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

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

November 14 - Herman Auer: "Planting Fruit Trees"

December 12— Christmas party & awards

January 9 — TBD



Official Newsletter of the Jefferson County Master Gardeners

## *A Message From Our President Brenda Beadle, JCMG President*

### JCMG Members

Fall is officially here. Lower night and daytime temperatures have cooled the Gulf waters so we can put away our hurricane preparation equipment and supplies until next June.

Most of you were affected by Imelda in some way, either your own home, or your neighbors, friends and relatives' homes. We are all asking if 40 - 60 inches of rain in less than 48 hours is the "new normal". If so, we need to remember when planting our shrubs and trees to choose an area that has good drainage.

One of the goals of our local association of Master Gardeners is to increase knowledge of gardening to its members and the general public. We have been making an effort to meet this goal by posting on social media (visit our Facebook page), running a farmer's market booth, creating new beds at our own test garden and supporting the botanical gardens at Tyrrell Park. I would like to see our group offer public classes at

local libraries on gardening. Each one of us has a talent for gardening, i.e. propagation, roses, citrus and vegetables. Sharing our knowledge helps our communities learn about growing their own food.

Our 2020 intern class begins January 21. We have a change in the program this year. Classes will be held January 21-24 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Additional classes will be held every Thursday in January (30th) and February (6th, 13th, 20th, 27th) from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The cost of the course is \$175.00.

Until next time, have a safe and enjoyable holiday.

Brenda Beadle

JCMG President



## *Fall Lawns in the Landscape*

*David Oates, Horticulture Agent*

It never fails that the AgriLife Extension office gets numerous calls about when to fertilize lawns for the fall season or whether or not to use a winterizer fertilizer. We seem to experience an influx of lawn fertilization questions when the days get cooler and we experience our first true “cool spell” of the year.

Southeast Texas stays warm well into the fall season and lawns continue to grow until night time temperatures hover around the 50-degree mark. Until we reach that temperature, be sure to maintain your lawn with proper mowing and watering practices.

More than likely, however, the truth is that it is getting closer to a point in time to put away your fertilizer spreader for heavy nitrogen applications. Fertilization of warm season grasses with a fertilizer high in nitrogen is not recommended for our area during the cooler months.

This time of year, stimulating growth and promoting excessive growth of lawn grasses such as St. Augustine, Centipede and Zoysia are not recommended due to fungal issues such as late season brown patch and take-all root rot. Bermuda lawns need a well-defined rest period, or dormancy, for best results.

Are winterizer fertilizers a must have for a successful lawn? If used correctly, they can be a great asset when they add the correct amount of potassium to a lawn. If you remember back to chemistry 101, the “K” in a fertilizer analysis refers to the last number in a fertilizer ratio as the amount of potassium. This element is closely associated with win-

ter hardiness and increased disease resistance in turf grass. A good winterizer for our area will have a 3-0-1 or a 3-1-2 ratio of elements. Avoid winterizer fertilizers with a high nitrogen content as we are not wanting to stimulate excessive growth in the lawns. Avoid applying high potassium fertilizers if they are not needed based on recommendations of a soil sample.

A good idea to remember is that if you bag your lawn clippings, you are removing a vital source of potassium that occurs naturally. Grass clippings and stems contain a high percentage of potassium. If maintained correctly, clippings left on the lawn can be a valuable source of potassium for your lawn.

If you do decide to use a winterizer fertilizer, follow a few simple guidelines on fertilizer selections and maintenance techniques, and you will be on your way to a healthier spring lawn.

Brown Patch



Take-all root rot

## *We Will Miss You Holly*

*By Melissa Starr, JCMG*

Holly Kirkwood was a long-time member of the Jefferson County Master Gardeners. She loved to tell the story of how Vince Mannino would ask her to take the Master Gardener class (her mother, Aletha, was already a Master Gardener), but she couldn't take off two weeks in January from her job as a teacher. When Vince decided to have the Master Gardener class in July, 2000, she jumped at the chance to take it.

As a retired teacher and librarian, she knew the value of information and visuals. At every plant sale, she made sure that there were plenty of pictures and plant information available for the public. She could use technology easily and could print pictures and signs like a pro. She didn't need the internet to tell her the identity of a plant; she had their common and botanical (Latin) names memorized.

