

MG WOOD WORKS



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Peggy Rogers: President's Message

Happy New Year!!

As I write this before Christmas to be published the first of January, it seems strange with Christmas still ten days away. With Christmas now in the review mirror, what was your Christmas like? I really missed attending all the Christmas parties, galas and family gatherings. Will life ever be the same? 2020 has been the most challenging year of my life! Not just the pandemic caused by the corona virus, but the attitudes, presidential election, rioting/destruction of property, mask wearing, and social distancing. However, we have survived and we are going forward.

That I know about, we have at least one of our members survive COVID-19 and one member lost two of her close family members to COVID-19. I urge you to stay away from any contact with people inside and outside, so we can do our part in slowing down this deadly virus. We look forward to the new year of 2021 hoping it will bring good changes, but in reality I only see a repeat of 2020! Ugh!

Committees, please keep working and planning by email or phone.

We need to think of new ways to communicate our knowledge to the public. How about videos? Yes, I'm exploring the different tech meetings, but so far Zoom seems to be the answer.

Would love to hear from you with constructive ideas as I want to stay open to suggestions.

At this time, on NetHealth, Wood County and surrounding counties are RED. Which means, no face-to-face Extension hosted or Extension sponsored events. No guest

speaking or presenting at other entities' events. No overnight events!

On another subject, the poinsettia was introduced to the US from Mexico by John Robert Poinsett, thus poinsettia! What have you or what are you going to do with your Christmas poinsettia?

Toss it or see if you can get it to rebloom for next year! When the leaves drop you can cut it back to about 4 inches, repot it to a larger pot with fresh soil, keep it damp but not soggy. I noticed this year that most of the red ones did not look healthy, Curled leaves, black leaves and black spots, yes most seemed to have a fungus. 2020 got us again. So examine your plant before deciding to keep it, if you are keeping it will need to be treated for fungi.



2020 Trainee/Intern Class Report

At our November WCMGA meeting Penny Boice, Kathy Goodman, Michele Musser, Mitzi Pearce, Dan Rose, and Carolyn West received their Texas Master Gardener certification.

Nancy McDonald and Gwynn Tucker were awarded intern status and by December 15, both of them reached Texas Master Gardener status.

M J Lamborn, David Tevebaugh, and Nancy Tevebaugh have earned intern status and are still working on TMG certification. These class members have persevered with a smile and determination to complete their goals.

Educational Opportunities

Because of the COVID restrictions, our usual educational meetings/classes are not being held. Several online options are available to continue learning, and you can explore those options in [Online with WCMGA](#) on the last page of this newsletter.

2021 WCMGA

Officers and Directors



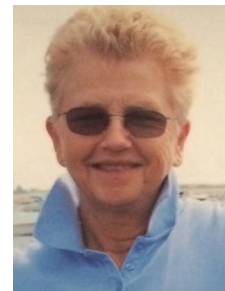
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Linda Timmons: WCMGA Awards 2020

Since 2007, our county extension agent has recognized master gardener volunteers who went above and beyond during the year. For most of 2020 Wood County didn't have an agent but the association felt the recognition of effort still needed to be made. A very special thank you is deserved by all associates for your continued contributions in this especially challenging year.

Congratulation to the winners of our 2020 Wood County MG awards. Certificates presented by Emily Husmann, Wood County Extension Agent.

Innovator of the Year

Melissa Deakins

Kids Korner at the Wildscape

Melissa saw an opportunity to let the kids get involved in the information area at the Wildscape. She designed and posted fun horticulture information for the younger visitors to the garden.

Community Outreach

Keith Zimmerman -WCMGA Web Page

Keith has been maintaining our website for several years. He has worked this year to keep our website current both with horticultural and association information.

Project Leader

Linda Timmons

Wildscape at the Mineola Nature Preserve

The Wildscape garden has had challenges and opportunities this year. The garden was used for hands-on training for the 2020 class as well as providing horticultural information and education for kids and adults.

Rookie of the Year

Kathy Goodman

In a year that was interrupted by a complete shutdown, the MG trainees were challenged to finish their training and perform their volunteer hours. Kathy completed all her hours, participated in multiple projects, and stepped up to help redesign, edit, and layout our Association newsletter, *Wood Works*.

Master Gardener of the Year

Ann Reynolds

Ann is active in supporting Texas A&M AgriLife Extension through the three Hawkins Gardens and publishing articles in local newspapers.

5 Year Service Pins were presented to:

Melody Eishen, Gwen Fleishman, Larry Fleishman, Lauri Fisher, Traci Justice, Gayle Mullinax, Tracey Snow Murphy, and Joyce Tullis.

10 Year Service Pins were presented to John Fox, Diana Mele, and Jan Whitlock.

15 Service Pin was presented to Jerry Sutphin



Melissa Deakins

Innovator of the Year

Photo by Ann Reynolds



Keith Zimmerman

Community Outreach
of the Year

Photo by Ann Reynolds



Linda Timmons

Project Leader of the Year

Photo by Ann Reynolds



Kathy Goodman

Rookie of the Year

File Photo



Ann Reynolds

Master Gardener
of the Year

Photo by Linda Timmons

Peggy Rogers: How They Do It In Dallas

JANUARY

Decide what plants need to be replaced or moved. Create a wallet list of plants to watch for as you peruse the nurseries this spring.

