

WILLIAMSON COUNTY

GARDENING

May 2019



TEXAS
MASTER  GARDENER
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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Cover:
WCMGA Veggie Demo Garden

Photo by Sonia Schuetze,
MG 2016

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Williamson County Master Gardeners are on Facebook with information about programs and events.

All Rise

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

April is just a busy month, no matter how you look at it. Just seems like there aren't enough hours, days or weeks to get everything finished before the heat starts up. This year with the Plant Sale, tax time, Easter and then the State MG conference, my goals are being pushed to the limit. Every year, I plan to get all the flower beds cleaned/cleared and ready for new compost and amendments. Then I can get all the new plants in the ground before the heat arrives in May. The time change helps as I usually feel the need for a miner's light on my hat to see those final Cedar Elm saplings/weeds. Never fails that I'm working in a flower bed assuming I can see just fine, but then my wife turns on the backyard flood lights. I realize how dark it really is, and that I was not seeing just as well as I thought. I try to create a list and force myself to follow it, but that never works. My gardening work style is more like a game of Pinball. I ping from one area to another, bouncing off to an area that needs attention when I walk by it, but then bouncing back again when I remember what I needed for that first area. There's always that argument in my head about whether more flower beds and less grass is a good thing. Successfully clearing/prepping a garden bed versus just mowing the grass, can be a hard argument to referee. It is the hardest when it's dark and the neighbors ask if that's the same flower bed I was working on this morning. Yes, yes it is! Now turn off your porch light and let me get back to my gardening. I'm trying to beat my last Pinball high score.

Tommy King, President

Congratulations to the New Master Gardeners from the 2018 Class

Steve Craig

Cheryl Cutliff

John Gardner

Colette Grier

Dale Hill

Phyllis Kamm

Nancy Knickerbocker-Penick

Victoria Lew

Kelly Linder

Christine Luchini

Jennifer Rosas

Liz Sheehan

Deborah Spanel

Mike Voss

Names in **BOLD** completed their hours this past month.

From The Corner Office

Kate Whitney

Williamson County AgriLife Horticultural Extension Agent

Howdy Master Gardeners!

The fall rains delivered an amazing array of wildflowers this year. I have enjoyed watching the colors change from the blue of our famous bluebonnets to pink primrose and now to the reds and yellows of Indian blankets and Mexican hat. I especially enjoyed all the wildflowers on our drive down to San Antonio for the field trip in April. The Botanical Gardens in San Antonio were really amazing to see this year! If you didn't get to attend the tour, I encourage you to make a trip down to see it. You could spend an entire day wandering around the gardens.

Last week, Jayla Fry, the State Master Gardener Coordinator, made an exciting announcement about a new logo for Texas Master Gardeners. The new logo will help to unify all the county Master Gardener programs and give us a unified look and message. I'm very excited to begin using the new logo, and we will be using it on all future Master Gardener materials. AgriLife put together a good brand guide to show all the formats of the logo and how it must be used. There are specific guidelines on color, size, and background images so that it will look consistent across the state. <https://mastergardener.tamu.edu/branding/>

Thank you for all the work you do in Williamson County! Our program is growing because of your dedication!

-Kate



The AgriLife Extension Office has Moved

Our offices have moved to the new county building, the Georgetown Annex, at 100 Wilco Way, Suite AG201. It is still off SE Inner Loop but now closer to Leander Road, 1460. It is the gray-brown two story brick building and the offices are located on the second floor.



ALERTALERT..... ALERT

NEW LOCATION FOR OUR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETING

We will be having our first monthly meeting at our new location in the Williamson County Georgetown Annex on Monday, May 13th; see map and photo above. If you haven't been there yet, the entrance is where the flags are. Just inside the front doors, take the stairs or elevator to the second floor where the auditorium will be right in front of you. County policy is for no food or drink in the auditorium so our snacks and social time will be in the new AgriLife training room at the end of the hallway. There will be signs and master gardeners to direct you. Remember, you have to finish your snack and drink before you return to the auditorium. Until we get used to the setup, there may be a few glitches discovered and adjustments to be made. Hope to see you there.

IN THE DEMO GARDENS

Companion Planting

by Dale Hill, MG 2018

This year, don't just plant a vegetable garden – plant a “companion garden” which takes into account which vegetables, herbs and flowers grow better near each other (and which do not!)