Holly also loved to serve. In addition to being a Jefferson County Master Gardener, she was very active in her church, First United Methodist Church of Beaumont and was a member of P.E.O. Sisterhood.



# Holly, we will miss you!

September 27, 1954 -  
October 9, 2019



# Christmas Cactus Blooms Bring Holiday Cheer

By Eileen Slater, JCMG

December Christmas plants of Poinsettias, Hollies, Ivies and Mistletoes bring cheer- But in sub-tropical Jefferson County, the Christmas Cactus can rebloom year after year. (Ho, Ho, Ho to my creative poem!)

Do you have a favorite story of a relative who has a Christmas cactus that has been blooming for many years? My cousin has a 40-year old Christmas cactus that his mother grew and is now as big around as my circled arms! My four babies from that mother plant are growing.

There are three kinds of non-thorny or spiny Christmas cactus from which to choose- Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. The Thanksgiving Christmas cactus, *Schlumbergera truncata*, is also known as the claw cactus. The drooped leaves have pointed edges that resemble crab claws. The buds set in mid-September and blooms in October-November. The second Christmas cactus, *Schlumbergera x buckleyi*, has a flattened, round leaf edge. The bud sets in October and blooms from Thanksgiving to January. Both the Thanksgiving and Christmas cactus have tubular flowers. The third Christmas cactus is the Easter cactus, *Rhipsalidopsis gaertneri*. The leaves have pointed teeth with fibrous hairs in the leaf joints. The flowers bud in February and bloom in March and April. The flowers are more star shaped and come in a variety of colors.

The spiny Christmas cactus is an epiphyte that roots in accumulated organic debris in the tree branches of the rain forests in Brazil's Organ

Mountains. An epiphyte is a plant that grows on another plant but is not a parasite. This tropical plant likes warm, humid and shady environments. They must not dry out and do not like to stay wet.

Use well-draining soils for potting. Grow indoor plants at daytime temperatures of 70 degrees and evening temperatures of 60-65. Water when the top 1 inch of soil is dry. Soak the soil until the water runs through the pot's drainage holes. Ideal outside temperature for growth is 70-80 degrees Fahrenheit. They grow slowly at 90-100 degrees. In the summer place in a shady spot or unheated porch until temperature get below 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

When plants bud, bring them indoors. Stop fertilization when flower buds appear. To bloom the plant needs 14 hours of long nights and days of sunlight of 8-10 hours for 6 weeks. Cover cacti if you have strong indoor lighting at night. A cloth or box may be used. Flowers form between 50-55 degrees Fahrenheit.

After flowering, the plant will produce new vegetative growth. In the spring to early fall, feed every two weeks with a complete houseplant fertilizer such as 20-20-20. Propagate cuttings in late spring because that is when holiday cacti emerge from their winter rest. Prune plants in June to encourage branching and more flowers. These pruned leaves can be placed in moist soil to root new plants. In mid-August, water and fertilize less to harden growth and increase bud development.

How is your Christmas Cactus growing?

## Winter Herbs

*By Melissa Starr, JCMG*

Cooler weather is finally here! Those hot, sweltering summer days took a toll on our gardens. Now that autumn has taken hold, it is time to start thinking about plants that will withstand our mild winters. Several herbs, such as cilantro, dill, fennel, parsley and lemon balm will grow well during our winters.

Many people complain that they cannot grow cilantro. Part of the problem is that they plant cilantro in the late spring and summer when the heat kills it. Cilantro can be planted by seed sown in a sunny location. Follow the directions on the seed packet and mix a slow release fertilizer into the soil. Pat the soil and water until the soil is moist. It should be ready to harvest after about five weeks.

Parsley is an herb that grows all year, but prefers the cooler months. It is a biennial which means it will grow for two years. During the cooler months, it will look full and beautiful, but during the summer, it will look sick and puny. Parsley can be planted in the sun, but is slow to germinate. If you don't want to wait for it to sprout from seeds, plant a transplant. Dig a hole in well-drained soil the size of the plant's pot and work some slow release fertilizer into the soil. If the soil is not already moist, then water the plant thoroughly.

Dill is a perennial in our area that will grow all year. In the winter, dill loves the sun, but during the summertime, afternoon shade will help keep it from dying in the sweltering summer heat. Dill can easily be grown from seed or transplants.

Fennel is a perennial that will grow all year.

It can be planted by seeds or transplants, but it is easier to buy a plant. Fennel is an herb that is best planted away from other herbs. It is known to stunt the growth of or kill other herbs.

Lemon balm is a very fragrant herb that can be planted from seeds or transplants. It looks like mint, but grows in a mound instead of sending out runners. It has a very fragrant lemon scent and is great for cooking when you want to add a lemon flavor to your food.

After planting your herbs, make sure to water them when the soil dries out and cover them if the temperatures dip below 25 degrees. However, there have been times when herbs could withstand the freezing temperatures without being covered, especially if they are planted near a building.

Enjoy the cool temperatures this week and plant some herbs.



Lemon  
Balm



Italian Parsley

## *Carrots*

*By: Tim Schreck, JCMG*

Several weeks ago, we planted several tomato plants in some very large pots found on the side of the road. These 30-gallon pots had medium-sized trees in them, so they have lots of extra room with only one tomato plant in each pot. While reading one of my books, I discovered carrots are a common companion plant for tomatoes, so we planted seeds around the edge of the pot. They germinated right before the heavy rain we had, so they did not get washed away. We will see how they progress in the next couple of months.

Carrots originated in Persia and were harvested for their leaves and seeds since wild carrots are very woody and bitter. They were eventually bred and domesticated in Europe and Asia to be less woody, taste better, and have a larger or longer taproot. Parsley, cilantro, dill and anise are close relatives, have a small white taproot and are still grown for their leaves and seeds. True carrots range in color from white, yellow, shades of purple and the common orange. Their color varies more than their flavor which can only be noticed when eaten raw.

Carrot seeds were found dating back to 2000 BC, but the first edible carrots were mentioned in Persian history around 900 BC and were purple and yellow. Persian, eastern developed, carrots stayed with the purple, yellow and white varieties. European, western developed, ones were white and purple, but variants in the 1500s resulted in the first orange ones. Carrot seeds have been used for medicinal purposes for hundreds of years. Early Medieval times carrots, being associated with rabbits, were linked to fertility and

given to a bride for good luck.

There are two cultivars, eastern and western. Eastern ones originated in Persia and are usually longer, skinnier and vary in color. There are many middle eastern recipes mentioning spicy cooked carrots. Western ones originated in the Netherlands and are shorter ranging from a one inch ball to six inches. They were developed for the shorter growing cycle of northern Europe.

There are two stories to the development of the orange carrot. One story states that it is a variant of the purple carrot since some purple carrots are orange on the inside. Growers from the Netherlands picked the darker yellow ones and its variations to create the orange color. There is a myth that the western orange carrot was developed to commemorate the royal Dutch House of Orange and the struggle for independence. Good story but little to really back it up.

Another good story I found was a false link to good eyesight and carrots. The British government let out rumors that carrots improved the night vision of their pilots during WWII. This story was leaked the Germans to mislead them and was created to hide the fact they had made incredible advances in their radar systems leading to better success. Carrots do help your eyesight but only if you are already deficient in vitamin A. Carrots are good for you and have vitamins such as B6, K and beta-carotene.

## The Latest Dirt

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Hotline: 409-835-8742



We're On The Web:

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

<http://jefferson.agrilife.org>



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## 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

**Master Gardener  
Christmas Party & Awards**  
December 12  
**AgriLife Extension Office**  
with refreshments

### Golden Triangle Citrus Show

Bring Citrus for judging:  
Nov 19 from 9-4 and Nov 20 from 9-noon  
Speaker & Awards—Nov 20 6-8:30 pm  
\$10 admission for the program 6-8:30  
Enter as many citrus as you like—free of charge  
At Extension Office Auditorium

⇒ **Garden Workdays**  
Wednesday and Friday, 9-  
Noon

⇒ **Master Gardener  
Shortcourse**  
January 21-Jan 24, 2019 M-F,  
9 am - 4 pm  
Additional classes on Thurs.  
Jan 30 and Feb 6,13,20, 27  
from 1 pm to 5 pm