Planting

- Continue to plant new shade trees, fruit trees, and evergreen shrubs. Mulch root areas.
- Continue to transplant established trees and shrubs while they are dormant.
- Finish planting pre-chilled tulip and hyacinth bulbs if you did not do so in December.
- Plant any bare-root plants including fruit and nut trees as well as roses.
- Continue planting pansies, snapdragons, kale, Swiss chard and other cool season annuals. Plant onion transplants anytime soil is ready. Plant spinach and snap peas mid to late month.
- Sow seeds in flats or containers to get a jump on the season. Petunias, begonias and impatiens can be started now. Tomatoes, peppers and beans can be started in late January into mid-February indoors, in a hot bed or heated greenhouse.

Pruning

- Prune with a purpose. Do not “top” any trees or shrubs including crape myrtles. Never leave stubs. Cut flush against remaining branches on shrubs and along the branch collar on trees. Peach and plum trees should be pruned to encourage horizontal branching, remove any strongly vertical shoots.
- Continue to prune evergreen trees such as magnolias, live oaks, and wax myrtles to minimize possible ice damage.
- Re-shape evergreen shrubs and shade trees, as needed, during the winter dormant period.

Plant Care

- Check houseplants for insect pests such as scale, mealy bugs, and spider mites.
- Continue to mulch leaves from the lawn and remove debris from turf areas to reduce disease and insect problems.
- Continue to water lawn once every three weeks or so, if you have not had at least 1” of supplemental rain.
- Watch for scale insects on camellias, hollies, and euonymus.
- Water outdoor landscape plants, as needed, when the soil is dry. Water plants thoroughly before a hard freeze to reduce chances of freeze damage.
- Fertilize pansies and other winter annuals about once a month throughout the winter.
- Protect tender plants from hard freezes.
- Till and prepare new planting beds when soil is workable. Work in organic material. Add compost and mulch to all beds. Recycle your Christmas trees. Contact your city’s waste disposal department for sites. Know your soil by getting a soil test through Texas A&M.

Source: *Monthly Gardening Tips: January*: Dallas County Master Gardener Association, Inc.;
<https://dallascountymastergardeners.org/index.php/monthly-gardening-tips/>

Ann Reynolds: DAR Honors Wood County Master Gardeners

The Wood County Master Gardeners were awarded the Daughters of the American Revolution with Community Service Award on December 7, 200.

DAR is an organization with a deeply rich history while also being truly relevant in today’s world. More than 1,000,000 women have joined the organization since it was founded over 125 years ago. They became members to honor their heritage as well as make a difference in their communities across the country and the world.

For more than a century, the members of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution have dedicated

themselves to historical preservation, promotion of education, and encouragement of patriotic endeavor. Part of the patriotic endeavor is rewarding individuals and organization for their community service.

This year the John Hogg Sr. chapter of The Daughters of the American Revolution met on December 11 at the Taste of Italy restaurant. At that meeting, they awarded the Wood County Master Gardeners with the organization’s community service award. The chapter cited the many educational opportunities for members and the public and also the different projects within the community.

