



MG WOOD WORKS



November 2019

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EXTENSION

Melodee Eishen:

It's fall y'all! Finally! When we continued to have days in the high 90's into October, it makes one go check the calendar. I think it was unusually warm. However, the weather broke and we are well on our way to fall. The leaves here are falling, in fact our large black walnut tree is already naked.

I've enjoyed having a bountiful garden this summer. But it's time to finish the harvest of peppers, hibiscus and moringa before our first frost. I know traditionally it's not until November, but I wouldn't be surprised if it shows up a bit early.

We are currently getting some much-needed rain and it will really help the fall garden. I'm looking forward to having Swiss Chard and turnip greens for the winter. I'm always surprised when certain plants seem to start thriving when everything else is in a downturn. These plants include my comfrey, chives, hibiscus and Malabar spinach. Even my volunteer sweet potatoes are producing lots of beautiful green leaves for salads and cooked greens.

As my theme for this year is Sustainability, it's time to reflect on how the garden produced this year and what I might change for next year. There were lots of pluses, but I still have some big plans for changes. For one, I'd like to dig up my front yard and design a medicinal perennial garden. I think I have many plants scattered around here I can use, so it will be nice to organize them into a design that's easily accessible and looks great. I know it sounds like a lot of work, but it doesn't have to get done in one day. If any of you have any ideas on medicinal gardens, I'm all ears. Do any of you have a medicinal garden already going?

Of course, there are many other things to do too, which includes transplanting the asparagus, moving the young Burr Oaks out of their barrels to their permanent homes, digging up and moving my persimmon (it got too much shade and didn't produce), etc, etc.

So, continuing the theme of Sustainability, fall is always a time to reflect and give appreciation for all our blessings.

This year has been very full of many blessings of family, friends and master gardeners. I have learned so much from our master gardeners in Wood County. Let me add here, I really appreciate all you do to keep our program active and vibrant. With all of us working together it keeps Wood County Master Gardeners a Sustainable organization.

You know that none of us knows what will happen next year. It could be a very tumultuous year, or it could be a repeat of this year. Some are predicting political chaos, enormous economic downturns and weather upheavals. I know that no matter what, I have my faith, and a family to love and that loves me, I have friends in WCMG, and I can work in my garden and all will seem right with the world. This is what I find SUSTAINABLE!



2019 Wood County MGs



Melodee Eishen	Phil Young	Wanda Mischefsky	Joyce Tullis
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Photo by Elizabeth Neuens

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2019 Responsibilities

- Emails
- Extension Office Landscaping
- Facebook
- Intern Class
- Newsletter
- Sunshine
- Volunteer Management System
- Website

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Lin Grado: Inviting Butterflies to Your Garden

I love to see butterflies in the garden. It's not because I take awesome photos of butterflies – my photos are generally blurry – nor is it because I'm a budding entomologist – my knowledge of butterflies is limited to 'swallowtails' and 'orange' – but because I love the movement that butterflies bring to a garden. Like all creatures, butterflies need food, water, shelter, and a place to raise their young. These are relatively simple to provide.

First the basics: Butterflies are insects that go through four distinct life stages: egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, and butterfly. It's important to know this, as we gardeners sometimes are overzealous at removing insect eggs and 'worms' (caterpillars) from our plants. If you're indiscriminate in applying pesticides, your butterfly population will suffer along with the pests you are trying to annihilate. So the first and most important guideline for inviting butterflies to your garden is to reduce your use of pesticides.

Guideline #2 for inviting butterflies: Plant nectar-rich flowers (and don't spray them with pesticides). Butterflies eat a liquid diet; for most butterflies that means nectar. When a butterfly lands on a flower, it unrolls its long straw-like proboscis and inserts it deep into a flower to drink the nectar. Some flowers are more attractive to butterflies – think of plants with lots of blooms that are close together. In my garden, if I could have only one flower for butterflies, it would be the old-fashioned garden phlox (*Phlox paniculata*). It is a rare summer day that I don't have swallowtail butterflies on my phlox. The flowers at the Wood County Arboretum that attract the most butterflies also include lantana, salvia, black-eyed Susan, butterfly weed, blue mist flower, and coneflowers. Many of these flowers are in the aster family, characterized by flower heads composed of many individual florets. Each individual flower is a separate nectar source, so one visit provides a lot of nectar.

