Herbal Prepping for Spring

by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

Nothing delights me more than to go down a walkway lined with rosemary. The sweet, savory aroma released by rosemary when I brush against it pleases me. I have a plant next to the porch to welcome guests as they walk past it. Herbs are my favorite plants. I have a few trees and some flowers, but I could easily give those up if I had to. As long as I have my herbs, I’m in a happy place. I have a sensitive nose and I love to cook, so perhaps that’s why the herbs call to me. Every year I strive to grow ten or more varieties of basil. I have a serious basil fetish. This year is no exception. Genovese, sweet, dark opal, Aristotle, Napolitano, Thai holy and Aromato basil were some I tried last year and they’ll be back. This year I hope to have amethyst improved and everleaf emerald towers basil. My favorite basil was given to me by Rob Lucey, a former Bear Creek master gardener and a former editor of the Urban Dirt. It has no name so I call it Rob’s basil.

It’s sweet, smells great and it reseeds every year. Another favorite of mine is cardinal basil. The deep maroon flowers remind me of a cock’s comb. I would never eat it. I just grow it for the glory, kind of like my peppers. Once I buy my variegated pesto pepetuo basil, my basil collection for this year should be complete.

Other herbs I have included are several varieties of: rosemary, oregano, and mint. I have a large container of lemon grass, but I don’t know what variety it is.

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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
Upcoming Events

March 2020

Green Thumb Gardening Series
Herbs
Mar. 12, Barbara Bush Library, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Mar. 17, Spring Branch Memorial Library, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Mar 19, Freeman Branch Library, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Mar. 21, Maude Smith Marks Library, 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Educational Programs
Mar. 12, Second Thursday 10:00-11:30 a.m. Program: Natural Habitats by Tim Pylate, Armand Bayou Nature Center. Tim will be speaking about beneficial and poisonous snakes in our area. This will be the time of year when they begin to resurface. Tim plans to educate the public by bringing some snakes to observe, too! Genoa Friendship Gardens, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Plants for sale in the greenhouse.

Youth Activities
Mar. 24, Growing with Plants & Nature (Formerly Open Garden Day at Weekley Center). Free for children ages three to twelve. 10:00 to 11:15 a.m. Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Rd., Cypress, TX. REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED by Sunday, March 22nd. To register or for more information: ogd.harrishort@gmail.com.

Master Gardener Awards Luncheon
Mar. 11, 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. CHERIE FLORES GARDEN PAVILION, HERMANN PARK, 1500 HERMANN DRIVE, HOUSTON 77004. Register by 12 p.m. Wednesday, March 4th. Registration forms are available at February's First Tuesday meeting, in the Weekly Update emails and on page 9 of this newsletter.

April 2020

Green Thumb Gardening Series
Soils and Composting
Apr. 16, Freeman Branch Library, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Apr. 18, Maude Smith Marks Library, 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Apr. 21, Spring Branch Memorial Library, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Apr. 23, Barbara Bush Library, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Educational Programs
Apr. 7, First Tuesday 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. Program: Rainwater Wrangling in the Big City: Modern Solutions for an Ancient Practice presented by Nell Wheeler. The talk will cover why one might want to harvest rainwater, how to size and design a rainwater system, legalities, and other fun facts. Arrive as early as 10:30 a.m. and bring a sack lunch. Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Rd, Houston, 77055
Apr. 9, Second Thursday 10:00-11:30 a.m. Program: TBA Genoa Friendship Gardens, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Plants for sale in the greenhouse.

Youth Activities
Apr. 15, Growing with Plants & Nature (Formerly Open Garden Day at Weekley Center). Free for children ages three to twelve. 10:00 to 11:15 a.m. Trini Mendenhall Community Center; 1414 Wirt Rd., Spring Branch. REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED by Monday, April 13th.
To register or for more information: ogd.harrishort@gmail.com.

Visit txmg.org or contact the Harris County Extension Office, 713-274-0950, coordinator.harrishort@gmail.com for information.
President’s Perspective

Where plants, shoppers, wagons, signs, $$$ and volunteers converge, you have an HCMGA plant sale! Add to that smiles all around.

Countless volunteer hours go into these labors of love to offer plants that are uniquely suited to our environment. They put the Harris County Master Gardeners “brand” into the community with face-to-face public outreach and education. Plant sales are the primary way the Harris County Master Gardener Association raises funds to support Master Gardeners’ activities throughout Harris County. These include Ask A Master Gardener (AAMG), Cylinder Gardening, plant research trials, and the Speakers’ Bureau.

The West Harris County fruit tree sale on January 25 grossed over $42,000 and welcomed nearly 580 shoppers. Other sales scheduled for this spring are Genoa Friendship Garden’s fruit tree and tomato sale on February 22, West Harris County’s tomatoes, peppers, herbs, vegetables and perennials sale on March 7, and a double feature on March 21—a booth at the Cy-Fair Home & Garden Show with a variety of plants, and GFG’s spring sale featuring perennials, herbs, and peppers.