Vegetable Planting Guide

Planting Times for North Central Texas

Vegetable Types	Planting depth in inches	Distance between rows	Average crop height ft	Spring planting dates* North Central Texas	Fall planting dates* North Central Texas	Days to crop maturity
Asparagus	8-12	48-60	5	Feb. 1 - Mar. 1	Not Advised	700
Beans, snap bush	1-1 1/2	24-36	11/2	Mar. 18 - Apr. 15	Aug. 1 - Sep. 15	45-60
Beans, snap pole	1-1 1/2	36-48	6 - 8	Mar. 18 - Apr. 15	Jul. 30 - Aug. 10	60-70
Beans, Lima bush	1-1 1/2	30-36	11/2	Mar. 18 - Apr. 15	Aug. 15 - Sep. 15	65-80
Beans, Lima pole	1-1 1/2	36-48	6 - 8	Mar. 18 - Apr. 15	Jul. 25 - Aug. 15	75-85
Beets	1	12-24	11/2	Feb. 1 - Feb. 15	Sep. 1 - Oct. 1	50-60
Broccoli	1/2	24-36	3	Feb. 1 - Feb. 15	Aug. 15 - Sep. 30	60-80
Brussels Sprouts	1/2	24-36	2	Feb. 1 - Feb. 15	Aug. 15 - Sep. 30	90-100
Cabbage	1/2	24-36	11/2	Feb. 1 - Feb. 15	Aug. 15 - Sep. 30	60-90
Cabbage, Chinese	1/2	18-30	11/2	Feb. 1 - Feb. 15	Aug. 10 - Aug. 30	65-70
Cantaloupe	1	48-96	1	Apr. 5 - May 1	Jul. 30 - Aug. 10	85-100
Carrot	1/2	12-24	2	Feb. 1 - Feb. 15	Sep. 1 - Sep. 30	70-80
Cauliflower	1/2	24-36	3	Feb. 1 - Feb. 15	Aug. 15 - Sep. 20	70-90
Chard, Swiss	1	18-30	2	Feb. 1 - Mar. 3	Aug. 15 - Sep. 15	45-55
Cilantro	1/2	12-24	2	Feb. 1 - Apr. 1	Sep. 1 - Sep. 30	40-60
Collard (Kale)	1/2	18-36	2	Feb. 1 - Mar. 3	Aug. 25 - Sep. 20	50-80
Corn (sweet)	1/2	24-36	6-8	Mar. 18 - Apr. 30	Aug. 10 - Aug. 25	70-90
Cucumber	1/2	48-72	1	Mar. 18 - Apr. 30	Aug. 25 - Sep. 10	50-70
Eggplant	1/2	24-36	3	Apr. 1 - Apr. 30	Jul. 30 - Aug. 25	80-90
Garlic	1-2	10-18	1	Feb. 1 - Feb. 15	Not Advised	140-150
Kohlrabi	1/2	12-18	11/2	Feb. 1 - Mar. 10	Aug. 15 - Sep. 20	55-75
Lettuce	1/2	12-24	1	Feb. 1 - Mar. 31	Sep. 1 - Sep. 30	40-80
Okra	1	24-36	5-7	Apr. 1 - Apr. 30	Jul. 1 - Aug. 25	55-65
Onion (plants)	1/2 - 1	12-18	11/2	Jan. 1 - Feb. 15	Aug. 15 - Sep. 15	80-120
Onion (seed)	1/2	12-18	11/2	Jan. 1 - Feb. 15	Sep. 1 - Sep. 20	90-120
Parsley	1/2	12-24	11/2	Feb. 1 - Mar. 15	Aug. 15 - Oct. 10	70-90
Peas, English	2-3	18-36	2	Jan. 20 - Mar. 3	Sep. 15 - Nov. 1	55-90
Peas, black-eyed	2-3	24-36	2 1/2	Mar. 30 - Apr. 30	Aug. 15 - Sep. 1	60-70
Peppers	1/2	24-36	2-3	Mar. 30 - May 30	Jul. 30 - Aug. 25	60-90
Potato, Irish	4	30-36	2	Feb. 1 - Feb. 15	Jul. 30 - Aug. 10	65-100
Potato, Sweet	3-5	36-48	11/2	Apr. 15 - Jun. 1	Not Advised	100-130
Pumpkin	1-2	48-96	11/2	Mar. 25 - Apr. 25	Aug. 10 - Aug. 25	75-100
Radish	1/2	12-18	1/2	Feb. 10 - Apr. 15	Sep. 20 - Nov. 15	25-40
Spinach	1/2	12-18	1	Jan. 20 - Mar. 10	Sep. 15 - Nov. 1	40-60
Squash, Summer	1-2	24-60	2	Mar. 25 - Apr. 15	Aug. 1 - Aug. 30	50-60
Squash, Winter	1-2	48-78	1	Mar. 25 - Apr. 15	Aug. 10 - Aug. 30	85-100
Tomato	4-7	24-48	3-6	Mar. 20 - Apr. 30	Jun. 15 - Jul. 30	55-100
Turnip, Greens	1/2	12-24	11/2	Feb. 1 - Mar. 10	Aug. 25 - Nov. 1	30
Turnip, Roots	1/2	12-24	11/2	Feb. 1 - Mar. 10	Aug. 25 - Nov. 1	30-60
Watermelon	1-2	60-96	1	Mar. 30 - Apr. 30	Jul. 20 - Aug. 10	80-100

* Last avg. frost date March 20 - First avg. frost date Nov. 17

Soil Temperature Requirements

The numbers in parenthesis indicate minimum soil temperatures at which each vegetable should be planted in order to obtain optimum germination of seed and growth of transplants. Planting in soil that is too cool can lead to poor germination, seed rot, diseases and slow root and top growth of plants. For best results, plant during recommended dates, but only when soil temperatures reach the point designated. Proper temperature should be maintained to a depth of 5 to 8 inches. A kitchen thermometer (probe type - temperature range is 0° to 230°) is the easiest, most available and least expensive product to use for this purpose.