Butterflies also feed on the flowers of shrubs like abelia, vitex, and butterfly bush, with their tubular blooms on each stem. An old-fashioned butterfly favorite for shady spots is Cashmere bouquet, also called Mexican hydrangea, a shrubby perennial with broad pink blooms consisting of lots of small nectar-filled flowers. And some native trees have blooms that are attractive to butterflies, such as sumac and Mexican plum.

Color is also important to attracting butterflies – some like red or orange flowers, but to attract the widest range of butterflies, remember WYPP: white, yellow, pink, and purple. Many of the plants listed above have blooms in these color ranges. Also select single versus double flowers, as singles tend to have more nectar. Finally, some newer hybrids may sacrifice nectar as growers breed for larger or longer-lasting flowers, so try to buy old-fashioned varieties.



Giant swallowtail caterpillar looks like bird poop on a hardy orange tree.



Swallowtail butterfly on phlox

As an aside: nectar is high in sugar, but butterflies also need salts and other minerals for optimal reproductive health. You may see them on a damp spot of soil, looking like they're resting. This behavior is called 'puddling', and the butterflies drink from the damp soil to get the salts. I have some sandy paths that I keep raked (so I can avoid stepping on snakes), and the butterflies often congregate there. Leave a similar spot in your garden, or build a simple pudding station – email me for directions.

Guideline #3: Provide protection from the weather (and don't spray pesticides). Butterflies don't need butterfly houses for shelter, but they will appreciate some protection from the wind and rain. If you plant your butterfly garden quite densely, the plants themselves will offer shelter from wind. Include trees, woody shrubs, ornamental grasses, rock piles, and thickets, and the butterflies will have a place to hunker down in a rain storm or at night. I like the cottage-garden look, so I intersperse ferns or grasses among the flowers, as well as some shrubs that like to form thickets, such as Virginia sweetspire and weeping butterfly bush. These encourage butterflies to stick around, even through storms, and provide them hiding places from predators.

Guideline #4: Provide food for the caterpillars to eat (and don't spray pesticides). Butterflies need a place to raise and feed their young, and caterpillars eat leaves. Butterflies will only lay eggs on the specific plant species that is food for their caterpillars (called a larval food source). I think every grade-schooler in Texas knows that monarch caterpillars eat milkweed – after all, the monarch is our state insect. Other butterflies are just as selective in food for their caterpillars. Black swallowtail caterpillars will lay waste to your parsley, dill, and fennel plants, and gulf fritillary caterpillars can defoliate your passion-vine. If you want to have butterflies in your garden, then you must tolerate damaged foliage on the larval food sources. Luckily, a lot of larval food sources are trees, so the damage isn't as noticeable – for example, the giant swallowtail feeds on citrus and Hercules club, the viceroy feeds on cottonwood, and the question mark feeds on all elms. Planting native trees can provide larval food sources for many butterflies.

Reduce your use of pesticides; plant nectar-rich flowers; provide protection from the weather, and provide plants for the caterpillars. By following these four simple guidelines, you too can invite butterflies to linger in your east Texas garden.

Lin Grado: Beyond the Bloom

Gardeners are happiest when their plants are blooming. They invite you to see their gardens, post pictures on Facebook, and even have photo books printed of their gardens of blooms. If you happen to visit their gardens when the blooms start fading, they'll say, 'You should have been here last week.' Blooms are fleeting – a gardener must also look for the beauty after the flowers fade.

