

MG WOOD WORKS



November/December
2020

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Peggy Rogers

Hello Gardeners,

About this time of year, my grandparents used to say, "It's time to put the garden to bed."

They would completely clean all plants from the garden area, cover it with leaves and straw and they were done for the year.

I think we are all ready to wind down this crazy 2020 year and be done, but we can't do that, we still have work to do. Our Master Gardener work cannot be put to bed. It's time to plan for 2021. Although we do not know if the new year will be any different, we must continue forward.

We had great plans for 2020 that had to be cancelled, but maybe the tour and education events can be revived and improved for the new year. I was taught to look for the good in the bad. So, for the good, we've spent more time at home, more time with family, done more home cooking, and done less eating out.

I've spent more time in my gardens and created a new iris garden. My gardens show it by having fewer weeds, more flowers, and healthier plants. I've researched more plants. I've volunteered more in our Extension Demonstration Gardens. I've gotten more exercise, so why have I gained weight, hmmm?

At the October meeting, we formed a committee to explore the challenge to grow food for the needy and how and where to distribute the produce. We can grow and give away food, but we also need to incorporate education about how to grow the food.

As a Texas A&M AgriLife organization, our purpose is to help the extension agent

distribute horticulture information to the public. Our new extension agent, Emily Husmann, is coming mid-November. She will be creating opportunities for us to help her educate the public.

As a lot of you have fall gardens, your gardens are still producing. It's time to clean dead, damaged, or just unsightly plants from the garden, but don't forget to leave a few plants with seeds to feed the birds.

I don't know about the rest of you, but I have too many leaves to rake! If I leave them all on the gardens, they are so thick that they smother the bulbs and seeds. However, I do mulch and reuse some of them.

Because this is our last *MG Wood Works* newsletter for the year, I'll say happy fall, happy Thanksgiving, merry Christmas and a very happy New Year!

2020 Trainee Class Update

With this crazy pandemic year, the 2020 class has had its problems. As of October, the trainee statistics were:

- Weekly classes ended with most trainees having 35 of their 50 hours of education.
- Ten trainees have completed 50 education hours.
- Five of the 10 trainees have finished 50+ volunteer hours and are Texas Master Gardeners.
- Two of the 10 trainees are close to completing 50 volunteer hours.
- One trainee just lacks a few education and volunteer hours to finish.

The trainees have until April 30, 2021, to complete their education and volunteer hours. After that, they will be given the opportunity to join the next trainee class. At this time, a 2021 class is not planned.

Wood County Master Gardener Association (WCMGA) Meetings
Third Thursday of Each Month (Please watch your email/messages for updates.)
8:30–9 AM Visitation and sign-in
9 AM Meeting

2020 Wood County Master Gardener Association

2020 Officers and Directors

Peggy Rogers, President	214 794-2853	peggyrogersc21@gmail.com
Ann Fair-Irby, Vice President	903 571-5802	ladyfaira@aol.com
Jan Whitlock, Secretary	903 878-2795	j_whitlock@hotmail.com
Jean Croucher, Treasurer	214 738-7671	jean@crouchercool.com
Gayle Mullinax, Director	806 683-8647	gcmullinax@att.net
Peggy Rogers, Director	214 794-2853	peggyrogersc21@gmail.com
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Jean Croucher Jan Whitlock Ann Fair-Irby Peggy Rogers

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office - Wood County

Extension Agent - Wood County Emily Husmann 903-763-2924 Emily.Husmann@ag.tamu.edu

Project Chairs

Emory City Park	Teresa Runion	903-439-7161	nanarunion@gmail.com
Extension Office Landscaping	Debbie Latham	817 925-3055	latham55@msn.com
Hawkins City Park and Library	Ann Reynolds	903 769-2398	ann@etex.net
Mineola Nature Preserve	Linda Timmons	903 569-3443	lindtmms@aol.com
Phenology-Nature Watch	Melodee Eishen	903 571-2322	meishen@airmail.com

2020 Responsibilities

Emails	Peggy Rogers	214 794-2853	peggyrogersc21@gmail.com
Facebook	Robin Sanchez	717 645-8778	ranchez@hotmail.com
Intern Class	Linda Bradley	817 909-6919	lk_bradley58@yahoo.com
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Sunshine	Elaine Porter	361 319-7300	porterpettus@gmail.com
Volunteer Management System	Peggy Rogers	214 794-2853	peggyrogersc21@gmail.com

Kathy Goodman: Welcome to Emily Husmann, the New Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agent

Please welcome Emily Husmann, the new Texas A&M AgriLife extension agent for Wood County.

