

May 2019

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Meetings are the second Thursday of each month, 6pm in the Extension Office Auditorium

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

May 9– David Pool/
Economical Pest Control

June 13– Lee Freeland/
Snakes

July—No meeting



Official Newsletter of the Jefferson County Master Gardeners

Agent's Two Cents *By David Oates, Horticulture Agent*

The spring Season is officially upon us here in Jefferson County. It seems that we have had a mild winter and spring as compared to others in the past. The hot temperatures and those summer time gardening issues will be here before we realize it. Hopefully everyone has gotten a start on their gardening chores and is marking those tasks off his/her list of activities to accomplish. The gardening lists always seem to be non-stop. As most gardeners know from experience, there is always something to be done in the garden.

While marking off items on your gardening to-do list, be sure to thank your fellow Master Gardeners for an outstanding plant sale that was held in March of this year. With all the folks that participated in the never-ending planning, preparation, and execution of the sale; our annual plant sale was a huge success. There is a lot of preparation for all these programs that

are put together, plus all the behind the scenes work that sometimes is overlooked and forgotten about. We had one of the best crowds yet for attendance. Everyone that attended was very positive of the sale and the individuals that worked to put on a huge program such as this. Plans are already under way for next year's Master Gardener sale.

So, if you see a fellow master gardener around the office, working in the test garden, working on a program or presentation, take a few minutes to stop and give them a well-deserved pat on the back for all their hard work and dedication to the Master Gardener program.

I am looking forward to a productive 2019 season with the Master Gardeners. Thanks for all that you do to support Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

A Message From the President

By Brenda Beadle, JCMG President

It has been a busy season this spring. Our spring plant and vegetable sale was a great success due to the tireless efforts of Marianne and Dorothy. The cold wind and temperature did not deter over 700 customers from coming out to the Jack Brooks Regional Airport and standing in line to be the first to buy the beautiful tomato plants, citrus trees, herbs and many other plants that were available. As always, Sharon's Porch was a popular shopping venue that offered creative designs by Sharon and Penny. It takes all of our volunteers and a lot of work to make this sale a success. Our Master Gardeners and Interns made it happen and to that I say, "Thank you!"

Our volunteers continue to work at the test garden getting it in a manageable condition. The 2019 Interns are rebuilding the vegetable beds at the garden as part of their intern project. We are very excited to have such a great group of interns taking on this project. Volunteers have also finished cleaning and preparing the JCMG bed at the Beaumont Botanical Gardens located in Tyrrell Park. The first phase was finished last year and showcases several varieties of Texas Superstars. The Louisiana Iris, planted many years ago, are in full bloom. We have designed an adjoining bed and will be planting hydrangeas in it. Our Master Gardeners have an educational booth at the Beaumont Farmer's Market on the 2nd Saturday of each month. We urge our members to participate in this event every second Saturday morning from 8-11. Several Master Gardeners were on hand at Lowes Home and Garden Center in

Port Arthur providing information and answering shopper's questions.

The Annual Texas Master Gardener's Conference was held last week in Victoria. Melissa Starr, Judy Starr, Eleanor Lazenby and Jerry White were there to represent the Jefferson County Master Gardeners. They came back with three impressive awards:

- 1st Place (Medium county) for the Key-hole Garden created by Eileen Slater and Melissa Starr
- 3rd Place (Medium county) for Outstanding Individual going to Marianne Kirkpatrick for all her work in 2018 including, but not limited to, DIG Fest.
- 1st Place (Medium county) for Outstanding Association

Congratulations to these exceptional Master Gardeners.

As we move onto into warmer days and nights, the grass will start to grow inches each day and flowers will start to bloom creating more work in our gardens, but remember to stop and enjoy the beauty of the blooms and the bounty from our gardens.