Some plants produce edible fruit that follows the flowers, and those fruit can provide continuing beauty. (Please do not eat the fruit of any plant unless you are certain that it's not poisonous.) Edible doesn't always mean tasty, and there's no correlation between beauty and taste. For example, I have a hardy citrus tree that blooms each spring – fragrant white orange-blossoms – and bears large fruit later in the year. Unfortunately the fruit tastes like a not-very-good grapefruit, so I leave it on the tree all winter. The result is stunning: a ten-foot tree with deep green leaves that provide an evergreen backdrop to large yellow orbs scattered throughout.

A more familiar example of a plant with showy edible fruits is American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) – its bright purple berries are ripening now along our roadsides. The fruit isn't really palatable – it has a medicinal taste to me, and can cause stomach upset – but it makes a great jelly. The beautyberry shrub is somewhat unruly, and not very attractive most of the year, so it looks best in the back of a border, along a fence, or in a naturalized area.



The purple berries make beautyberry a standout in the fall.

One of my favorite garden snacks appears each fall on the native Turk's cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus*). The flowers, in red, pink, or white, produce a fruit that looks like a shiny red apple in miniature. I munch on those as I walk in the garden and spit out the seeds – and I think every seed has sprouted, resulting in a line of Turk's cap along my garden path.

Turk's cap performs well in full sun to shade, and can be a part of a dry garden that receives no supplemental water.

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Yantis Prairie Days Melodee Eischen

On September 28 this year the Wood County Master Gardeners participated in Yantis Prairie Day. Last year the Prairie Day event took place at the local school and this year we were across the road at an old dairy that they have turned into an educational center.

There were many exhibitors from Texas Parks and Wildlife, to Audubon Society and private exhibits showing pelts of native wildlife found in the area, soaps and salves made from herbs, home schoolers showing wildlife art work and their own phenology study, birdhouses and honey bee hive viewing. Also on hand were artists painting Plein Aire at the pond and tours of the Prairie pasture featuring native grasses and plants. In the classroom area, which was the old dairy, we could listen to experts talk about various aspects regarding native grass and native plants being incorporated into our pastures or as landscapes in our yards. These sessions were full of lots of suggestions on going "Natural", there seemed to be many advantages like less watering, weeding, mowing and less fertilizing if you were up for a non-structured look to your landscaping.



Melodee Eischen, Ann Reynolds, Reggie Askins, and Linda Timmons

Shaniqua Davis: Lawns in the Fall

I'm hoping that I only have to mow my yard just one more time this year. Cooler weather and shorter days are bringing an end to the lawn's growth. But even as you do your last lawn mowing, below are practices that will ensure a good transition of your lawn into winter months and a stronger lawn come next spring.

Don't fertilize anymore. One common action we love to take is applying a "winter-izer fertilizer". It is a very beneficial practice but don't do it now because it is too late. Generally, research recommends the absolute latest fall fertilizer application should be made at least six weeks before the location's historic first-frost date.

Given that our historic first frost is mid-November, that last application of fertilizer would have been done by the first of October. Fertilizing this late in the fall would be like someone preparing you supper just before bedtime! Your lawn is preparing for winter dormancy and a late feeding could be more disruptive than helpful.

One exception to this is if you have a Bermuda lawn. You can give Bermuda 2-3 lbs. of 0-0-60 per 1,000 sq. ft. Potash fertilizer applied in the fall is a secret of top-notch hay growers. Bermudagrass roots are built up with potash (another name for potassium) and it won't stimulate vegetative growth or fungal problems.

Do add lime... if you need it. If you need to add lime to reduce acidic soils, add lime now to your lawns. Lime helps to neutralize the pH in our commonly low pH soils. Lime isn't really a fertilizer although it does contain Calcium, a secondary nutrient for plants. Lime's purpose is to provide a better environment for the plants to grow. One of its better attributes is that it allows nutrients to be more available.

So, who does need to lime? I don't have a clue. But with \$12 spent on a soil test, anyone and everyone can find out exactly how much lime

they'll need to apply.