Emily is a graduate of Oklahoma State University. She has a degree in animal science with a minor in agricultural economics. She comes to Wood County from Anderson County where she served as an assistant Texas A&M AgriLife county extension agent last year.

Our new extension agent will begin working in the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office in Quitman on November 17. It will be good to have that position filled again.

We look forward to working with Emily in the future.



Melodee Eishen: 2021 WCMGA Officer Candidates

At the October meeting of the Wood County Master Gardeners Association (WCMGA), the Nominating Committee put forth the following names for 2021 officers: President—Peggy Rogers, Vice-President—Susan Jarrell, Secretary—Janet Jenkins, and Treasurer—Jean Croucher.

These candidates are much more accomplished than they let on. I think the WCMGA will be well served by this slate of officers for 2021.

Voting for officers will be conducted during the November meeting.

Each person answered the following questions:

1. Why did you become a Texas Master Gardener (TMG)?
2. Have you always lived in Wood County, Texas? If not, where did you come from and when?
3. What occupation or profession do you have, or did you have before retiring?
4. Tell us about your family.
5. What's your favorite thing about the WCMGA?
6. What are you looking forward to in 2021?

President: Peggy Rogers

1. I became a vegetable gardener because we needed vegetables to help feed the family. However, I desired more knowledge and wanted to grow flowers. I heard about the TMG program in 1978, when it first came to Texas. However, I did not live in a county where the TMG program was available. Thirty years later, in 2008, I attained my goal by driving to Wood County.
2. I have lived in Wichita, Clay, Ward, Palo Pinto, Van Zandt, and Harrison counties, but never in Wood County.
3. I was an executive vice president of production for Aero Dynamics Auto Pilot company for 10 years and a real estate office manager and sales associate for 22 years. I'm retired, but I own and operate a small landscape business.
4. I married my high school sweetheart. I have two sons, three grandchildren, and two great grandchildren. For 5 years, I've had partial custody of my youngest great granddaughter.
5. My favorite thing about WCMGA is the people.
6. For 2021, I'd like to have more public educational events.



Vice-President: Susan Jarrell

1. I became a TMG because I love being outside with plants. I love to create, and I enjoy nature's beauty. My grandmother and mother had "green thumbs." I always had a patch of ground to try to make beautiful even though I had no idea what I was doing!



2. My husband and I moved to Wood County 4 years ago. We moved from the Beaumont area where we grew up.
3. I began teaching in 1976. My areas included early childhood, English, special education, and gifted education (K-12). I also taught at the college level and worked as a national and state consultant in the area of curriculum and strengthening low performing schools. I retired in 2016.
4. I am married to a wonderful man who I met on a blind date. Together we have three children (ages 42, 39, and 35) and three grandchildren.
5. My favorite thing about WCMGA is meeting wonderful people. The nicest ladies and men are gardeners!
6. I hope that 2021 will give us a more loving and caring society. I also hope that more people will find spiritual peace and spread that peace to our world.

Secretary: Janet Judkins

1. I came to TMG because my husband, Steve, was very interested and he wanted us to learn together.
2. I grew up in Tyler and met Steve at Tyler Junior College. We moved to Wood County from Nederland, TX.
3. I retired as an attendance clerk at a middle school in Nederland.
4. We have been married 46 years. We have 3 children and 9 grandchildren.
5. I have enjoyed meeting wonderful people, developing friendships, and learning so many new things about plants and even spiders!
6. For 2021, I hope to be able to set up the garden area that I have in my head and drawn on paper.



Treasurer: Jean Croucher

1. Having recently moved (2017) to the area from the DFW area, I wanted to learn how best to work in the soils and learn which plants are the best.
2. I've worked in the DFW area since 1975.
3. I was an Information Technology (IT) nerd from 1975-2018. It makes me tired just thinking about it.
4. I'm the youngest of six children. I have four brothers and one sister. I'm single and enjoy my life on the lake with my 13-year-old golden doodle, Bijou.
5. It's a hard question for 2020, but I love being part of the WCMGA group and working with such knowledgeable people.
6. For 2021, I want a vaccine that we can all feel good about taking and getting back into real life.



Ann Reynolds: A Garden for the Birds and Butterflies



Preston and Kathy Baker Holly Gardeners Yard of the Month for Holly Lake Ranch.

Kathy and Preston Baker have created a garden for the birds. Literally! Holly Lake Ranch’s award-winning photographer and her husband (the mastermind behind Kathy’s projects) have created the perfect backdrop for capturing nature through the camera lens – especially birds. Have you ever thought of growing a garden just for birds and butterflies?