Vegetables from Transplant (Optimum Soil Temperature for Planting)

Onions (45) Broccoli (30) Kohlrabi (50) Cabbage (55) Chinese Cabbage (55) Tomatoes (60) Peppers (70) Eggplant (75)

Vegetables from Seed (Optimum Soil Temperature for Planting)

Carrots (50) Onions (50) Leeks (50) Peas (50) Potatoes (50) Spinach (50) Lettuce (50) Radish (50) Parsley (55) Chard (55) Collards (55) Cabbage (55) Beets (55) Chinese Cabbage (55) Snap Beans (60) Cucumbers (60) Turnips (60) Sweet Corn (65) Black-eyed Peas (65) Lima Beans (70) Squash (70) Watermelon (70) Cantaloupe (75) Okra (75) Sweet Potatoes (75)

Dale Groom
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Texas AgriLife Extension Service
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Emily Husmann: Wood County Extension Agent

Hello! My name is Emily Husmann and I recently started as the new Ag/NR County Extension Agent in Wood County on November 17. I spent the last year in Anderson County in training to become an Extension Agent and was introduced to the Master Gardener Program and Association during my time there.

My love and appreciation for horticulture began at a young age walking through my grandmother's gardens as she identified all of the vegetables, flowers, shrubs, and trees she was growing. My interests continued into my high school career by competing on the FFA Nursery/Landscape Team where my team advanced to the State level three years in a row. I earned my letterman jacket as a freshman.

I greatly appreciate the passion for horticulture, education, and volunteering that is characteristic of being a Master

Gardener and look forward to being a part of that here in Wood County. I am excited to get to know everyone in the Wood County Master Gardeners Association and have already enjoyed meeting the handful of Master Gardeners who have stopped by my office and those of you I had the pleasure of meeting at the last WCMGA meeting.

I also am looking forward to the new year and am hoping that 2021 grants us the opportunity to allow face-to-face functions again. I do have a Wood County 2021 Master Gardener Intern Class lined up that will be held virtually, for the time being, and will start January 26 and meet until April 8.

I look forward to my future working with all of you as members of the Wood County Master Gardener Association!

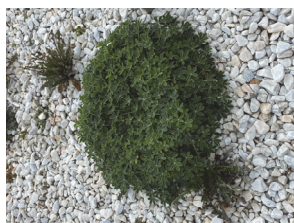


The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating. The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, 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 Project

The volunteers put the project's gardens to bed a week ago. Shredded leaves were added to the library and sensory gardens and perennials were cut back. Now, we await the advent of spring.

But, wait! There are still things that can be done on a limited basis given the "virus." We have MANY bluebonnets (*Lupinus texensis*) coming up to be transplanted to the sign garden in the city park sign in it and white rock mulch. Bluebonnets don't require much maintenance and should fill in nicely to hide the mulch.



Bluebonnet Rosette

A little story on the bluebonnets (doesn't every gardener have a story about their plants?). The bluebonnet seeds came from plants at the First Baptist Church and the Allen Memorial Library. Former Hawkins City Mayor, Sam Bradley, planted the bluebonnets many years ago at the church.

Over time, the plants seeded in the road and washed down to the library lawn. We transplanted many of those into the library flowerbeds. We gathered seeds and strewed those at the pavilion bed where they are now coming up. And, someone (who won't be named), scattered a handful of seeds in the sign garden. So, Mayor Bradley's bluebonnet legacy continues. There are several residences in Hawkins that have bluebonnets from Mayor Bradley growing in their gardens.

A presentation to the January Hawkins City Council meeting will highlight the many hours our volunteers have worked in the city. Additionally, we will note the cost of plants bought, and the perceived value of plants, fertilizer and mulch donated. It is always good to see an on-paper description of our efforts.

Ideas are forming on the creation of a trifold brochure identifying the specimen plants in the library garden. Citizens have asked about some of the plants, so we thought a brochure with information about the plants (light requirements, drought tolerance, etc.) would be beneficial. We are also collecting seed from some plants to be available along with the brochure.

So as 2020 FINALLY comes to a close, I would like to thank the many volunteers who have participated in Hawkins. I am thankful also to Peggy Rogers and the other project managers for answering my oh-so-many questions and requests for advice.

We have persevered through strange and perilous times. As gardeners, we always know there is next year, that perennials will re-emerge, seeds will germinate, and life will go on.

I hope each one of you and your family have a wonderful new year. And always, GARDEN ON!



Bluebonnet Leaves

Kathy Goodman: Dreaming of Spring 2021

The year 2020 definitely was a different sort of year for everyone. I never would have dreamed how my Master Gardener Class of 2020 would turn out. We got off to a great start with the classroom sessions. In the beginning, the Master Gardener members, MG officers, guest speakers, and AgriLife Extension Agents presented highly informative sessions. We were near the end of the lessons and were all looking so forward to Victoria Settle's planned outings. Then, everything changed with the closing of in-person activities due to COVID 19. However, it was impressive how the Master Gardener members and officers helped the MG interns complete their training and volunteer hours. Thank you again!

I have a grateful attitude for every one of you Master Gardeners! Bonds are forming and I feel that I am becoming part of the "real" Master Gardeners group. It's unfortunate that we had to limit our face-to-face contact at the end of the year, but I believe that will change in 2021. The goal for 2021 is to stay optimistic and continue learning.