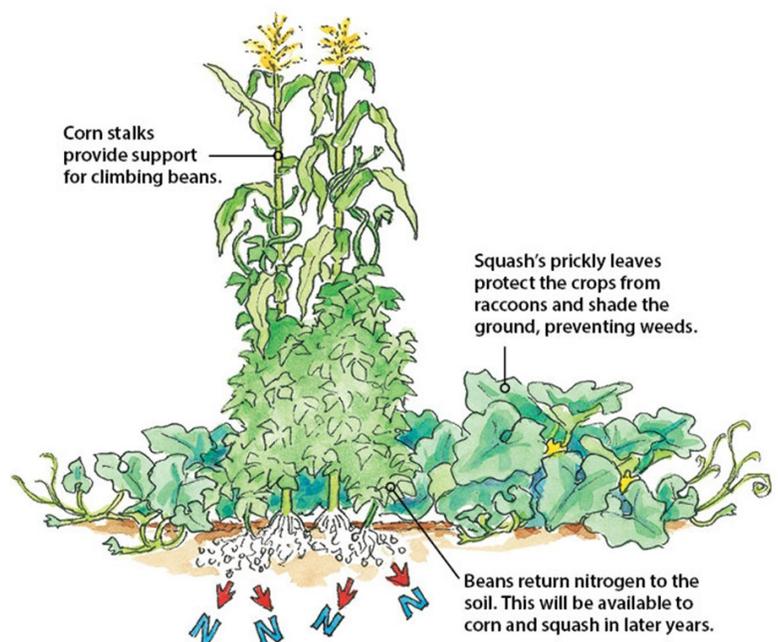
Companion planting is the practice of growing certain plants alongside each other in order to reap the benefits of their complementary characteristics, such as their nutrient requirements, growth habits, or pest repelling abilities. Larger vegetables may also be used to protect smaller plants and seedlings from harsh winds or as a climbing support.

Companion planting examples include:

- Slow growing plants matched with fast growing plants as they will have different space and nutrient requirements
- Heavy feeding plants are intermixed with light feeding plants or plants that incorporate nitrogen into the soil
- Plants with deep roots with those that have shallow roots
- Sun-loving plants offering shade to shade-loving plants
- Aromatic plants, which often repel pests, are planted with non-aromatic plants

A classic example of companion planting is the Three Sisters trio – corn, pole beans, and squash – which were commonly planted together by various Native American communities due to the plants' complementary natures. The corn grows tall, providing structure for the climbing beans; the squash stays low, shading the area with its large multiple leaves, conserving water, while providing weed control, and the beans replenished the soil with nitrogen for both the corn and the squash.

Growth habits, space and the nutrient needs of plants are important characteristics to consider when companion planting. Growing plants together that require the same primary nutrients and space, means that they will be competing for resources which can slow down growth for all. For this reason, it's usually best to grow plants to-



gether that have complementary space and nutrient needs to optimize your garden.

In order to attract beneficial insects and pollinators, you need to have flowers available to keep them happy. They provide carbohydrates and protein to the beneficial insects when pest populations are low. The flowers supply nectar, which contains carbohydrates, and pollen supplies protein. The foliage on the plants provides protection from heat, rain and other insects.

Many plants make ideal companions for vegetable and fruit-bearing plants. For example, choose flowers and herbs - such as scarlet sage (salvia), yarrow, goldenrod, zinnias, sunflowers, marigolds, dill, lavender and many more - to attract beneficial insects and pollinators to your garden. Plants that flower at different times of the year can provide beneficial insects and pollinators with nectar and pollen when they need it.

Finally, companion plants help each other out when it comes to preventing damage from pests and can be a helpful component to your IPM (Integrated Pest Management) program. The strong scents of plants like lavender, rosemary, dill, oregano and mint, for example, can discourage grazing animals like deer from snacking on your nearby vegetables, as well as attracting beneficials to your garden (two for one!). Basil can be helpful in repelling thrips, flies and mosquitos. Oregano can help repel the cucumber beetle. Nasturtiums, which are a favorite of aphids, can be used as bait (or trap) plants to keep pests off your main crops. Marigolds deter beetles, nematodes, tomato worm and many other garden pests.

Tolerate minor pest infestations and set action thresholds in your IPM. The beneficial insects will get the memo before you do. This will provide another food source for the beneficials and help keep them in your garden.

There are many resources available to assist you with planning your “companion planting” garden. Happy gardening!



The Tool Shed

The Spear Head Spade

by Jim Williams, MG 2017

A couple of years ago my assignment at the Berry Springs Spring Clean-up was to clean up a large area under a big oak tree near the cemetery. There were a few small plants that were supposed to remain but some ugly, tough, spawn-of-the-devil, woody things had to come out. To my untrained eye they all looked the same but Wayne gave me a quick lesson and I was onto my task. This wasn't a fun job as this thing was deep and tough and my shovel really struggled getting through the roots meaning that I was struggling, too. As I worked, I had noticed a Master Naturalist on the other side of the cemetery using a funny looking shovel. After lunch I think he was feeling sorry for me and suggested I try using his shovel, a spear head spade. Wow, it was love at first dig, I could have danced all night! The remainder of the day was a pleasure and it was like spading in butter. A week later FedEx delivered my new shovel and I use it weekly ever since.