After all that has gone on in 2020, it is a treat to see this

yard and their cottage home surrounded by hardwoods and pines. Butterflies welcome you as you arrive. The first things you notice are the hardscape, yard art, birdfeeders, and many plants.

Their yard includes many plants that ruby-throated hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*) love, including Turk’s cap



The yard is filled with herbs and flowers in an attractive landscape.

(*Malvaviscus drummondii*), Hot Lips salvia (*Salvia microphylla*), autumn sage (*Salvia Greggii*), and mealy cup sage (*Salvia Farinacea*).

In addition, there are Texas Gold lantana (*Lantana x hybrida ‘New Gold’*) and Bandana lantana (*Lantana camara*) plants. Their shrubs include barberry (*Berberis*), crepe myrtle (*Lagerstroemia*), nandina (*Nandina domestica*), creeping juniper (*Juniperus horizontalis*), azalea (*Rhododendron Anthopogon*), and Spanish dagger (*Yucca gloriosa*). Shady places contain ajuga (*Ajuga reptans*).

Plants, bird baths, and feeding stations are built at different levels. Planting in levels is more attractive to a wider variety of birds and butterflies. As you walk up to the house you see a

big urn bubbling with water and the sound is peaceful. There are many paths to walk to view the garden in different ways. The yard contains different types of bird feeders – suet and seed.

The gardens include troughs filled with flowers and herbs. Two rain barrels supply water for the plants nearby and plans are in the works for a potting bench. Preston says the gardens are a work in progress that never ends.

As you walk around the house you see the seating area where Kathy photographs the birds that come to feed from the yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*) thicket. Kathy Baker truly captures the beauty of Holly Lake Ranch.

Kathy Baker’s Photography

The list of the many species of birds and butterflies that Kathy captures in photos is too long to include. This section contains a few of photos taken by Kathy.

See her Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/kmcaglebaker>) to see more of her nature photos.



Seating area where Kathy photographs birds.



Ruby-throated hummingbird



Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)



Curious Carolina wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*)



Unafraid, the fawn poses for a photo.

Barb Williams: Lettuce Barrel Project

Howdy ya'll!

I've been experimenting with different containers, as well as different varieties of vegetables that I enjoy eating and sharing.

I enjoy fall gardening because the temperatures are cooler and the pests seem to be fewer. Of course, you can't wait for the weather to cool off before getting started or you'll run out of time on some plants.

Thankfully, lettuce is not a frost sensitive plant. Leaf lettuce (cut and come again) typically does better in our climate as opposed to head lettuce (one harvest only) because there is more time between temperatures that are too hot and a quick freeze. A hard freeze is considered an hour or more at 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Frost makes lettuce sweeter. A freeze should just bite back the leaves a bit, which means I should be able to harvest this batch until next year when the warmer temperatures cause the lettuce to bolt.



Start lettuce from seeds in September.

Start Seeds Early

I started my lettuce inside from seeds in September. This year I'm growing Burpee Bibb, Merveille des Quatre Saisons (a French heirloom) and Drunken Woman, which are all leaf lettuces (*Lactuca sativa*) with different shapes and colors.



Remove the outer lettuce leaves to make planting easier.

I put stickers on the tray and seed packets to make labeling less cumbersome.

Preparing the Barrel

Now for the barrel... I purchased a strawberry barrel at the barn sale that the Wood County Arboretum held this fall. The drip irrigation was already attached to the inside.

After bringing the barrel home, I spray painted it so it would blend in with the hardscape in my garden. After letting it dry for a few days, I moved it into place and connected it to my irrigation system.

For the compost center, I used some leftover fencing. Its design is based on the keyhole garden we built at Deena Taylor's home a few years ago. I used wet cardboard around the outside of the center, so it would keep the compost where I wanted it during the build. Then I filled the center with the compost from my bin that wasn't quite finished decomposing. Next, I made Mel's Mix using my finished compost, peat moss and perlite. I put 3 scoops of each at a time in the wheelbarrow and then stirred it up (grateful to have lots of masks handy).

I filled the area between the compost center and the outside of the barrel with this mix and then watered.

Planting the Vegetables

The next day I planted. I placed a label above the top hole in the barrel and then planted a lettuce variety in a diagonal direction.

On the top of the barrel, I planted radishes. I'll let some radishes go to seed for the early pollinators in the spring. I'm really looking forward to seeing how it looks in a few weeks!

Also, I'm super excited to have fresh lettuce to share!



Place raw compost in the center.



Prepare and add Mel's Mix around the center of the barrel.