That said, I learned so much in 2020 and plan to continue learning through volunteering, watching online programs, researching topics, and continuing my own gardening experiences (mistakes and successes). It was a bit overwhelming in the beginning of the MG intern training because there was so much to learn, but through repetition I discovered that I am learning a bit at a time. As in many situations in life, this is not a competition, it's a learning process. Hopefully, in the near future we will have another Master Gardener Intern Class, and we can learn right along with them. It will be glorious to have those field trips when everyone feels safer.

At this time of year, I'm pushing myself to do some work whenever the weather is decent. Actually, it's easier to work in the cooler weather because I tend to heat up way too fast. Even accomplishing a couple of hours of work in a day is encouraging; and it feels good to get my hands dirty, feel physically tired, and see progress. Thank goodness that gardening is such a great stress reliever when we really need it.

In 2021, I will try to become more organized. To that end, I'm keeping notes about what I have done on a particular day, things learned, what got planted, and where it's planted. I am working on a redesign of my backyard, but not in a really organized way. In addition, I'm reading lists about winter gardening chores that need to be done and marking the tasks off as I gradually get them accomplished. In addition, I'm moving plants that seem to need more sunshine.

The recent planting of daffodil bulbs has me anticipating what they'll look like this spring. In addition, because some of the special plants that I planted in 2020 didn't do as well as anticipated, I am replacing them with some shade-tolerant wildflowers in certain parts of the yard. Another reason I chose to plant wildflowers was because amending the sandy soil in multiple areas of the yard was a daunting task. Hopefully, the native plants will flourish and lure but-

terflies, bees, and hummingbirds to my area. However, sowing a mix of wildflower seeds will be a learning adventure because I don't know where the various plants will grow, or which ones will be the largest or most prolific. Also, the various plant heights may not be arranged as I would like, such as tall ones in front. Here's to the optimistic thought that this effort will produce an English cottage garden look. We'll see what happens in the spring. It may be a wonderful surprise!

My New Year's resolution is to keep occupied with positive gardening thoughts, to learn from my experiments, to research plants before planting (or buying), to be prepared by performing the needed tasks, and to dream about a beautiful spring display that will be visible from my windows.

May you have a blessed and optimistic New Year!

Debbie Latham: Extension Office Demonstration Garden

The Wood County AgriLife Extension office is our home base for information, training and great friendships. This small demonstration garden (*established by the WCMG 2019 Class*) proved to be too small for social distancing during the current pandemic.



Rock garden provides interest under the office sign.

With the help of several individuals who worked alone on weeding, watering, mowing, and general upkeep, it is now time for high hopes and new ideas!



Troughs and plants enhance the side of the office.

The foundation has been laid, and with the help of Carolyn West and the awesome WCMG class of 2020, it will thrive again! Thanks to each one of you for your loyalty and pride with this project.

Gayle Mullinex: Xerces Society Article "Leave the Leaves"

Gayle Mullinex sent information from the Xerces Society concerning winter gardening. Rather than include the entire article—and beautiful graphics—here, you can read the story on the [Xerces website](https://xerces.org/blog/leave-the-leaves): <https://xerces.org/blog/leave-the-leaves>

Jacque Simmons: Rediscovering a Texas Treasure: The Humble Bumble Bee

A calling this past summer to record the population of bumblebees sparked a personal interest that is carrying over into decisions about how to add pollinator magnets into our landscaping. The great *Backyard Bumble Bee Count*, July 24 – August 2, 2020, likely spurred people to spend time in the yard observing the creatures.

For this gardener, the count prompted an enduring and enthusiastic effort to not only observe how many bees visit our yard, but also consider what conditions may factor into their presence. Two thoughts intertwined with the count efforts: how heavily do bumble bees rely on specific groupings of plants; and what role, if any, does weather play in their choices?

Behold the Humble Bumble Bee

I am a native Texan, but it has been years since spotting a bumble bee at work, having lived much of the past few decades in both urban neighborhoods and the Piney Woods of East Texas. The drought on bumble bee encounters ended last fall when my husband and I purchased a fixer upper home in the tiny Smith County community of Noonday, known for yellow onions and garden-friendly soil. It is in this new location that I am becoming reacquainted with a fuzzy memory of my childhood.

My earliest glimpse of the hard-working bumble bee centers on a family camping trip in the 1960s. What was intended to be a simple getaway turned into a terror-filled weekend for my mother after a bee took a fancy to her long, fragrant hippie hair. Every time she tried to leave our pop-up trailer the bee showed up to investigate. It had no interest in the rest of us, but the memory of Mom retreating to the safety of the camper is forever etched in my psyche.

Fast forward a few decades to the fall of 2019... Shortly after moving into our fixer upper, a little bumble bee paused on a weed as we were cooling off on the patio. It displayed no fear or interest in our presence, and we inspected its plump yellow and black body with great interest. We cleaned the flower bed, leaving behind the shoot of goldenrod that the bumble bee found so interesting. A lone bee showed up almost daily to visit the plant, seemingly in hunt and gather mode. As fall gave way to winter, we noticed one day it had disappeared.

