



# The Latest Dirt

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### Upcoming Meetings:

August 13—Awards and Heidi Dietze from Big Thicket National Preserve

Sept 9—TBA

Oct 14—TBA

## Message From The President

JCMG Members,

According to weatherman, Greg Bostwick, this has been the wettest summer since 1991. Actually, I enjoy the evening showers watering my yard and plants. Yes, the grass grows an inch every 24 hours requiring mowing twice a week, but every plant in the landscape is so green and lush. Let's not complain about the rain as we are so fortunate to not live in an area where droughts are common throughout the year.

Our Master Gardeners do a great job volunteering and educating the public about everything from trees to turf care. We are in the community growing food for the Meals on Wheels program, propagating plants at the test garden, conducting plant sales offering unusual and new varieties to the public, or volunteering at the Botanical Gardens. Many have assisted our extension agent with school programs. We share our knowledge with other Master Gardeners and the public. There is something for everyone. Please think about what you want to do and volunteer with one of these groups. We all have our special talents and interests.

Our new Intern program starts in September. Try to make a few classes during that first week and welcome the new interns. If you have pictures of Master Gardeners over the years at events, bring them to the next meeting. We will prepare a power point video to show our new interns.

It is time to get our vegetable gardens ready for the fall planting. Many of our suppliers are not at capacity due to the winter freeze so you need to plan to purchase early while plants are in stock. Bedding plants are also still in short supply as well as roses. Remember to drink plenty of water and take breaks while working in the August heat. The heat and humidity can be brutal this time of the year so wear a hat, apply sunscreen, and drink plenty of water.

Enjoy the rest of the summer!

Brenda Beadle,  
JCMG President

# Agent's Two Cents

By David Oates

## Jefferson County Horticulture Extension Agent

*"With all of the rainfall received, homeowners have been battling extreme cases of fungal issues ..."*

Rain! Rain! Go away! Don't come back until you are needed later in the year! This could be the anthem for every outdoor enthusiast who has endured the spring and summer months with constant daily rainfall here in Southeast Texas. Some folks were getting rain twice and, in some cases, three times a day for a period time. Rain is a good thing, but sometimes we all can receive too much of a good thing. The spring and summer months have been a roller coaster for wet and rainy days here in Jefferson County. It was almost a guarantee that you were going to get rain at some point. With all of the rainfall received, homeowners have been battling extreme cases of fungal issues in the lawn, excess water standing in low lying areas, saturated lawns that normally were dry, insect issues from all the standing water, (yes mosquitoes that could take you down and drive you back indoors immediately), and a host of other water related hazards.

Through all this adversity of wet weather, Master Gardeners and gardening enthusiasts have endured another summer growing season plagued with challenges and have prevailed. Several folks were able to have some decent

garden harvests and maintain their landscapes despite the soggy, wet conditions. Master Gardeners are a resilient group of folks who will work against the odds to have that perfect garden or a landscape that belongs in a magazine.

I want to thank all the volunteers who worked tirelessly to improve the Test and Demonstration Gardens and assist-



ed with other events held by the Jefferson County Master Gardeners this spring and summer (even dodging the daily rains). If you have not been out to the demonstration gardens recently, be sure to check out the progress and improvements made by fellow Master Gardeners. I think you will be impressed by the improvements and updates. I would

also encourage every Master Gardener to make time to volunteer in all our activities, especially our group activities, as we restart a lot of programs due to COVID-19 restrictions being lifted.

As the old saying goes, "If you don't like the weather today, just wait 10-15 minutes and it probably will change." I think this saying is appropriate given the unusually wet summer months we have experienced this year. Let's hope for a drier and more predictable fall season. Stay safe and happy gardening!



TEXAS A&M  
**AGRI**LIFE  
EXTENSION

# Jefferson/Chambers Rainwater Barrel Making Class

Saturday, August 14 , 2021

**Pre-registration required by August 6th  
(space limited); \$45 fee, includes  
constructed rain barrel**

Speaker:  
David Oates,  
County  
Extension  
Agent—  
Horticulture

Registration: 8:30am

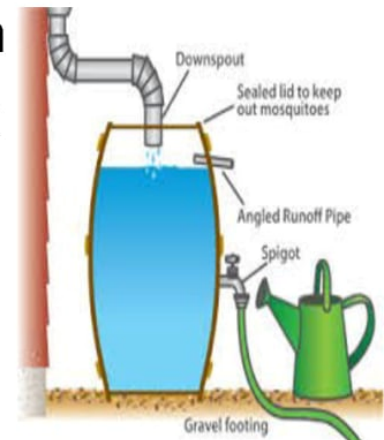
Program: 9 am-Noon

Location: Cove  
Community Building  
5735 South FM 565  
Cove, Texas 77523

For more information

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension—Jefferson County

**(409) 835-8461**



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## Building an Earth-Kind® Raised Bed

By: Melissa Starr, JCMG

***“Gardens in Southeast Texas need to be able to drain well after heavy rains, but still hold enough water for plants to survive during periods of dry weather.”***

The weather this year has been a challenge for many gardeners. While some have been successful, other gardens have failed. There seemed to be no relief with inches and inches of rain falling in July. What is a gardener to do during this type of weather? The key to success is proper soil preparation and raised bed construction.