Before and After

The strawberry barrel was transformed into a new planter for winter vegetables. It's a useful idea to repurpose a strawberry barrel. Keep being creative and thinking of new ways to create or repurpose planters.



The strawberry barrel before the transformation.



The barrel planted and growing lettuce and radishes.

Kathy Goodman: Preparing Plants for Winter

Now that the weather has cooled and the days are getting shorter, it's time to think about what I need to do to prepare my flower beds and plants for winter. Seems too soon for winter. I'm wish all gardeners good weather for winter preparation tasks.

Reference: Here is a great Texas Master Gardener resource for a list of monthly tasks for Wood County: <https://txmg.org/woodcounty> On the menu at the top, click **Monthly Gardening** and select the month.

Dividing Plants



One daffodil bulb multiplied to more than 12 in three years.

One of the first tasks is dividing the daffodils (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*), bearded irises (*Iris germanica*), yellow flag irises (*Iris pseudacorus*), and cannas (*Canna*). According to my research, daffodils bloom better if they are divided every three to four years. In addition, iris bloom better if they are not crowded. This year, I'll have

extras to share, which is one of the joys of gardening.

Reference: For information about daffodils, see <https://www.almanac.com/plant/daffodils>; for irises, see <https://www.almanac.com/plant/irises>; for Cannas, see <https://www.almanac.com/plant/cannas>

Note: Interestingly, the yellow flag iris is considered invasive in some areas. <https://plants-archive.ifas.ufl.edu/plant-directory/iris-pseudacorus/>

Before the first freeze, I'll cut my larger angel's trumpet (*Brugmansia*) plant in pieces about 12 inches long and propagate them in water. After they root, I will plant them in pots. That's how I got my first angel's trumpet plant from the Wood County Arboretum. I plan to pot my smaller angel's trumpet plants that aren't growing where they're planted and move them to the garage. I may keep them in pots until I find the location in which they like to grow.

Reference: [So Easily Distracted, Growing And Propagating Angel Trumpet \(Brugmansia\)](#).

Planting Bluebonnet Seeds

I planted my Texas bluebonnet (*Lupinus texensis*) seeds early in October. Through research, I found the freeze and boil technique and will see if that works. Some rocky undeveloped areas in my yard should make the bluebonnets feel at home.

Reference: [How to Grow Texas Bluebonnets, by A.J. Andrews](#)

Storing Plants in the Garage

Since I don't have a greenhouse, I must decide which plants to move into the garage before the first frost. While storing the plants in the garage, I found that turning the florescent lights on during the day seemed to help keep the plants alive through

the winter. However, I might store fewer plants this year because they take up a lot of room. During the plants' dormant period in the garage storage, it is easy to overwater the potted plants, which causes roots to rot. I read that you should water the plants once a month while they are dormant.

In addition, before the first frost, I save my geraniums (*Pelargonium x hortorum*) using the bare-root method. Just knock the dirt off the roots and store them loosely in an open cardboard box. By using that method last year, a few survived. I planted the survivors in a pot after the last freeze in the spring. They soon came back and flowered nicely.

Reference: [Garden Gate, How to Over Winter Geraniums](#).



This red geranium was started from a bare-root plant that was stored in the garage last winter. This is how it looked in October.

Cleaning Flower Beds

To clean up my flower beds, I remove the dead leaves from various plants that don't die back in the winter and remove dead tree leaves from the flower beds. Because of the number of trees in my area, I have a lot of leaves to rake. In the past, I thought it was good to let the leaves stay in my flower beds to protect the plants from freezing. However, in my Master Gardener class, I learned that was not a good practice. The piled-on leaves can cause plants to rot, and the moisture encourages disease and pests.

My experience tells me not to cut back my lantana (*Lantana camara*) plants when they lose their leaves and look dead. One year I cut back my lantanas in the fall and none of them came back the next spring. I will cut them back in the spring after the last freeze.

Reference: [How Far Can You Cut Back a Lantana? Home Guides/Garden/Garden Care by Patricia H. Reed](#).

Carol Hollen: Making Time for Rosemary and Thyme

While staying at home these days more than we might like, we have extra thyme—and rosemary—on our hands.

Uses for Rosemary

If you're like me, you have several rosemary (*Salvia rosmarinus*) plants around your house or in your garden. They're hard to kill and seem to thrive in the hottest of Texas summers. Perhaps best of all, they discourage mosquitoes. We have one by our kitchen patio that keeps getting bigger each year with absolutely no help from me. Now that's the kind of plant I love!

We all know that rosemary is a lovely addition to a lamb, pork or chicken dish. However, you might notice that rosemary pairs nicely with garlic in many recipes. The following garlic crusted roast rack of lamb recipe makes my mouth water.

