

Urban Dirt

Gardening Events and Information for Texans

Swap 'til You Drop

by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

It all began with my friend Jacke Shipwash. Jacke loves plants as much as she loves animals. I met her several years ago at the rodeo when she stopped by our Master Gardener booth. We became friends on Facebook and have kept in touch since then.



Terri's booth

Photo by Terri Simon

She was the first person to tell me about plant swaps.

Plant swaps are one of the cheapest ways I know to increase your plant inventory. They can also be a load of fun. I have Plantmeet Houston/Gulf Coast Plant Swap Group on my Facebook page. On October 6th I attended my first plant swap with this group and I hope to keep going back.



October Rose Hibiscus

Photo by Terri Simon

Founded about twenty years ago, the Plantmeet Houston/Gulf Coast Plant Swap Group began with about six members who loved plants. Jennifer Wolford became the person in charge when the original founder dropped out. She has been in charge ever since. Nadine Milburn helps her as well. Jennifer believes the group may be one of the first swaps started in Texas. The swap is held twice a year at a pavilion at Mercer Arboretum in Humble. The facebook members total about 916. At this past swap approximately 40-50 people showed up. One member is Dave Barnett who comes from Dallas. There is usually a small core group who participates. One of the first members was Tally Calvert who

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Upcoming Events

November 2018

Urban Gardening Certificate Program

Nov. 2, Creating Healthy Soil 1:00 - 3:00 p.m., Alice Young Library, 5107 Griggs Rd, Houston, TX 77021,
Contact Lindsey Mouton, 713-274-0950, email: Lindsey.Mouton@ag.tamu.edu

Race for the Trees: Free Tree Giveaway

Nov. 3, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Hermann Park, McGovern Centennial Gardens, 1500 Hermann Drive

Open Garden Day - Combined Nov./Dec. meeting

Dec. 11, 10:00 - 11:15 a.m., Weekley Community Center - Open Garden Day Children's Activities. **Registration required by Sunday, Dec. 9th to: ogd.harrishort@gmail.com**. Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Rd., Cypress, TX

Houston Urban Tree Conference

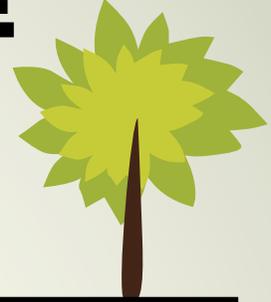
Nov. 16, 8:15 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Road, Houston, TX 77021,
Sign-up: <https://Houston-Urban-Tree-Conference.Eventbrite.com>

Have Garden Questions?

Email your questions and photos to: phone hcmga@gmail.com or

Call us Monday – Friday 9:00 am to Noon at 713-274-0950

HOUSTON URBAN TREE CONFERENCE



TRINI MENDENHALL COMMUNITY CENTER
1414 WIRT ROAD | HOUSTON, TX 77055
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2018
8:15 AM - 3:00 PM

8:15 - 9:00AM REGISTRATION

9:00 - 10:00AM UNDER-UTILIZED TREES FOR THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

10:00 - 11:00AM TREE PROBLEM DIAGNOSIS

11:00 - 12:00PM DON'T GET CAUGHT WITH YOUR PLANTS DOWN...KEEPING UP WITH THE LATEST TREE PLANTING RESEARCH

12:00 - 1:00PM LUNCH

1:00 - 2:00PM Crape Myrtle Bark Scale RESEARCH UPDATE

2:00 - 3:00PM TREE DISEASES IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

**COST
\$45**

SIGN-UP: [HTTPS://HOUSTON-URBAN-TREE-CONFERENCE.EVENTBRITE.COM](https://houston-urban-tree-conference.eventbrite.com)

CEUS

TNLA - 5 | TDA PESTICIDE - 3

ISA

CERTIFIED ARBORIST - 5 | MUNICIPAL SPECIALIST - 5 | BCMA-SCIENCE - 1 | BCMA-PRACTICE - 4



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS OF THE TEXAS AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE ARE OPEN TO ALL PEOPLE WITHOUT REGARD TO RACE, COLOR, SEX, DISABILITY, RELIGION, AGE, OR NATIONAL ORIGIN. THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURTS OF TEXAS COOPERATING. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO REQUIRE AN AUXILIARY AID, SERVICE OR ACCOMMODATION IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY EXTENSION ACTIVITIES, ARE ENCOURAGED TO CONTACT THE COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE FOR ASSISTANCE 8 DAYS PRIOR TO ACTIVITY.

Swap 'til You Drop, *cont'd from pg. 1*

passed away this year and she was missed. I asked Jennifer what her favorite thing was about the plant swap and she said she enjoyed the camaraderie of fellow plant lovers who seem like family. My favorite was the “orphan pile.” If you have brought plants that did not get traded but do not want to haul those plants home, they can be placed on the orphan table. Believe me, someone will claim those plants. It’s also great for newbies who show up but didn’t bring plants because they are just beginning.