These are huge, time consuming and labor-intensive undertakings. A big Thank You to the leaders who plan, recruit volunteers, and execute every part of these events, and to all of you who volunteer to make them happen.

Watch for volunteer links in the Weekly Updates. If you don’t get onboard that way, check for dates and locations on our website and show up early and energetically to find an assignment: https://hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-sales/. Spending time together with fellow Master Gardeners reinforces the connection and common mission we share with each other. You may go home tired, but you’ll go home happy.

I look forward to reporting back to you on our sales.

Beth Braun
HCMGA Board President, 2020

Genoa Friendship Gardens Sales
Campbell Hall, Pasadena Fairgrounds, 7600 Red Bluff Rd., Pasadena 77507
Mar. 21, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Peppers, Perennials and Herbs Sale

West Side Sales
Mar. 7, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Spring Tomato, Pepper, Vegetable & Perennial Sale
Richard and Meg Weekley Park, 19110 Longenbaugh Rd, Houston 77090
(between Barker Cypress and Greenhouse Road)

Mar. 21-22, 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Cy-Fair Home & Garden Show, The Berry Center, 8877 Barker Cypress Rd, Cypress, TX 77433
Boasting light blue flowers that will quickly turn to white if the plant is placed in a vase of water, chicory is best known as a weed that will prolifically self-sow and quickly take over your garden if allowed to set seed; therefore, the flowers must be regularly pruned during growing season. To grow, plant seeds in a full sun location, in well-drained soil. Chicory roots can be easily cultivated and should be stored in the refrigerator at 38° to 42° F., where they will keep for several months until used or forced to produce chicons. Chicory has two stages of development. The first stage produces the rosette of leaves and the harvestable root. In the second stage, the harvested root is reburied upright in damp sand or soil until it produces a new sprout or narrow head of blanched, pale green leaves known as Belgian endive.

If you examine any consumables’ ingredients list from the grocery store carrying a “high fiber” or “gluten free” claim, you will likely find there the additive “inulin,” which is simply another name for chicory root. Inulin is a type of fiber, which means it’s a plant-based carbohydrate whose bonds cannot be broken by human digestive enzymes. Since inulin is inexpensive to manufacture, has few calories, and offers a pleasant, slightly sweet taste, it is the fiber addition of choice for energy bars, breads, and granolas – particularly low-carb ones. Interestingly, asparagus, leeks, artichokes, garlic, onions, and jicama all likewise offer high inulin content.

Although you may not choose to grow and cultivate chicory root in your own garden, this is a plant that bears familiarization with, and awareness of. Here’s to knowledge, and happy spring!
and my certification as a Texas Master Gardener, let’s agree ginger is a spicy herb!

Whew….glad that is over with. I don’t know about you but I feel….empowered!

There are essentially two categories of ginger, ornamental and edible. Seeing this is an article on herbs, my comments below are strictly related to edible ginger.

Some articles will suggest you pick up some ginger “root” from your local grocery store and use that as your planting stock. That may work, but you have no knowledge of where the ginger was sourced or how it was grown. Is it organic? Store-bought ginger, like many vegetables in stores, are chemically treated to minimize or eliminate sprouting. You can try store bought but I prefer to follow the recommendations of Rodale and purchase “organic, untreated rhizomes” as planting stock from a local nursery or online seed supplier. Whatever approach you use, select some good pieces right after harvesting and re-plant them.

For clarity, when we talk about ginger, we typically use the term ginger root. However, contrary to popular opinion, ginger is not the root of the plant. When we think in terms of plant parts, ginger is technically an underground stem or rhizome. That said, I would not recommend going to your local grocer and asking where the ginger rhizome is!

Plant of the Month

Ginger (Zingiber officinale)

by Don Tyler, Master Gardener

The Green Thumb 2020 Gardening Series is focused this month on herbs and if you saw my last attempt at an herb garden, and I use the term “garden” loosely, you would probably read no further. To say I was in a bit of panic this month would be an understatement. I needed an herb to write about and I needed one fast!

I turned to one of my favorite gardening books, Rodale’s Ultimate Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening, and read, “The word herb means different things to botanists and gardeners. For the botanist, an herb is basically any seed-bearing plant that isn’t woody; it’s where our word herbaceous comes from, as in herbaceous perennial. But for herb gardeners, what distinguishes an herb from other plants is its usefulness. As Merriam-Webster’s dictionary puts it, an herb in this sense is ‘a plant or plant part valued for its medicinal, savory, or aromatic qualities’.”

With that in mind, I am not a botanist. I am a gardener, or I would like to think so, and so if I want to consider ginger an herb, I can do so for its “medicinal, savory, or aromatic qualities”! No one can argue ginger does not possess proven health benefits. Healthline summarizes it nicely, “Ginger is among the healthiest (and most delicious) spices on the planet. It is loaded with nutrients and bioactive compounds that have powerful benefits for your body and brain.” Not convinced? The New Directions Aromatics Blog states, “Ginger Essential Oil or Ginger Root Oil is derived from the root of the Ginger herb and has earned the nickname ‘The Oil of Empowerment’ for the feeling of confidence that it is known to inspire.” So, as I sit here eating another “ginger chew”, a delightful ginger-fied version of a gummy bear, I feel inspired to designate ginger (Zingiber officinale) as my Plant, i.e. herb, of the Month! If nothing else, just humor me.