Reference: <https://www.foodandwine.com/recipes/garlic-crusted-roast-rack-lamb>

However, if you happen to be a vegetarian, rosemary roasted potatoes are an easy family favorite, too. Have you ever tried infusing olive oil with rosemary? There are many recipes out there in Google land for doing just that. Here's a simple one that you can make now, and perhaps even give as gifts. After all, Christmas is right around the corner. Yikes, did I say that?

Reference: <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/245912/rosemary-garlic-infused-olive-oil/>

Rosemary's Neighbor—Thyme

Not to be outdone, rosemary's neighbor in the garden, thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), can be used in a plethora of do-it-yourself food and beauty concoctions. Here's a link to an example of a simple syrup recipe using thyme that you can easily make and use to enhance company cocktails or your favorite non-



Rosemary thrives in Texas and adds flavor to many recipes.

alcoholic beverages. Simple syrup also makes a nice gift – the gift of thyme.

Reference: <https://www.southernliving.com/recipes/thyme-simple-syrup-recipe>

Skin and Hair Benefits

Lastly, you may find rosemary and thyme nice additions to your skin and hair routines. Why not use what you have on hand and cut back on expensive store bought products?

References: <https://www.bebeautiful.in/all-things-skin/everyday/beauty-benefits-of-rosemary>

<https://www.prevention.com/beauty/skin-care/a20435887/how-thyme-and-rose-help-your-skin/>

Moira (M.J.) Lamborn: Growing Parsley in the Winter



Researching all about parsley before planting.

Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*) is a Mediterranean herb that is a biennial (a plant that takes two years to grow from seed to fruition and die) but in Texas, it is more like an annual.

Parsley grows well in zones 3-9 and can grow through winter in zone 9. Although it is usually sown in the spring, I think I will have success sowing in October because when a frost is predicted I will cover it with a cloche or bring it indoors. Parsley makes a great container plant.

It germinates in 18-30 days so it's quite slow. Remember to transplant it carefully so you do not injure the tap root.

While parsley likes full sun to partial shade, in Texas, I suggest

giving it partial shade. It likes a neutral pH soil of 6, so slightly acidic soil.

There are two forms of parsley, curly or flat leaf. The flat leaf parsley can grow a foot taller than the curly leaf form. In general, flat-leaf parsley has a more robust flavor, while the curly variety is more associated with decoration. It's also a great plant for the garden because few pests eat it.

Harvest parsley by picking the leaves as you need them. Removing the flower heads prolongs the growing season. If you want parsley to self seed, leave it alone and you may get more plants. The seeds are tiny.

I grew up eating parsley in many recipes. For example, it tastes great with scrambled eggs, pesto, soups, and stews. Interestingly, parsley is also a good breath freshener.

Reference: <https://morningchores.com/growing-parsley/>

Jessie Mellon: From Black Land to Sugar Sand

This spring, we moved from the “black land prairie” of Ellis County to the “sugar sand” of Wood County. I was delighted that we wouldn’t have cracks in the yard big enough to swallow quail, but then discovered pocket gophers.



Buried plastic pots foil gophers and the tomatoes grow well.

Our neighbors all had their own solutions for gardening in gopher ground. The consensus was that container gardening is the best way to foil the pesky critters. I decided to follow an “old timer’s” advice. I had three-gallon plastic pots that I filled with a commercial potting soil. I buried the containers in the sand, leaving about 3 inches of the lip above ground. Then, I planted my tomato seedlings in them and placed a tomato cage around each one as an act of faith. To my delight the tomatoes grew well.

We decided to try another method to thwart the gophers. We cut a 48-inch square of half-inch hardware mesh and placed it on the bare ground. We then placed a 36-inch diameter galvanized fire ring on top of the mesh, leveled and filled it with equal parts of a mixture of commercial potting mix and native sandy soil.

This method performed well despite the summer heat. I believe that the volume of soil, top mulch and regular watering kept the soil cool and moist enough for the roots of onions, peppers, okra, and summer squash to endure through July and August.

We planted broccoli and cabbage plants in the fire ring for the fall and possibly winter.

Our next experiment will be to lay a row of hardware mesh directly on the ground, pile cardboard, soil, compost, and mulch on top to a depth of about 8 inches. Hopefully, we will be able to grow row crops with this method.

Growing vegetables in sugar sand requires a learning curve. I am climbing that curve and looking forward to the journey.



Wire mesh and a galvanized fire ring form a great gopher barrier.



The completed fire ring is gopher proof and provides a nice container for the broccoli and cabbage plants in winter.