Don't keep watering. I've had a number of folks ask if they should water during the winter months. It's true that your lawn and shrubs and other perennials need moisture year-round, but our climate typically provides enough moisture in our winter not to water. In the coming weeks (and certainly after our first frost) you can completely turn off your sprinkler system.

When to turn the irrigation system back on? April is naturally a good time. The grass will likely have started growing at that time and warm, drier weather would be starting.

Do treat for weeds. You can (and should) treat for weeds each fall. Problematic warm season perennial weeds such as Spurge and Virginia Buttonweed can be killed now before they go dormant. Annual spring weeds such as Lawn Burweed and Henbit can be best controlled with preemergent herbicides as they are just trying to germinate.

Products may not be clearly marked as "preemergent" but may instead have language on them such as "weed preventer." So, being familiar with some of the active ingredients can be helpful. Common active ingredients used for preemergence control include prodiamine, dithiopyr, pendimethalin, isoxaben, and others.

I have long recommended Atrazine. There are lots of products on the shelves at lots of stores that contain this active ingredient. It is very safe to use on our most common turf grass, St. Augustine.

Do these last practices, and your lawn will be one of the best in the neighborhood next spring.

Shaniqua Davis is the County Extension Agent for agriculture and natural resources for Wood County. Her email address is Shaniqua.davis@ag.tamu.edu

The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.



Ann Reynolds: Hawkins City Park & Library



Do you hear shouts of joy? Listen closely, fellow Master Gardeners. The Hawkins City Park sprinkler system is now fixed . . . just in time for winter. The trick now is to get city officials to NOT shut off the water during the coming months. Stay tuned.

Even though many plants were lost to the drought and lack of supplemental watering, the flower beds did not look too bad for the Oil Festival. Several city officials complimented WCMG for the hard work on this project. Now that it is cooler and there is water, spring/summer flowering perennials will be transplanted.

Lin Grado : Beyond the Bloom

Continued...

Other plants produce colorful fruits and seeds that are not edible. One of my favorites is a shrub called harlequin glorybower (*Clerodendrum trichotomum*), sporting clusters of white blooms in June. But that's not enough for this easy-to-grow shrub: in August, blooms that were pollinated become metallic-blue berries surrounded by hot-pink calyxes. Harlequin glorybower does like to spread by the roots, so you may have to pull out ones that pop up in neighboring beds. I have some plants to share with the first three gardeners who email me at txgardengal@gmail.com.



Seedheads rival the beauty of these bell-shaped clematis blooms.

One plant that I grow is pretty nondescript, almost invisible, until its fruit ripens – in fact I often forget that I have a strawberry bush (*Euonymus americanus*) in my shade garden. The small blooms are yellow-green and not very noticeable. But when the pods split open, it's a showstopper! Another common name for this plant is 'hearts-a-burstin' and that's pretty descriptive of the purplish-pinkish husks that split open to reveal bright orange seeds.



The seed pods on this native shrub earned its name: 'hearts-a-burstin'.

Finally, some plants have seeds whose form alone provides interest in the garden. My absolute favorite seedheads are those on clematis vines, such as our native leatherflower (*Clematis carrizoensis*) – they form a tangle of filaments that will ripen into a fuzzy ball – exotic and beautiful! Most clematis will form interesting seedheads, so plant the vines where you can see the seeds ripen, and don't deadhead this vine or you'll miss half of its beauty.

This fall, as the flowers are fading, take the time to notice the fruits and seeds in your east Texas garden.

Jacque Hilburn-Simmons Fall Plant Sale at Arboretum

The fall sale at the Arboretum attracted a steady turnout. The outpouring of shoppers helped make the annual fall plant sale at the Wood County Arboretum and Botanical Gardens a huge success.

The two-day sale, divided into shopping opportunities for members and the public, attracted a host of plant enthusiasts from around the area.

"It was a great sale," said Deanna Caldwell, president of Friends of the Arboretum, which oversees the grounds. "We are so appreciative of the support, especially the Master Gardeners and our volunteers, for helping customers with their plant selections and purchases."