Hard Working Texans

Texas Parks and Wildlife reports that Texas is home to hundreds of bee species with few being as recognizable as the bumble bee. There are actually more than 50 species across North America, but only nine seem to hang out in Texas – the brown-belted, two-spotted, common eastern, variable cuckoo, black and gold, golden northern, southern plains, Sonoran and American bumble bees. Identification is possible by examining the thorax, located between the head and abdomen regions, according to Texas Native Bee Co-op on

[iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org), and TPW's bumble bee identification page.

Bumble bees are described by state wildlife experts as "social" insects that rely on a queen and daughter bees to create new generations. Colonies generally live about a year and start fresh each spring, with queens that leave the nest and then hibernate over the winter. TPW reports that these young queens emerge when the weather warms and seek out on their own to find a suitable home to start a nest.

Unlike honey bees, however, bumble bees do not store massive quantities of nectar and pollen. So that leaves them dependent on a succession of flowering plants from spring to fall to completely build out their in-ground colony, according to TPW's summary of the "Bumble Bee Life-Cycle" featured on www.tpwd.texas.gov.

They tend to select flower-rich grasslands to set up camp and start the process of laying eggs to create worker bees, which can reach a few hundred by mid-summer, according to Texas Master Gardener Association, txmg.org. The queen personally collects enough pollen to nourish a first batch of eggs, which grow to become either workers or future queens. Female bees carry out the work of the hive, while males leave in search of opportunities to mate with young queens.

As fall sets in and the flower supply starts to dwindle, the queen, her workers and the roaming males all die. Only the young queens, who left the nest and spent the summer feeding and seeking out a place to overwinter, survive, according to TPW's website.

Buzzing Backyard

The backyard of our fixer upper was, and is, very uncivilized. There is no manicured lawn or expertly designed plantings. It is surrounded by fields brimming with spring wildflowers and warm weather grasses that are baled as hay. When we moved in last fall, there was a single flowerbed with three overgrown roses in it and several dozen dying zinnia plants.

The unkept yard featured a handful of mimosa and sycamore trees, an ancient crepe myrtle, sickly fruit trees and random things that have yet to be identified. We did not initially achieve much in the yard because our first few months were spent fixing up the house itself. Winter came and went, and with the arrival of warmer weather, the fruit trees blossomed and dozens of tiny zinnia seedlings sprouted in the rose bed.

I had little firsthand knowledge of the colorful annual, having lived in the woods for so many years, but apparently bees love them. When the zinnias started to bloom, it was as though someone sounded a silent dinner bell for butterflies, hummingbirds and bumble bees. I was a fan.

As the summer unfolded, we added wax myrtles, irises, day lilies and a handful of assorted seasonal color species, in-

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Jacque Simmons:
Rediscovering a Texas Treasure: The Humble Bumble Bee, continued



A surprise profusion of zinnias provided a suitable habitat for dozens of bumble bees

cluding geraniums, snapdragons, salvia and hibiscus. Surprisingly, the bumble bees stayed loyal to the zinnias and roses, largely ignoring the other flowers.

When the call for bumble bee counters went out mid-summer to help promote awareness and understanding, I jumped right in. I counted 11 bees that first day, followed by 15 the next and 16 the next. The bees seemed to prefer fresher blooms, sometimes visiting single flowers over and over. My counts were conducted at various times throughout the day, sometimes moving in close for a photograph.

It was a delight to inspect and photograph the bees, which seemed to ignore my presence. Those that came to dine in our yard were friendly and tolerant and nothing like the pest that tormented my mother all those years ago.

Texas Weather

It was during one of the early morning counts that I realized something interesting: some bees did not go home when the day ended, choosing to remain overnight nestled in a zinnia. Was there something special about those flowers, or were the bees falling ill? A little investigation revealed that bees can view flowers as both a food source and a motel room.

In fact, according to Honey Bee HQ, honeybeehq.com, there is a reason for their behavior. Bumble bees apparently have difficulty flying in cooler temperatures so some shelter in flowers, while others head back to the nest. Researchers have found that flowers can be up to 18 degrees warmer near the nectar source, hence making them a cozy option for chilly nights, according to Honey Bee HQ website. I tried to count the sleepers every few days and found that the numbers of bees that stayed overnight on the zinnias typically numbered about five.

When Category 4 Hurricane Laura threatened the Gulf Coast in late August, I started watching the bees several days be-

fore the predicted arrival to see if they would leave for the safety of the nest or stay close to a stable food source. Ultimately, the brunt of the storm missed our area of the state, but nonetheless, the numbers of bees visiting our zinnias mushroomed in the days leading up to the weather event, compared to the number of daily visitors in the summer.

On August 22, seven days before the storm made landfall, I counted an all-time high of 26 bumble bees in three small flower beds. Also, pre-hurricane feeding seemed to take a sense of urgency with multiple bees observed on a single flower at one time. The increased number of bees remained about the same for several days, then fell to about 20 and then roughly 15 for most of September.