How did I accumulate the plants I took? Well, I used several of the techniques I learned as a Master Gardener. I divided plants, I took cuttings, I grew seeds and finally, I scoured a big box store that has a plant clearance section. If I bought a plant, my limit was five dollars. The majority were around three dollars though. Many of those clearance plants just needed to be bumped up and babied. With a little love I could double their size in a few months. I must

confess, some of these did not make it to the plant swap.

Plant swap rules are fairly simple. No cash changes hands. Both gardeners must agree about the plants being exchanged. Believe me, there are experienced gardeners who know the value of their plants. Some of the booths had a small section of plants separate from others.



Mermaid Garden

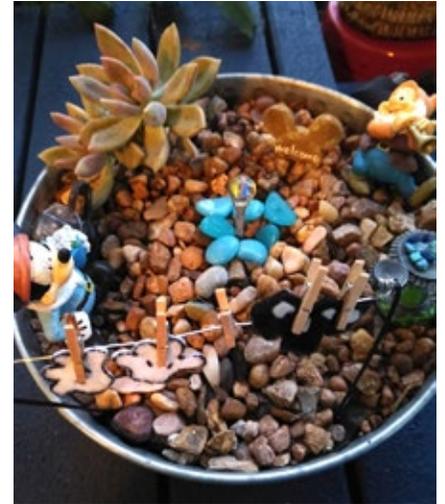
Photo by Terri Simon



Fairy Garden

Photo by Terri Simon

Those plants were marked as rare or special and you needed to exchange something of comparable value. Talk about horse traders! The plants you receive as trades are kept under your table. Everyone pitches in and contributes something for lunch. Being surrounded by people who love plants as much as you do was exciting. We also learned from each other in the process in addition to making new friends. Somehow I had wound up with several succulents along the way and I made several fairy gardens to make them look appealing. I think I was the only person there with fairy gardens and I traded all of them.



Mickey Mouse Gnome Garden

Photo by Terri Simon

How do you find other plant swaps? You can Google Texas plant swaps and see what pops up. I’m told one of the largest plant swaps is in Livingston and about 400 people show up. As usual, some gardeners specialize. One person had several house plants while another had orchids. To each his own. I’m happy with the trades I made and starting in February or sooner I’ll start getting plants ready for the May plant swap. Here’s hoping I see you at the next swap.



Robyn Culotta Timmermeyer's swap trades

Photo by Robyn Culotta Timmermeyer



Herb of the Month - Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)

by Karen McGowan, Master Gardener

Thanksgiving welcomes thoughts of autumnal temperatures, fall foods, and fun activities. In keeping with the season, November's herb focus is on thyme.

Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), known as garden thyme, is an evergreen shrub of the Lamiaceae or mint family. Aromatic thyme is a perennial native of southern Europe and the western Mediterranean. Thyme is extensively cultivated in both commercial and in-home gardens as a culinary and medicinal herb. There are literally hundreds of species of thyme.

Since ancient times, thyme has been used for its culinary, medicinal, and even alleged magical qualities. Ancient Egyptians used thyme in embalming. Grecians popularized thyme for use in bathing and by burning it as incense in their temples, believing that thyme was a source of courage. Greek men would rub the herb on their chests, and tradition held that an infusion of thyme taken on midsummer's eve as a tea would enable one to see fairies dancing.



Belief holds that the spread of thyme through Europe was, like many traversing customs, articles, and foods of those times, attributable to the Romans. The Romans utilized thyme to purify their rooms and to "give an aromatic flavor to cheese and liqueurs." There was further a commonly held belief among the Romans

Citations:

<https://www.almanac.com/plant/thyme>

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/plants-and-animals/plants/plants/thyme>

<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Thyme>

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/266016.php>

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/fallgarden/herbs.html>

that thyme added to bath water would impart energy. Thyme was tapped in everyday life by the Romans, and thus traveled with them throughout Europe, finding its way into common life of every country they occupied.

Thyme has been used for centuries for seasoning of foods, and long recognized for its antiseptic properties. It was once used in sickrooms to help stop the spread of disease, and the essential oil was used on surgical dressings and to treat battle wounds even as recently as World War I.



Thyme enjoys full sun and moderately dry, well-drained soil. Thyme, as most perennial herbs, can be propagated by cuttings or by division. Divide plants every 3 to 4 years in the early spring. The plants should be dug up and cut into several sections. You can also cut 4 to 6-inch sections of the stem and root these by placing the cuttings in moist sand in a shady area. In 4 to 8 weeks, roots should form on these cuttings. To harvest thyme, clip the tops when the plants are in full bloom. Usually, leaves and flowers are harvested together. Use thyme fresh, or dry for later usage! To dry, after harvesting, hang thyme in loosely tied bundles in a well-ventilated room. You can also spread on a screen, cheesecloth, or hardware cloth.

Thyme has such a mild and agreeable flavor that it transfers very well across many cultures and dishes, and works great as a culinary enhancer when used either fresh or dried, depending upon the dish and preferred taste and texture. Thanksgiving dishes such as turkey and mashed potatoes chime particularly well with thyme, as do soups and savory dishes, in general.