Plant lovers anxiously await the opening of the fall plant sale.

The sale featured seasonal favorites, from brilliantly colored mums to hearty foundation shrubs.

"We are so grateful to our growers for the fabulous plant selections," said Lin Grado, garden manager. "We were able to offer a wide variety of plants, all suitable for East Texas."

Special appreciation is extended to two key sponsors, J. Berry Nursery and Tree Town USA, which provided locally grown specimens for the event.

The annual fall plant sale is only one of many projects offered throughout the year at the arboretum, a 23-acre garden venue that also features a walking trail, theme gardens, tribute plantings and new Monarch way station. The next public event is a holiday open house planned for Dec. 12.

The Arboretum is located at 175 Governor Hogg Pkwy.

To learn more about the arboretum, membership options and volunteer opportunities, visit www.woodcountyarbo.org. Information is also available by phone at 430-235-5461 or email: woodcountyarbo@gmail.com.

Linda Timmons: 2019 Awards

It's that time of the year again when we start thinking about what we, as Texas Master Gardeners, have accomplished during the past year and what we might improve during the coming year. One way we can evaluate our accomplishments is by honoring those MGs who have gone above and beyond. The five areas we have traditionally chosen to honor are innovator, project leader, community outreach, outstanding MG and rookie of the year.

The person selected as **innovator** should be someone who introduces new ideas or new ways to get a job done. The **project leader** will be someone who shows leadership in a WCMG project at a physical location. The person should be involved in planning, developing and implementing a project that fulfills our goal of research based horticulture education. The **community outreach** nominee would be someone who has collaborated with community leaders and other individuals to promote the Texas Master Gardener program. The **outstanding Master Gardener** should show leadership and made major contributions in the current year. The **rookie** of the year will be an individual from the 2019 Trainee Class that exemplifies and promotes the Texas Master Gardener program through leadership and volunteer service.

When you vote for someone for any of the awards you are asked to include a few words about why you are nominating this person. This can be especially important when several nominees get the same number of votes. Each of us sees a different side to the people we work with in the Master Gardener program. You may have been the only person that saw the effect your nominee had on a child or group during a presentation or your nominee may have inspired you to do or be more as a Master Gardener. Your observations can be important in getting your nominee recognized.

Traditionally we have received the ballots and voted by email. This year our advisor, Shaniqua Davis, and the executive committee will be distributing the voting and deadline information at the association meeting on November 21st.

A reminder of our Master Gardener activities this year:

- ◆ Consultations (horticulture advice to individuals and organizations)
- ◆ Extension Office Garden
- ◆ Farmers Markets
- ◆ Hawkins City Park and Library
- ◆ Junior Master Gardeners
- ◆ Science Days
- ◆ Speakers program (horticulture presentations to local groups)
- ◆ Spring Conference
- ◆ WCMGA Facebook page
- ◆ WCMGA Website
- ◆ Wildscape
- ◆ Wood County Arboretum
- ◆ Wood County Master Gardener Training Class
- ◆ Woodworks Newsletter
- ◆ Yantis Prairie Day

2020 Officer Election

Melodee Eischen

Each September a nomination committee of three members is appointed by the Wood County Master Gardener Executive Committee (who are your current officers). This year the committee chose Linda Bradley, Linda Long and Tracey Snow Murphy. The executive committee were seeking members who are involved in various aspects of the organization and know a lot of the membership. It also helps if they attend most of the monthly meetings.

When nominating someone for an officer position we also encourage they find those who regularly attend monthly meetings. Those nominated also must be members in good standing, meaning they have paid their dues and meet the CEU and volunteer hour requirements. Other than these criteria we look for those involved in various projects, enthusiastic, positive and a willingness to assume these positions and are capable of handling these commitments.