Melodee Eishen: Phenology Report

For the month of September, we had well above average rainfall. Our average for Wood County, Texas is about 4 inches. This year we received nearly 10 inches of rain for September.

The most rainfall for Wood County, Texas usually falls during the 31 days surrounding October 22, with the average being 4.2 inches. So far, this month is drier than normal, but the weather could change.

The average frost date for this area is mid-November. In the past four years, the first fall frost dates have been:

- 2019 – October 31
- 2018 – November 13
- 2017 – October 28
- 2016 – November 12

The latest recorded fall frost for our area was December 4, 2009, and the earliest was October 28, 2017. So, a fall frost should be coming soon to our area

I’m tracking hummingbirds and found that they left my home the first week of October. However, I saw one straggler on October 14. Overall, I had quite a few hummingbirds and they drank two quarts of sugar water daily. According to my research, hummingbirds drink .02 oz. feed per day. Using that calculation, I guesstimated that we had several hundred birds. It was a feeding frenzy during September.

I’m also tracking the elderberry plant. In September, I harvested berries. The plants are growing and expanding nicely. The other plant I’m observing is Turks cap. It is large with lots of red blooms and is beginning to fruit.

Kathy Goodman: Whiteflies Can Damage Plants

Many gardeners are experiencing whiteflies on their plants. Apparently, you need to practice some sort of infestation control because they can do some damage. In addition, you should make sure that the plants you bring into your greenhouse this winter do not have whiteflies.

Ann Reynolds provided the following link to an AgriLife website with extensive information about whiteflies.

Reference: <https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/library/landscaping/whiteflies/>

You really need to read the entire article because there is too much information to adequately cover here, but I will summarize some of the highlights aimed at home gardeners.

Types of Whiteflies

The article says there are many types of whiteflies, and that it is important to know which one you are seeing. The main whitefly species that feed on ornamental plants in Texas are the silverleaf whitefly (*Bemisia argentifolii* [Bellows & Perring]), the greenhouse whitefly (*Trialeurodes vaporariorum* [Westwood]), and the banded wing whitefly (*Trialeurodes abutiloneus* [Haldeman]).

The complete life cycle of a whitefly varies from about 2.5 to 5 weeks according to temperature conditions and species. Many overlapping generations can occur each year. Adults and nymphs feed by inserting their mouthparts into plant tissue and sucking phloem sap.

Whitefly Damage

Whiteflies can damage plants directly or indirectly. Direct damage is caused through their feeding, which removes plant sap and stunts plant growth, especially in young plants. Silverleaf whitefly feeding has been associated with several plant disorders, including silverleaf of squash, stem blanching, and whitening of poinsettia and cruciferous vegetables, and irregular ripening of tomatoes.

Indirect whitefly damage is caused by the large amounts of sticky honeydew secreted during feeding. Honeydew may cover plants and support the growth of sooty mold, which reduces the plant's ability to use light for photosynthesis. In addition to direct and indirect damage, whiteflies may carry and transmit viral diseases that can severely damage susceptible plants.

A certain number of whiteflies may be tolerated when they do not cause significant damage. This tolerance level varies according to the host plant and individual preferences. A few adults feeding on plants will usually not cause significant damage and do not warrant treatment.

However, if monitoring reveals an increasing number of eggs and nymphs on the underside of young leaves and the weather conditions are favorable, intervention may be required to prevent future damage.

Intervention

Intervention may be any of the following methods:

- Physical/mechanical control
- Biological control
- Chemical control

Physical/mechanical control includes removing heavily infested leaves or plants and using a high-pressure water spray on the underside of leaves. Removing infested leaves from plants may be enough to control small populations on less preferred hosts. Removing a few infested plants early may prevent future problems.

High-pressure water sprays will wash away honeydew and sooty mold accumulations and reduce populations of adults and nymphs. High-pressure water sprays are recommended at least once a week for three consecutive weeks and can be repeated, as necessary.

The easiest biological control method in a landscape is to conserve naturally occurring predators and parasitoids. Conservation biological control involves the careful selection and use of pesticides only when necessary to prevent pest damage. Judicious use of insecticides not only will preserve natural enemies but will also reduce health and environmental risks.

Insecticidal soaps and horticultural oils are contact insecticides that cause suffocation and desiccation of nymphs and adults. Soaps and oils are among the best alternatives for whitefly control by homeowners because they are effective, preserve natural enemies and are relatively safe. It is important to thoroughly cover the underside of leaves and repeat applications.

Insect growth regulators, when applied during the immature stages, prevent adult whitefly development. These products generally do not kill adult whiteflies present at the time of a treatment.