I continued observing bees sleeping among the zinnias, even in the rain, throughout the summer until the season started to give way to fall.

I attempted to extend the zinnias bloom season with supplemental watering and pruning, hoping the efforts would keep the bumble bees around a little longer. We also avoided pesticide treatments on plants to avoid accidental exposures. We cannot be certain the efforts produced any benefit for the bees, but our nearest neighbor swears her summer squash and watermelon crops were record-breakers. Was it because of the increased bumble bee presence?

Creating a Habitat

In late September, with the number of bumble bees dwindling to just one or two sightings a day, I removed the exhausted zinnias and conducted a fall cleanup of the flower beds, replacing faded blooms with happy snap dragons and pansies. I assumed the bumble bees had reached the end of their lifecycle, but I apparently have much yet to learn.

Some have been sighted buzzing around at Thanksgiving, collecting food from alternative sources in our yard from snap dragons, late season lantana and fallen fruit from an old pear tree. As of the time of this writing, we recently experienced a deep fall freeze, and I am wondering if the bumble bees succumbed to the elements. I will be watching, camera in hand, to see if any survived, but thoughts mainly are turning to spring and how to build on my limited knowledge.

I recently joined a Facebook page, Texas Bumblebees, to see what other enthusiasts are discussing and sharing. Efforts are also under way around our home to create an improved habitat. I tossed several sacks of assorted seeds of Texas wildflowers throughout the yard.

Over the past few weeks, we added planted abelia, pink lemonade honeysuckle, rose of Sharon and oleander to the landscaping. There also a small jar of collected zinnias seeds waiting in the wings, just in case there is a blank spot left over to fill for my bees.

Lin Grado: Winter Garden Cleanup

The holidays are over, decorations put away, and the brief periods of warm weather draw you outside for morning coffee. You gaze out at your garden and it looks – dreadful. Flowers that provided nectar for butterflies and hummingbirds, hit by hard freezes in December, are now a mass of dead leaves and branches. Some shrubs seem to be skeletal versions of the lush plants from the summer. Must you look at that destruction till spring?



Remove annuals such as bachelor buttons.

Warm sunny days in January are perfect for cutting back the dead foliage in beds. As weather permits, prune, cut, and haul away to make your gardens tidy. However, there are some plants that you should not prune yet.

Leave the growing foliage on your spider lilies (*Lycoris* spp.) and other fall-bloomers to replenish the bulbs for next year's blooms. You can prune it after it yellows and dies.

Leave the frozen leaves on your summer bulbs, such as crinum lily and amaryllis (*Hippeastrum*), for continued freeze protection. I like to wrap the limp leaves of my crinum loosely around the neck of the bulb – it looks neater and provides more winter protection for these Southern mainstays.

Wait to prune most shrubs, as pruning can stimulate new growth that is subject to freeze. Most plants, if properly selected for their allotted space, need very little pruning. Ornamental plants should be appreciated for their natural forms. They look better and are easier to care for if not pruned heavily for size.

Wait until Valentine's Day to prune roses.

Don't prune any spring-flowering shrubs or you'll cut off the buds and have no blooms next year. Some examples of what NOT to prune include:

- Flowering quince (*Chaenomeles speciosa*)
- Azaleas (*Rhododendron* spp.)
- Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica*)
- Forsythia spp.
- Spiraea spp.
- Viburnum spp.
- Indian Hawthorn (*Raphiolepis indica*)
- Witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)

Don't prune old-fashioned blue or pink hydrangeas, because they bloom on old wood (last year's growth).

Don't prune lantanas (especially newer hybrids) - this may reduce hardiness. If necessary (to clear a path), you can cut back to twelve inches, but you may lose the plant if the rest of the winter is hard.

Many plants can be cut back following a hard freeze, as time and weather permit, such as:

All annuals can be pruned back or even pulled out of your garden. If it's a reseeding annual like bachelor buttons, zinnia, or cockscomb, leave some seed heads behind for next year's plants.

Perennials such as salvia, phlox, and coneflower can be trimmed close to the base. If there's a rosette of new leaves, leave that alone. Evergreen perennials that are a little woodier, like autumn sage, can be cut back to 6-12 inches. If you have some tender perennials (those hardy to Zone 8 or higher), you might want to cover them with a light mulch such as pine needles to protect them for the rest of the winter.



Pruning perennials provides a cleaner look.

Cannas should be cut at ground level. Be sure to remove the stalks from the garden, as leaf rollers overwinter in the foliage.

Deciduous ferns like Southern wood fern (*Dryopteris* spp.) hit by frost can have all of their fronds removed at the base. Don't prune evergreen ferns like holly fern or autumn fern.



Ornamental grasses and the grass-like liriope (monkey grass) should be cut back by the middle of January, before the new growth starts; otherwise you'll have to look at cut edges all season.

Wood ferns can be cut to the ground.

Evergreen shrubs can be pruned now if needed to maintain their natural shape— junipers, waxleaf ligustrums and hollies. Use lopping shears to remove branches one at a time and avoid the formally-sheared look.