The spear-head spade is a modification of a sharp shooter shovel. The unique blade is a cross between a spear and a shovel. It slices through rocky soil as well as clay and roots are no match for it. The high-grade steel is very hard which maintains its edge very well. I sharpened mine a bit more with a file and it works even better.

This tool is great for us older gardeners and was designed by an 85-year-old gardener/inventor with artificial hips and knees. Its ease of slicing through any type of soil means less effort on my part. Less effort = less pain and exhaustion after a morning of digging. Also, it is 40 inches tip to handle. When weeding I can just push it into the soil or gently step on it to get the weed root loosened then use it as a cane to support myself going down and coming back up. My 67-year-old back really likes that part.

It's also great for dividing dense plants. It slices through the toughest root ball while it's still in the ground then I dig it out of the ground with my standard shovel. It makes the job much easier.

I have never seen it sold in a store; I bought mine online directly from the company. If you Google "spear head spade" you will see a few vendors selling it from \$35 to \$54. There are both short handled and long handled shovels available. If your kids need any suggestions for Mother's Day this could be better than the wheelbarrow you got last year.



Plantings for the Bs -

Birds, Butterflies and Bees

by Alice Stultz, MG 1996

With sightings of Monarch “scouts”, black-chin and ruby-throated hummingbirds, garden plants are being evaluated for freeze, wind damage and general good health. Flowers are popping up all over and weeds are not far behind or in the case here in Central Texas, the weeds are competing with abandon.



Hummingbirds are attracted to the tubular flower where some insects cannot travel. The cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) is a perennial herb that blooms from May to October. The deep red, tubular flower lends itself to pollination by hummingbirds.

Flame acanthus (*Acanthaceae* family) is a deciduous shrub that can be severely trimmed in late winter. It has orangy-red flowers that bloom in late spring to frost. It is a rewarding plant as it is sun-loving, drought tolerant, hardy shrub that can be a nice border plant. Occasional watering aids the flower performance in the hot summer months. It too has a tubular flower which the hummingbirds love.



Two vines to mention for the hummingbirds are the trumpet vine (*Campsis radicans*) and the coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*). The trumpet vine can be very invasive, can take out a fence and is not as popular right now. The coral honeysuckle is an evergreen vine with dark leaves on the top and lighter on the underside. The tubular flowers in clusters are usually red on the outside and paling to orange on the inside. Red berries mature in the fall and this vine does not take as much water as the jasmines.

Other plants for the insects to enjoy in the garden are indian mallow, aloe vera, Pride of Barbados (*Caesalpinia*), bee balm, bottle brush,

desert willow, fuchsia, firebrush, shrimp plant, red hot poker, lobelia, penstemon, salvias, tecoma stans and mimosa to name a few. Try a plant new to the garden this year to enhance your plant knowledge, landscaping and flora and fauna base.

References: The Hummingbird Society website, Texas Native Plant Database, and Texas A&M Agrilife website.



Winola's Timely Tips for May

by Winola VanArtsdalen, MG 2007

In the wonderful month of May, we can enjoy the beauty of flowers and the delicious tastes of food prepared with those fresh herbs, the reward for all our hard work. It is time for some follow-up to be sure all this joy continues!

Hopefully, you planted native, adapted plants, right plant/right place in soil enriched with compost. You will need to water more often at first, but back off gradually to deeper watering, less often. Remember that watering deeply, less often develops deep roots for plants' survival during stress of summer. Especially if you bought bushes/trees in large containers, remember that those deep roots must be watered or they will die.

Avoid wounds on oak trees February through June when beetles that carry the oak wilt fungus are most active!

Walk through garden daily, a great beginning of your day activity! Do you have herbs and plants with daisy-like blooms (zinnias and fall aster) and umbrella-like blooms (yarrow and fennel) to welcome helpers to your garden? Do your plants have enough air circulation? Do plants need light pruning for shaping, weeds pulled? Is water available for beneficial insects? Watch container plants do not get too dry and be sure they have a mulch cover over soil to retain moisture. Keep an eye on your gutters for problems with animals or clogging.

Carry clippers to cut blooms with a clean cut back to a leaf or leaves to encourage branching. Perennials require more pruning than shrubs, three times a year to ensure full new blooms for woody shrubs like salvia greggii and skeleton-leaf goldeneye. They can be left unpruned to look natural, but get a bit messy.