To reduce the impact of insecticides on natural enemies, avoid the frequent use of broad-spectrum insecticides (those labeled against many pests) because these also kill predators and parasitoids. Avoid frequent, long-term use of insecticides with the same mode of action because this may lead to the growth of populations of insects that are resistant to the chemicals. Insects that are resistant to one insecticide may also be resistant to other insecticides (cross-resistance).

Under certain temperature, humidity, water, and shade conditions, pesticides may cause injury to some plants (phytotoxicity). Generally, apply pesticides during early morning or late afternoon to avoid the hottest part of the day. Water plants one to two days before applying pesticides. Remember to always check the product label for the list of plants that may be injured by the pesticide.

Linda Timmons: Northern Sea Oats Grass Provides Multi-Season Interest

Northern or inland sea oats grass (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) is an interesting native grass that can be grown easily in any East Texas garden. It is an almost carefree perennial. The only work it requires is cutting it back in early spring. Northern sea oats grass is pest and disease free.

The plant's name refers to the unique seed heads that develop in the summer. The seeds start out green and slightly resemble oat seed heads. In the fall they turn bronze and age to light tan in the winter. The weight of the seed heads causes the stems to arch and they sway and rattle in response to any stray breeze. The leaves resemble bamboo. The leaves are a medium green during the growing season and turn from bronze to brown in the winter.



Northern sea oats grass that Linda Timmons shared at the October WCMG meeting. Photo by Kathy Goodman

Northern sea oats grass is a warm-season grass that spreads through rhizomes or seeds. It prefers rich, well-drained soil in sun. Plants grow 2 to 4 feet tall in an upright clump. Even though the grass prefers a sunny location, it will grow and seed in dappled shade. However, in the shade, the leaves are darker. The grass is drought tolerant. About the only thing the northern sea oats grass doesn't like is wet soil, but it will grow happily beside a pond or stream if the soil is well drained.

The grass is a source of food for birds, butterflies, and small animals. The seeds provide food for wildlife from mid-summer through winter. In spring, birds use the dried stems for nesting. You may want to leave your northern sea oats grass standing over the winter to maximize its usefulness to wildlife. Northern sea oats grass attracts butterflies because it is the larval host

plant for Pepper-and-Salt Skipper (*Amblyscirtes hegon*), Bell's Roadside-Skipper (*Amblyscirtes belli*) and Bronze Roadside-Skipper (*Amblyscirtes aenus*).

As with so many other wonderful things, northern sea oats grass does have a drawback. It can become invasive. If the seed heads are left through the winter a large amount of seed will fall to the ground and germinate.

To mitigate the invasiveness somewhat, you can cut most of the seed heads off in the fall and use them in dried flower arrangements. Or, in the spring, you can easily pull the seedlings as they emerge. The grass spreads by rhizomes also, but this just means that the clump gets bigger. In a few years, a clump that started out 3 inches in diameter at the base might be 6 inches at the base. As the clump gets bigger the grass is more inclined to flop over. You can dig and split large clumps in early spring.

Planting northern sea oats grass is a wonderful way to add texture, color, and sound to your landscape. It is an easy-to-grow native, has decorative seed heads, and even a slight breeze passing through a clump rustles the dry seed heads, which creates a pleasing sound in your garden.

Also, northern sea oats grass is an interesting cut flower. If you cut the seed stems off after they begin to turn bronze, they provide a long-lasting fresh or dried bouquet. This grass

Ann Reynolds: Plant Identification Tags for the Hawkins Library Project

Recently, Alasdair Duke volunteered to make plant identification tags for the Allen Memorial Library in Hawkins. Alasdair is a homeschooler who lends his youthful strength and enthusiasm to various projects in the area.

In keeping with the nature theme, Alasdair crafted the identification tags out of native cedar and sealed them to protect them from the weather.

These ID tags are a valuable addition to the Allen Memorial Library flower beds. Thanks to these tags, the library patrons will now learn the names of some of the plants they have been admiring for some time.

Thank you, Alasdair, for volunteering your time and talent to make these plant identification tags.



Homeschooler Alasdair Duke made plant ID tags for the Hawkins library project.

Ann Reynolds: Park Partners Need Support from Volunteers

I recently read an article in the Dallas Morning News entitled “Park Partners Need Support.” Many Dallas parks have had to adjust to the loss of a big chunk of revenue for six months during the COVID-19 pandemic. Two of these parks are the Texas Discovery Center Gardens at Fair Park and the Trinity River Audubon Center (both operated by non-profits on city-owned property).