Fruit trees should be pruned while dormant. Late January is the time to start this pruning – remember not to remove more than 25 percent of the branches. Check with our Extension Agent for more information on pruning your fruit trees.

If the pruned plants are free from disease and pests, you can add the trimmings to your compost. I practice 'chop and drop' composting by cutting the trimmings into small pieces and placing them as the first layer of mulch around the plant. I top that with 2 or 3 inches of mulch, using fallen tree leaves or pine needles as part of this mulch.

Take advantage of the warm days during the winter. Your beds will look better and your spring chores will be lighter.

Nancy McDonald: Butternut Squash Soup Recipe

Makes about 6-8 servings (1 cup)

Ingredients

1 butternut squash (makes approximately 35 ounces of cooked pulp)*
 3 tablespoons ghee (clarified butter)
 1 yellow onion, diced*
 1 teaspoon turmeric*
 1 teaspoon coriander*
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper*
 2 tablespoons garam masala*
 1 teaspoon salt or to taste
 14 oz can of unsweetened coconut milk
 2 cups chicken broth
 2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
 Unsweetened Greek yogurt, for topping
 Chopped cilantro, for topping
 Lime wedges, to serve
 Optional toppings: nuts, seeds, and croutons

Directions

This step can be done in advance and refrigerated: Wash the butternut squash (do not dry) then place whole squash in a slow cooker. Do not add additional water. Cover, cook on low for 6-8 hours or high for 4-6 hours, or until it is soft and can be easily pierced with a fork. Let squash cool until it can be handled. Remove from slow cooker, cut in half longwise and scoop seeds out with a spoon. Use the spoon to remove the squash pulp and place in a bowl.

Heat ghee in a Dutch oven or soup pan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until soft and translucent, about 3-5 minutes.

While onions are cooking, combine the turmeric, coriander, black pepper, garam masala, and salt together in a small bowl. When the onions are done, add the spice mixture to the pan with the onions and cook, stirring constantly until spices are fragrant, about one minute.

Add the coconut milk, squash pulp, chicken stock, and maple syrup. Stir to combine and bring to a boil. If a smooth soup is desired, use an immersion blender to puree the soup or process in a blender and then return to pan. Simmer for 20 minutes to blend flavors, stirring occasionally.

Spoon into bowls and top with a dollop of Greek yogurt and a sprinkling of minced cilantro. Serve with a wedge of lime to squeeze over the top. Excellent served with buttered naan bread. Other yummy toppings include croutons, seeds, or nuts.

*This recipe was created and submitted by Nancy McDonald and originally titled *Immune Boosting Butternut Squash Soup*. Based on her research (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>), several ingredients provide substantial nutritional benefits. Please contact Nancy for more information about nutritional benefits.

Linda Timmons: Weeding as a Learning Opportunity

I keep hearing people say that all we do at the Wildscape is pull weeds. It's true, there are a lot of misplaced plants that need to be removed to make room for the plants we want to showcase. Weeding is not a creative occupation, but it can be rewarding and give us opportunities to learn.

If you think weeding is just a matter of knowing the good plants from the bad plants, think again. Henbit, not good, right? Well, it's not all bad, either. In the late winter and early spring, we pull a lot of henbit at the Wildscape. But we don't pull it all because henbit blooms early and provides nectar and pollen for the pollinators. During the winter we pull most of the goldenrod. We don't pull it in the spring because henbit is an excellent fall food source for the bees and butterflies. If we didn't pull any of the goldenrod it would soon take over our garden because it spreads vigorously by rhizomes. We leave vetch when we can because it's a nitrogen-fixing plant. If it absolutely needs to be gone, cut it off at the ground and leave the roots.

Knowing if a plant is an annual or a perennial is important in weed control. Just mowing an annual plant before it blooms will eventually eliminate it from an area. Mowing a perennial doesn't usually do any good. Preemergent is an excellent way to fight annual weeds in a home garden but it doesn't work in a garden where both annuals and perennials are grown. Preemergent is an excellent weed control in paths and sitting areas where no plants are grown.

Mulching is an effective weed control in a perennial bed. If you have both annuals and perennials like bluebonnets and coneflowers in the same area, then mulching should be delayed until late spring to give the annuals time to develop. Keep in mind that mulch will inhibit the spread of the desired annuals if the seeds cannot come into contact with the soil. At the Wildscape we often collect seed heads of desirable annuals and sow them in prepared areas in the spring or fall.

We know how important attitude is. If we look at weeding as an opportunity to better know the plants growing in our world it might help sooth that aching back after a weed



Swallowtail feeding on henbit nectar.
fighting session. Or not.



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Please send newsletter articles, suggestions, and interesting information to B.J. McGee at mgnnewsletter@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, botanical names, etc.. It's appreciated if you can include the botanical names for all plants you mention. Articles may be edited.

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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.

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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. If you need help contact Peggy Rogers.

Associate Roster

You can find all 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?