Here's wishing you and your family the most blessed of Thanksgiving seasons! Don't you think it's time to try thyme?

FREE TREES

RACE FOR THE TREES:
NASCAR CELEBRATES ARBOR DAY IN TEXAS

HERMANN PARK

McGovern Centennial Gardens
1500 Hermann Drive

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3
10AM - 12PM

All area residents are eligible to receive free tree seedlings to replace trees lost due to Hurricane Harvey damage.

AgriLife Extension's Harris County Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer horticulture questions, including how to properly plant, water, and care for new trees.



*Visit the Harris County Master Gardeners
Facebook page for event details!*

www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

in partnership with

Hermann Park Conservancy & Harris County Master Gardeners

are please to present

**Master Gardeners in the City
at McGovern Centennial Gardens**

Saturday, November 10th & 24th

McGovern Centennial Gardens at Hermann Park

1500 Hermann Drive

Houston, Texas 77004

Events include garden tours and children activities.

These educational programs are FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.

The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.

Ask a Master Gardener

Ask a Master Gardener is a volunteer program offered by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Volunteers staff booths and tables to provide free, research-based horticulture education to the public throughout Harris County.

In October we are going to be in the following locations!

- Nov. 3** Urban Harvest (1st Saturday, 7:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.) at St John's School
3401 Westheimer Rd. (corner of Buffalo Spdwy. & Westheimer)
- Garden Oaks/Heights - 1st Saturday, 8:30 a.m. -11 a.m., at The Farmstand,
938 Wakefield, Houston
- Nov. 10** Tomball - 2nd Saturday, 8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. at 205 W. Main Street, Tomball
- Nov. 11** Town Lake (3rd Sunday, 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.), at 9955 Barker Cypress Rd.,
Cypress
- Nov. 15** Westchase (3rd Thursday, 3-7 p.m.) at 10503 Westheimer Rd, Houston
- Nov. 24** Memorial Villages (4th Saturday, 8:30 a.m. 1 p.m.) at 10840 Beinhorn Rd.,
Houston



Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Rd., Cypress, TX 77433

Open Garden Day is back! OGD has been relocated to the Weekley Community Center at 8440 Greenhouse Road, Cypress, Texas 77433.

We won't have outdoor gardens, so the activities will focus on nature crafts, small plants in pots and games. Activities will include decorating seed pods and making pine cone bird feeders and acorn jewelry. There will be coloring pages, legos, playdough and toddler puzzles. We hope you can make it!

November and December Open Garden Days are being combined and will be held on December 11th.

Pre-Registration is required by Sunday, December 9th to ogd.harrishort@gmail.com with number of child participants and their ages, so we are sure to have enough supplies for everyone. Also, please contact us with questions or comments.



**2018 Tuesday
Open Garden Day schedule**
Pre-Register to: ogd.harrishort@gmail.com
Dec. 11th - Pre-Registration required by Sun. Dec. 9th



Gardening Tools

This chart is a handy guide for knowing the best times to plant in Harris County.

Planting times are for seeds unless otherwise noted	Vegetable Garden Planting Dates for Harris County											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Artichoke	Dormant Crowns								Transplants			
Asparagus (dormant crowns)									Transplants			
Beans - Snap & Lima (Butterbean)			Snap & Lima					Snap				
Beets												
Broccoli (transplants)												
Brussels Sprouts (transplants)												
Cabbage (transplants)												
Cabbage - Chinese (transplants)												
Carrots												
Cauliflower (transplants)												
Chard, Swiss												
Collards (transplants)												
Corn												
Cucumbers												
Eggplant (transplants)												
Garlic												
Kale (transplants)												
Kohlrabi (transplants)												
Leeks	Transplants								Seeds			
Lettuce - also Arugula, Mache, Sorrel												
Melon - Cantaloupe, Honeydew												
Mustard												
Okra												
Onion - bulbing	Transplants									Seeds		
Onion - multiplying/bunching												
Peas - English & Snap												
Peas - Southern												
Pepper (transplants)												
Potato - Irish (cut pieces)												
Potato - Sweet (slips)												
Pumpkin												
Radish												
Spinach												
Squash - Summer												
Squash - Winter												
Tomato												
Turnips												
Summer Greens - Malabar, Amaranth												
Watermelon												

Average Last Freeze Dates (Hobby 2/8, Bush 3/1) Average First Freeze Dates (Bush 11/30, Hobby 12/20)

Plants grown over winter may require protection during freezing weather. Seeds and transplants started in the heat of summer will benefit from shading during establishment.

Like Us On Facebook

The Harris County Master Gardeners as well as Texas A&M AgriLife Extension - Harris County Horticulture are actively participating on Facebook offering tips, lists, news and plant advice almost daily. You



add the HCMG site to your account and easily share information with others. This is a definite timesaving device for these busy gardeners and helps promote our organization.

www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners

www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyHorticulture