County, where you can pick your own, learn about blueberries and buy yummy stuff. Search "blueberry farms east texas" on your map app for locations.

To store blueberries, it's best to keep them in the refrigerator, where they can last up to two weeks. However, if you want to preserve them for longer, you can freeze them. Simply spread the berries on a baking sheet and freeze them for a few hours, then transfer them to an airtight container or freezer bag. Frozen blueberries can last up to a year.

Caring for blueberry bushes is relatively easy. They prefer well-drained, acidic soil with a pH of 4.5 to 5.5. If your soil is not acidic enough, you can amend it with sulfur or peat moss. Blueberry bushes need regular watering, especially during the first few years after planting. Mulching around the base of the bush can help retain moisture and suppress weeds. Pruning is also important to maintain the shape of the bush and promote fruit production.

Blueberries are a delicious and nutritious fruit that can be grown and enjoyed in East Texas. With the right varieties, proper storage, and care, you can enjoy a bountiful harvest of these delightful berries year after year.



What's new at the Harvest Garden?

Hey MGs - What's happening at the Harvest Garden?

- We are still harvesting tomatoes.
- Sprayed fungicide on the grapes.
- We pulled-up the yellow squash, deadheaded the butterfly garden,
- Watered the asparagus, raspberries, and ornamentals.
- Unfortunately, the Seminole pumpkins fell victim to squash borers so we will pulled them :(
- We are honoring John by continuing to love and care for this garden. Thanks to all the MGs that come to work, and to all members of the public that attend our events there.



Our dear friend and beloved fellow Master Gardener John Maloch passed away June 12, 2024 following a brief illness. John was on the foundational leadership team of the Harvest Garden and was instrumental in the construction. He was our guide, mentor, and teacher. His patience and self-deprecating humor endeared him to all of us.

Friends and fellow Master Gardeners have commented:

“His patience, wisdom, gentleness, and humility and kindness will be missed profoundly! We all learned so much and worked so well with John. He was such a dynamic person/gardener and leaves us with a beautiful and bountiful legacy.”

“HCMGA's Great Leader of the Harvest Garden - There is no one who will totally fill his boots, but we are going to do our best in honor of John, a Great Man who led with a soft voice and a humble heart.”

[Link to Obituary](#) written by John's daughter.

Blueberry Crumble Cream Pie

Ingredients

- 1 pie crust dough

For the Pie:

- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 cups blueberries

For the Crumble:

- 4 tbsp butter, melted
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup coarsely chopped pecans
- 3/4 cup quick oats

Directions:

For the Pie:

- In a medium bowl whisk together the sugar, flour, sour cream, eggs and vanilla until smooth. Gently fold in the blueberries. Pour into the pie shell.

For the Crumble:

- In a medium bowl combine the melted butter, brown sugar, flour and oats. Mix until combined, sprinkle evenly over the cake mix.
- Bake for 55-60 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.*
- Let cool on wire rack.
- Serve slightly warm with a scoop of vanilla ice cream! Enjoy!



Did You Know?

- Blueberries are native to North America
- Blueberries have been around for 13,000 years
- Native Americans ate and cooked with blueberries, and used them medicinally and in ceremonies.
- July is National Blueberry Month
- You get fiber, vitamin C, vitamin K, manganese and potassium in every handful of blueberries
- A cup of blueberries has only 80 calories per cup
- Blueberries are known as a superfood because they are highly nutritious, contain powerful antioxidants, and are a low-glycemic source of carbohydrates.

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.

Who Gives a Fig about Wasps? We Do!

Figs and wasps have a symbiotic relationship that's so intricate, it could make even the most complex soap opera plot seem like child's play.

Here's the deal: figs need wasps to pollinate them, and wasps need figs to lay their eggs.

It's a "you scratch my back, I'll lay my eggs in your flower" kind of deal.

But wait, there's more! The fig plant and the fig wasp both have the same goal: reproduction. For this to happen, a fig plant needs to share its genetic material (in the form of pollen) with another of its kind, and the fig wasp needs a place where its larva can grow and feed. Think of the fig wasp as a tenant, and the fig plant as a landlord who takes payment in the form of pollen.

Now, here's where it gets interesting. The female fig wasp, just a couple of millimeters long, forces her way into a nonedible, unripe male-behaving fig where she lays her eggs in the flowers. Her wingless male offspring mate with the winged female offspring (yes, they're sisters) before using their huge jaws to chomp tunnels through the fig that will allow the ladies to leave.

But wait, there's more! If the female wasp enters a male-behaving fig, the process repeats identically; she sacrifices her life to further the cause. These pollinated flowers inside the fig pod then produce individual fruits and seeds, We humans get luscious figs, thanks to a wasp. Seed-dispersing animals and birds eat the figs then make new trees by spreading the fig seeds via their poop.

And if you're worried about eating figs with dead wasps inside, fear not! The figs produce a special enzyme called ficin, which breaks down the insect's body and turn it into protein that gets absorbed by the plant. So, the crunches you experience when chewing a fig are the fig seeds, not the wasp.

In conclusion, the relationship between figs and wasps is a fascinating example of mutualism in nature. It's a story of survival, sacrifice, and, most importantly, delicious figs. Who knew something as simple as a fig could have such a complex backstory?



ICYMI (In Case You Missed It):

- [Blue Daze Dazzles - July 1, 2024](#)
- [Blanket Flowers Cover Roadside - June 24, 2024](#)
- [Grow Your Own Blueberries - June 17, 2024](#)
- [Mimosa: The Tree I Hate to Love - June 3, 2024](#)

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