What does this have to do with the Wood County Master Gardeners? Our local projects, the Wildscape at the Mineola Nature Preserve, the AgriLife Office in Quitman and the Hawkins City Park/Allen Memorial Library have enjoyed the handiwork of Master Gardeners on a limited basis during these challenging times. While cities and the county laid off employees due to the pandemic, WCMGA provided a few volunteers at these projects to keep them beautiful.

People need parks and open spaces for mental health breaks – especially now. Each WCMGA project is a very different experience: one is a manicured office building garden, another

a nature preserve wildscape, and the last is a three-component demonstration, pollinator, and sensory garden. People can enjoy the gardens, birds, and butterflies while taking advantage of hiking and nature trails, jogging paths, and playgrounds. A big plus is that these projects also provide critical pockets of habitat for traveling insects and birds in the spring and fall.

The directors of both the Trinity and Fair Park properties in the Dallas area gave enormous credit to their volunteers who have filled a massive gap after this year’s layoffs. However, the Trinity River Audubon Center is fighting to survive. The properties are counting on people to visit so revenue will begin to trickle in.

Wood County and the cities of Quitman, Mineola, and Hawkins are fortunate to have Texas Master Gardener volunteers. Their can-do spirit helps to keep these garden spaces looking great year-round without having to rely on city or county revenue.

What would this world be without volunteers?

Kathy Goodman: The October WCMGA Meeting and Plant Swap

It was good to see some of my fellow Master Gardeners at the October WCMGA meeting. Linda Timmons brought some northern sea oats grass from the Mineola Nature Preserve and talked about its benefits and charm. (See her article on page 10.)

We welcomed Terri Baker who moved from Dallas county to Mineola. There were some questions about how programs are identified as Texas AgriLife programs. It’s a confusing subject; however, the programs are discussed in the *Texas Master Gardener Handbook*, Chapter 1 and in the *Management Guide* on the TMG Association website.

Reference: <https://txmg.org/administration/management-guide>

It was a good day for the plant swap. I got some tea cup elephant ears (*Colocasia esculenta*) and other plants that I will thoroughly enjoy.



The above photo is before the meeting and the photo below shows a bit of the plant swap after the meeting.



Peggy Rogers leading the October meeting and fielding questions.



As you read our newsletter, you learn about:

- Educational seminars and classes
- Garden projects
- Advanced training speakers at educational forums
- Classroom instruction for county ISDs
- Newspaper educational articles written by Master Gardeners
- Community outreach events
- Resources such as our website and Facebook pages

Please send newsletter articles, suggestions, and interesting information to B.J. McGee at mgnewsletter@hotmail.com or bmcgee@froco.com. Remember, the time you spend writing articles qualifies as volunteer hours. Before you submit your article, please check the spelling, especially for proper names and botanical names. Please include the botanical names for all the plants you mention. We appreciate photos that enhance the articles. Articles may be edited for grammar and space restrictions.

Online with Wood County Master Gardeners

MG Wood Works Newsletter

Unless otherwise noted, all photos in this publication were taken by the author of the article in which they appear.

Website

<http://txmg.org/woodcounty> has up-to-the-minute news and scheduled events, back issues of the newsletter and seasonal videos. Send new content for the website to **Keith Zimmerman**: keithzim@yahoo.com

Wood County Master Gardeners Association (WCMGA) Facebook Page

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

WCMGA Facebook Group

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

Advanced Training

Visit the **Texas Master Gardener** website (<https://mastergardener.tamu.edu/>) for information about advanced training topics and opportunities. The *Master Gardener Online Training* programs offer modules about various subjects, such as Landscape Water Conservation, Low-Volume Irrigation, Safe Use and Handling of Pesticides, Safe Use and Handling of Fertilizers, Reducing Landscape Waste - Composting, Designing an Earth-Kind Landscape, Creating Native Habitat, Earth-Kind Roses, Integrated Pest Management, and Rainwater Harvesting.

Sunshine

Know of a member who needs a get well, warm thought, or sympathy card? Contact Elaine Porter at 361-319-7300 or porterpettus@gmail.com.

Volunteer Hours

<http://texas.volunteersystem.org> Click the link and the sign-in page for the Volunteer System opens. Before logging in, right-click on the page and save it to favorites, bookmark it, or create a shortcut to your desktop. Please enter your hours in a timely manner. If you need help, contact Peggy Rogers.

Associate Roster

You can find photos, email addresses, and contact information for other Master Gardeners in the Volunteer System.

Please update your profile in the Roster! Check your listing to be sure your contact information is up-to-date. Have you uploaded your photo?