Spring Plant Sale & Market Day

By Melissa Starr, JCMG

“Saying THANK YOU seems so little compared to all the work you all have done, but together we did it!” said Dorothy Norris. We had record number of customers and a successful plant sale and Market Day. Dorothy Norris and Marianne Kirkpatrick, along with many helpers, put in countless hours to make this possible.



Texas Master Gardener State Conference

By Melissa Starr, JCMG

This year's Texas Master Gardener conference was held in Victoria, Texas on April 25-27. Speakers such as Felder Rushing, author of "Slow Gardening," Chris Wiesinger, "The Bulb Hunter," Jay White, owner and editor of "Texas Gardening" magazine, and several other speakers educated Master Gardeners from around the state. On Friday night, at the award's banquet, Jefferson County Master Gardeners received three awards. In the Medium county division, we received first place for Research, first place for Outstanding Association, and our own Marianne Kirkpatrick received third place for Outstanding Individual. Congratulations Marianne and all JCMGs!



Above: Butterfly house at the Victoria Master Gardeners' demonstration and education gardens.

L to R: Melissa Starr, Eleanor Lazenby, Judy Starr, Duddly Hargrove (TMGA President), Jerry White



Rainwater Harvesting

By Tim Schrek, JCMG

In an effort to be more ecofriendly many people are starting to collect rainwater to fulfill their garden watering or farm animal needs. It can be as simple as a plastic barrel collecting water from your roof. It can also be as complex as combining runoff from a roof, concrete pads or parking lots and using multiple pumps and processing systems to make the water safe for use.

There will always be a trade-off between cost, effort, and benefit. Only four states have specific restrictions against collecting rainwater: Arizona, Colorado, Oklahoma and Utah. Contrary to what I have heard in the past, it is not illegal to harvest rainwater in the state of Texas, but there may be restrictions on amount and how it is collected in certain areas. Austin actually has a rainwater collection rebate system to help you install a rainwater harvesting system. Harvesting reduces large amounts of runoff from paved areas and reduces trash and pollution that gets washed into streams.

All rainwater harvesting systems will have 3 or 6 components. All systems must have a catch surface, gutters or channels to direct the water, and then a storage container. In a simple low cost system, it would be your roof, gutters, and a barrel. In the more complex system you will add a water diverter to divert dirtier water from the storage tank, a delivery system to get the water to where it is needed, and then maybe a water treatment or purification system.

In most cases, a roof is the collection area

or catchment. The water travels through the gutters and a diverter before reaching the storage tanks. This diverter will wash the first 1 to 5 percent of the water to the ground. This is necessary because what first washes off your roof will have dust, animal feces, leaves, live and dead insects, overspray from insecticides, and pollen. These will cause contamination or algae growth if they make it to the storage system. A general rule of thumb states that you can capture .62 gallons of water per square foot of roof area. In your calculation, you can use an 85 percent efficiency due to loss from splashing and gutter leaks. For a 2500 square foot roof area and a one-inch rain, you can capture over 1200 gallons of rainwater. With Southeast Texas getting an average of 50 inches that is a lot of water.

Storage containers, or cisterns, can be made of plastic, metal, wood, fiberglass, or cement. Storage container size will depend on needs and amount of rainfall you can capture. Due to yard size and space limitations between 1000 and 3000 gallon storage containers are common for most residential applications. If the water is used for irrigation it will not need to be treated before use. If it is used for animals or human consumption, testing and purification systems will likely be needed.

Cucumbers

By: Eileen Slater, JCMG

My favorite summer salad contains fresh cucumbers in a marinated dressing. Plant cucumbers now for summertime enjoyment.

Cucumbers, *cucumis sativus*, belong to the cucurbit family. There are 2 types of cucumbers: pickling and slicing. Some cucumber varieties suggested by Texas A&M include: Pickling- Liberty, National Pickling; Slicing- Poinsett, Sweet Success.

Select a site that has 6-8 hours of sun and away from large tree roots. Preferred soil pH is between 6.0-7.0. Prepare a loose, well-drained soil with large rocks, sticks and trash removed from the soil. Spade soil 8-12 inches and elevate beds 4-6 inches high. A 3-4-inch layer of compost should be added to the soil as cucumbers are heavy feeders. This includes well-rotted leaves, grass clippings or compost. To fertilize soils for East Texas and the upper coast use 1 cup of 10-20-20 fertilizer into each 10-foot row. When vines are 10-12 inches long, side dress with 1 tablespoon of fertilizer per plant. Provide a wire cage, fence, etc. for the vines to grow.

Container growing cucumbers need 20 quarts or 5 gallons of soil for each plant. Containers should be clean and new potting soil should be added every year. Add compost to the potting soil.

After planting, mulch garden and container cucumbers with pine straw, chopped leaves, or another organic mulch to keep away pests and to avoid disease.

Plant after danger of frost. Soil temperature to plant seeds should be 60-75 degrees Fahrenheit. Plant 4 seeds 1 inch deep and cover with 1 inch of fine soil. Tamp down with the

flat side of a hoe. Space 36 inches apart. One week after plants have emerged, pinch off the weakest plants at ground level. Leave 2 strong plants on each hill. When buying transplants, select small ones with the two cotyledon leaves and 2 first true leaves.

Consistent watering is important. Water slowly in the early morning as plants use most water during the day. Water at the soil level as water on leaves promotes disease. One inch of water per week is necessary and more may be needed in a container. After fruit forms use an additional 1 gallon of water per week.

Cucumbers produce 2 types of flowers: male and female flowers. Both are needed to produce cucumbers. The male flowers open first and always drop off. The male flower is identified as having a base that looks like a stem. The female flowers appear 7-10 days later



and should not drop off. The female flowers can be identified as having a base that looks like a small cucumber. Touch the inside of the male

flower to the female flower with a cotton swab if you don't have enough bees to pollinate the flowers.

Harvest on a regular basis for continuous production. Pickling cucumbers ripen at 2-6" long and 1/2-2" in diameter. Slicing cucumbers ripen at 6-8" long and 1/2-2" in diameter.

Enjoy!

Greening up Your Lawn

By: Melissa Starr, JCMG

Spring is here, and the weeds have begun to take over some yards. As a child, I loved the smell of freshly cut grass, but never thought about what it takes to make a lawn lush and green. Many homeowners gear up to fertilize their lawns at the first sign of green grass, but wait! Don't fertilize that early.

Begin mowing any weeds that are growing in your lawn. If they are annual weeds, mowing them early can prevent seeds from forming and spreading next year. A pre-emergent

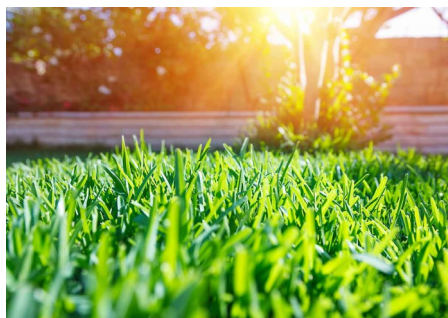
weed preventer can be spread on lawns before weed seeds germinate to prevent warm weather weeds from growing, but don't use weed and feed. The lawn should not be fertilized until

you have mowed the growing grass twice, which is usually in April. If fertilized too early, grass will begin to turn green quickly, but will not develop a strong root system. If left to turn green on its own, the root system has time to grow and can then handle the summer heat better. To determine what fertilizers your lawn needs, you can have a soil test done through Texas A& M. Call the Jefferson County AgriLife Extension office for forms and soil test bags. Most soils in our area need more nitrogen (the first number on a bag of fertilizer), but do not need much, if any, phosphorus (the mid-

dle number on a bag of fertilizer). If you are not planning to get a soil test, Texas A&M recommends slow-release fertilizers with a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio. Go to <https://agrillife.org/etg/2011/04/12/spring-lawn-care/> for more information on the proper amount of fertilizer to use.

Frequency of mowing and mowing at the proper height are fundamental to maintaining a nice lawn. Texas A&M recommends that St. Augustine grass be mowed at a height of 2-3 inches in sun

and 3-4 inches in shady areas. To determine frequency of mowing, you should never cut more than 1/3 the height of the grass. If grass is three inches tall, set the mower to mow at a height of two inches. Frequency also depends on the rate of



growth. The faster the grass grows, the more often it will need mowed so that not too much height is removed all at once. In addition, having a sharp mower blade makes smooth cuts on grass. Proper mowing reduces stress on the lawn and allows grass clippings to be mulched back into the lawn without having to be bagged.

Water is an important component of a healthy lawn. If it does not rain, water one inch per week, not every day. Too much water can cause disease problems in the lawn.

Daylilies

Micah Leigh, JCMG

Daylilies, those colorful single flowers on tall stalks called scapes that last only one day, bring charm and nostalgia to any garden. Easy to grow, they continue to be a favorite for generation after generation of gardeners. With over 60,000 named varieties to choose from, you can select colors ranging from white to clear/bright yellow to bright orange and soft apricot. Reds, pinks, purples, almost -black, two toned, single petal, spider, and ruffled, short and tall....the choices seem endless.

Daylily culture is quite simple. First, be sure to purchase from a reputable source to make sure you get a quality bulb. Plant them anywhere... in the flower garden, amongst the shrubs, by themselves for a spectacular show, or mingle with other perennials. All they need is good garden soil. They tolerate sun or shade, need 12-18 inches of spacing, and water when dry. Plant the crown no deeper than 1 inch below the soil. Apply a



layer of organic mulch to help retain moisture. Daylilies can be fertilized with a high nitrogen fertilizer in early spring, then 6 weeks later with a balanced plant food to encourage bud

set. In the fall, follow up again with the high nitrogen food to promote quicker clumping.

Daylilies can be planted in spring or fall while temps are still cool. Here in zone 9, look for evergreen or semi-evergreen varieties to ensure healthy growth year to year. Other types need colder winter temperatures than we normally have. Rebloomers are available, sending up a second, sometimes third set of blooms after the first round finishes.

Daylilies will get congested over time as they multiply each season. When this happens, carefully dig the clump out of the



ground and break into single fans before replanting. Depending on the variety, some will need to be divided every 3-4 years while others can go 5-7 years. Flowering is best once they are established, so don't divide more often than absolutely necessary.

With so many varieties to choose from and low maintenance demands, daylilies belong in every Texas landscape.

The Latest Dirt

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
1225 Pearl Street, Suite 200
Beaumont, TX 77701

Phone: 409-835-8461
Fax: 409-839-2310
Hotline: 409-835-8742



We're On The Web:

<http://txmg.org/jcmg/>

<http://jefferson.agrilife.org>



MISSION STATEMENT

To encourage and support the horticultural community of Southeast Texas through education and example.

2019 Officers

President—Brenda Beadle

Vice President—Sarah Sloan

Secretary—Debby Parker

Treasurer—Marianne Kirkpatrick

At Large—Dorothy Norris, Stellina Reed, Diane Davis

Past President—Eileen Slater

Announcements

Fruit and Vegetable Show
Saturday, June 8 at Central
Mall 9-Noon
Judging begins at Noon
Free to Enter

⇒ **Garden Workdays**
Wednesday and Friday,
approximately 9 a.m.-noon

Texas Master Gardener
State Conference
May 12-14, 2020
Waco, TX

Rainwater Harvesting/Barrel
Making Class

Saturday, May 4
Registration: 8:30
Program 9:00– noon
Location: Texas A&M Agrilife
Extension Service, 1225 Pearl
Street #200, Beaumont

JCMGs at Beaumont Farmer's Market
Second Saturday of the month

JCMGs are now on Instagram!
@jeffersoncountymastergardeners