It is with a sense of assuredness that I look forward to next year. I am very confident in each of our nominees, soon to be officers, dedication and competence. It's very rewarding to think of the many people we have in our association that have such a wealth of knowledge, talents and skills (i.e. future officers).

This year's nominees are:

PresidentPeggy Rogers,
Co-Vice-PresidentsAnn Fair-Irby and Debbie Latham
SecretaryJan Whitlock
TreasurerJean Croucher

A big **Thank You** to all who are willing to serve as officers of WCMG.



<https://thegardendiaries.blog/tag/thanksgiving-centerpiece>

Upcoming Events

WCMG Meeting:

November 21: Review of all the major projects and programs: Mineola Nature Preserve/Linda Timmons, Hawkins City Park and Hawkins Library/Ann Reynolds, Wood County Arboretum and Botanical Garden/Lin Grado, AgriLife Extension Landscaping/Debbie Latham, Nature Watch (Phenology Study)/Melodee Eishen, and Science Days/Reggie Askins. Shaniqua Davis will update/review "Lunch and Learn", and we will have a short overview of our Spring Conference "Plant*Grow*Eat".

December 19: Christmas party and celebration, presentation of 2019 awards, and election of officers, with a potluck luncheon hosted by Tracey Murphy at her home.

Visit the **Texas Master Gardener** website (<https://mastergardener.tamu.edu/>) for information about advanced training topics and opportunities. The *Master Gardener On-Line Training* programs offers modules on: Landscape Water Conservation, Low-Volume Irrigation, Irrigation System Auditing,, Safe Use and Handling of Pesticides, Safe Use and Handling of Fertilizers, Reducing Landscape Waste-Composting, Designing an Earth-Kind Landscape, Landscaping for Energy Conservation, Creating Native Habitat, Earth-Kind Roses, Integrated Pest Management, Pet Management for Crape Myrtles, and Rain-water Harvesting.

As you read our WCMG newsletter and learn of all the educational seminars and classes we hold, garden projects we plan and execute, advanced training speakers we share with the public in educational forums, the class room instruction we provide to County ISDs, the newspaper educational articles written by our Associates and the community outreach events we hold, as well as our web-site and Facebook pages, we hope you get an understanding of how great an asset you have available to you especially here in Wood County, Texas.

Online with WCMGA

MG Wood Works Newsletter:

- ◆ You are invited to submit thoughts, lessons, suggestions, or perceptions; if you are planning or know of an upcoming event of interest to MGs, please be sure to send that information to me. You are permitted to count time writing articles as volunteer hours. Articles may be edited.
- ◆ Unless otherwise annotated, all photos in this publication were taken by the author of the article in which they appear.
- ◆ Submit articles, ask questions, make comments, or report corrections to B.J. McGee: mgnewsletter@hotmail.com or bmcgee@froco.com

Website at <http://txmg.org/woodcounty> up-to-the-minute news and scheduled events, back issues of the newsletter and seasonal videos. Any new content for the web-site can be sent to **Keith Zimmerman**: keithzim@yahoo.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Wood-County-Master-Gardeners-Inc-205733709448425/?fref=ts>

Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1534107646899295/>

MG Advanced Training through Texas A & M AgriLife Extension

Sunshine: Know of a member who needs a get well, warm thought, or sympathy card? Contact Elaine Porter (361 319-7300; porterpettus@gmail.com). She will ensure one is sent from the Association.

Volunteer Hours: <http://texas.volunteersystem.org> Just click on the link and you will see where to enter your password. Before logging in, right click on the page and save to favorites or bookmark or Create Shortcut to you desktop. Thanks for entering your hours. If you need help contact Peggy Rogers.

Associate Roster: You can find all e-mail addresses and contact information for other Master Gardeners Available after logging into the Volunteer System.

Update your profile in the Roster! Is your phone number up to date? Have you changed your email address? Did you move? Have you uploaded a photo? Please check your listing to be sure your contact information is up to date

Become a MG!

Contact the Wood County Extension Office: **Phone: 903-763-2924**