Watch for pest and disease problems, ie. armadillos and deer, rabbits and slugs. Identify pests and be sure to use least toxic treatment, i.e., hard water spray, saucers with sweet solution to catch slugs, etc.

A dependable rescue treatment for plants is a seaweed solution on foliage early in morning or in early evening when sunlight is not hitting leaves. You can also use a weak solution of seaweed on new plantings a week after setting in. It is 0-0-1 formula, strengthening the cell structure and helping plants resist stress, including heat and cold.

Mulch 3" to suppress weeds, retain moisture, and to help avoid stress from extreme temper-

ature changes.

Save seeds. Keep in place with even temperature. Some gardeners keep in refrigerator, but they can be kept inside in air conditioned home, dry in labeled paper envelopes or glass jars. You can add a small package of desiccant, if you like.

Beds and Turf:

Keep those weeds under control. Dig weeds early before they grow bigger and stronger! Water deeply, less often.

Keep mower blades sharp. Do not cut more than 1/3 of leaf blade at one time.

Do not aerate your lawn during a drought, as it will cause undue stress to the root zone. Never spread compost in hot weather, as it is high nitrogen and could burn turf.

Follow rules of your water department. In absence of rain, you may need to irrigate one inch of water every seven to ten days depending upon soil depth, wind and sun. Divide into cycles to avoid run-off, meaning half or less at one time and watering again a little later. Probe into the soil to determine if moisture depth is reaching roots rather than just feeling the surface.

Avoid wasting water outside vegetation areas: sidewalks, street, etc.

If you have a sprinkler system, be sure it is well maintained checking for leaks, clogged nozzles, or broken sprinkler heads. Give access to a neighbor when you are away.

Depth of moisture:

A few hours after watering, use a moisture sensor, (available online or at local stores), or a screwdriver to be sure water reached the roots. Water deeply to a depth of 5-6 inches, in cycles, where possible. Shallow watering will result in roots near surface where it is dry and hot.



“A weed is any plant that has to deal with an unhappy human”

Felder Rushing's Great Grandmother

Cameras at the Plant Sale!

Photography by Sonia Schuetze, MG 2016



From Garden to Table

by Radhika Baliga, MG 2015

This month's recipe is a zucchini chowder from Kate Whitney's brother's mother-in-law, Nicol O'Malley. If you went on the DeLeon field trip in January, this is the soup that was served at lunch. The soup was so good that one MG requested the recipe on the car ride home, and another MG said that it's one of the best soups he's ever tasted.

Zucchini Garden Chowder by Nicol O'Malley

Ingredients

- 3 medium zucchini, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 Tbs. minced fresh parsley
- 1 tsp. dried basil
- 3 Tbs. butter
- 1/3 cup all purpose flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 3 cups water
- 3 chicken bouillon cubes
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- 1 can (14 ½ oz.) diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 can (12 oz.) evaporated milk
- 1 pkg. (10 oz.) frozen corn or 1 (15 oz.) canned corn, drained
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese



Directions

In a Dutch oven or soup kettle over medium heat, sauté the zucchini, onion, parsley and basil in butter until vegetables are tender.

Meanwhile, in a separate vessel, heat water to boiling and dissolve bouillon cubes.

Stir flour, salt and pepper into vegetable mixture. Gradually stir in water and chicken bouillon and lemon juice, mixing well.

Bring soup to a boil. Cook and stir 2 more minutes. Add tomatoes, milk and corn; bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 5 minutes until corn is tender.

Add cheeses and let simmer for at least 1 hour to allow flavors to mix together, stirring every so often.

It's even better the next day! Enjoy!

WCMGA EVENTS

May 6

WCMGA Board Meeting

AgriLife Training Room, 100 Wilco Way, AG201

1:00to 3:00 pm

All members are welcome to attend.

May 9

Green Thumbs Up Gardening Series: Cedar Park

Cedar Park Public Library

7:00 to 8:00 pm

“Lawn & Garden Insects” with Walt Black

May 13

WCMGA Monthly Membership Meeting

Georgetown Annex Auditorium

100 Wilco Way

6:30 to 8:00 pm

“Succulents in the Home Landscape”

with Jeff Pavlat,

Austin Cactus & Succulent Society

May 14

Green Thumbs Up Gardening Series: Round Rock

Round Rock Public Library

6:30 to 7:30 pm

“Lawn & Garden Insects” with Walt Black

May 25

Hands On In The Garden

AgriLife Training Room, 3151 SE Inner Loop

9:00 to 11:00 am

“Square Foot & Container Gardening”

with Linda Burch



**So Long,
We'll Be Back Next Month When We
Sell All This Stuff.**