Gardens in Southeast Texas need to be able to drain well after heavy rains, but still hold enough water for plants to survive during periods of dry weather. Texas A&M's Earth-Kind® program provides a method for building raised beds that not only allow drainage of excess water, but also conserve water during times of drought.

When building a raised bed, the goal is to have healthy soil. Healthy soil allows drainage of excess water, while retaining the nutrients and water necessary for plants to grow expanded root systems. To build a raised bed, start by marking out the space for the raised bed and removing the top 3" to 4" of native soil and sod to prevent weeds from growing later. Line the bed with an edging material such as landscape timbers, rock, brick, or concrete blocks. Raised beds should be at least 6" tall for good drainage. A semi-permeable weed barrier can be placed at the bottom of the bed to pre-

vent grass and weeds from growing; however, it will not prevent nut sedge from growing. That is the reason weed removal is important before building your beds. Now would also be a good time to install any irrigation hoses/pipes that will be used. Drip irrigation is the best way to efficiently water plants without wasting water. Next, add a high-quality landscape soil mix, leaving 2" to 3" of space at the top of your edging material. Work in 3" of fully finished compost, which looks like coffee grounds, to your mix. DO NOT till the native soil underneath; tilling will activate any leftover weed seeds. The soil will drain better if it is slightly higher in the middle of the bed. Pat the soil down slightly, put in your plants and add 3"-4" of mulch on top of the soil. Mulch helps retain water and prevent weeds from growing. Mulch breaks down over time, so add more mulch about twice a year. Do not allow the level of the soil to fall below the edging of your bed. This will prevent the bed from draining adequately.





# Fruit and Vegetable Show





# Planting Your Fall Landscape

By: Melissa Starr, JCMG

***“When planting in the fall, make sure the plants you choose are hardy in zone 9 and will not freeze during the winter months.”***

Fall is the perfect time to plant trees and shrubs in your landscape. During cooler season, the tops grow slower, while the roots grow quicker. This causes your plants to establish themselves faster. New plantings need to be watered frequently, and the regular rainfall that we normally experience during the fall months will make your work easier. After growing underground all winter, the roots of your plants will be better equipped to handle the heat of summer. Here are some tips for planting your fall landscape.

When planting in the fall, make sure the plants you choose are hardy in zone 9 and will not freeze during the winter months. We have mild winters, but some tropical and subtropical plants will not survive our winters. Native plants are always a good choice because they grow wild in conditions similar to our area. Also, choose a healthy plant from a quality dealer. You don't want to buy a plant that looks bad just because it is on clearance. It will not be a bargain if it dies.

Once you have chosen your plants, you will want to put them in the ground. First, dig a hole the depth of the root ball and wide enough in diameter that you have about six inches of space on all sides. Plant the tree or shrub just above the existing soil lev-

el because it will settle a little over time. When planting large trees or shrubs, do not amend or add fertilizer to the soil. You want to fill the hole with only native soil and water thoroughly. If you add compost to the hole where you planted the tree, the roots will tend to grow in a circle instead of out into the native soil. You can, however, add compost to the top of the soil. Then put a 2 to 4 inch layer of mulch around your plant. Do not allow the mulch to touch the trunk of the tree or shrub. This will help your soil retain moisture. Water it every day for the first 5 days, if it doesn't rain, and then once a week thereafter.

If you are planting fruit trees that need well-drained soil, you can build a raised bed in which to plant a tree. I planted a peach tree in a raised bed during the spring of 2020. It has tripled in size since then despite the rain that we had this year. Soggy, wet soil is not friendly to many fruit trees such as peaches.



## 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>



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## MISSION STATEMENT

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

### 2021 Officers

President—Brenda Beadle

Vice President—Dorothy Norris

Secretary—Debby Parker

Treasurer—Susanne Wakeman

At Large— Kevin Pierce, Stellina Reed,  
John Hughes

### Newsletter Staff:

Editor: Melissa Starr

## Announcements

### Fall Plant Sale

October 9

Test Garden

Don't forget to input your volunteer  
MG hours on the new site:

[https://vms.texasmg.org/sec\\_Login/](https://vms.texasmg.org/sec_Login/)

### JCMG Master Gardener class

9 am to 4 pm daily  
Sept 20, 21, 22, 23, 24  
and 1 pm to 5 pm on  
Sept 30, Oct 7 and 14th.

Cost \$175

Call 409 835-8461

To enroll

*Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.*