You might have noticed in the above references subtle usages of the words herb and spice, when referring to ginger. Brimming with confidence, I might as well clear the air on this matter. Is ginger an herb or a spice? Technically speaking, ginger is a spice. As noted in The Old Farmer’s Almanac, “an herb is the green, leafy part of the plant. A spice can come from the root, stem, seed, fruit, flower or bark of the tree or plant.” Therefore, in the strictest of terms, ginger is a spice but still we cannot question the herbal qualities of ginger. For the sake of argument, this article...
Ginger, cont’d from pg. 5

You will want a ginger root, i.e. rhizome, that has protruding knobs or knots, i.e. buds. This is where the leafstalks will sprout from. SFGATE in their article, “Does Ginger Grow in the Shade”, reminds us “most of the gingers prefer a rich, moist, well-draining, pH neutral soil”. As you see in the picture, I plant my ginger in large diameter containers. I even drill a few extra holes just to make sure I get good drainage and the soil I use is a good organic garden soil available at most nurseries.

Rodale’s recommends pre-sprouting your ginger prior to planting. Obviously, I am not going to challenge their expertise, but I have not had to do that. I simply place my rhizomes in the planter about two inches deep with buds facing up, cover with compost, and keep the soil moist. It takes a while to sprout (6 to 8 weeks), so be patient.

In my experience, the issue of full sun vs shade is always a bit of controversy here in Houston. Some experts recommend full sun, some partial shade. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension recommends “choosing a site that provides plenty of light, including 2 to 5 hours of direct sunlight.” What I have found with container growing is you can move the planter around and find what works best for your location. That can come in handy with our somewhat challenging weather. I have a nice tree canopy in my backyard and I place my planters in the shade with good success.

The following are pictures of my most recent harvest this past January.

I have found ginger quite easy to grow in Houston and a great addition to my landscape. In fact, so far it is the easiest “herb” I have grown. Looks like it is time to make some ginger chews!

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1 Bradley, Fern Marshall; Ellis, Barbara W.; Phillips, Ellen, The Rodale’s Ultimate Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening (Rodale), Location 7810 of 18280.
5 Bradley, Fern Marshall; Ellis, Barbara W.; Phillips, Ellen, The Rodale’s Ultimate Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening (Rodale), Location 6710 of 18280.
2020 Harris County Master Gardener Plant Sales

Save the Dates
Harris County Plant Sales 2020

- Fruit Tree Sale January 25th
- Spring Tomato, Pepper, Vegetable & Perennial Sale March 7th
- Cy-Fair Home & Garden Show March 21st

RICHARD & MEG WEEKLEY PARK (West Side)
19110 LONGENBAUGH ROAD
HOUSTON, TX 77090
(Between Barker Cypress and Greenhouse Road)

GENOA FRIENDSHIP GARDENS
CAMPBELL HALL, PASADENA FAIRGROUNDS
7600 RED BLUFF ROAD, PASADENA, TX 77507

- Fruit Tree and Tomato Sale, February 22nd
- Peppers, Perennials and Herbs, March 21st

Questions? Ask A Master Gardener 713-274-0950
Herbal Prepping for Spring, cont’d from pg. 1

There are seedlings of East Indian lemon grass under my grow light right now so I’ll see if it matches what I already have. My bay leaf tree is flourishing but I have decided it needs to be put in the ground instead of the pot it’s in. That’s another project for another day. The sage I’m growing is doing okay, but not great. I seem to have problems with sage and thyme. I think they get too much sun. I finally found a marjoram that flourished, but then came Hurricane Harvey. The search continues. My Mexican mint marigold struggled after Harvey and it lost the battle. That is easily replaced and it’s pretty hardy- unless it sits underwater for about five days. As for the chives, they are pretty hardy.

This year I received a Pine Tree Garden Seeds catalog and it had some herb varieties I was not familiar with. Feverfew, german- der, white mustard and nepitella are some I hope to try this season. I also ordered some bronze fennel and henna seeds. I cannot wait to try them. No, henna is not an herb. I just want to brag that I have henna seeds.

Most of my herbs are perennials with the exception of the basil. There are some cool season herbs you can try. Cilantro is an annual that does double duty. You can cook with the leaves and also the seeds. The seeds have their own name - coriander. The plant is used in Mexican, Asian and Mediterranean dishes. I have watched an Indian friend sauté the coriander seeds in a sauce pan until they pop. The aroma is enticing. Parsley is another cool weather annual and has loads of vitamins. I believe parsley is under used unless you are making a Mediterranean salad called tabbouleh. Parsley is the main item in this dish and it shines. Parsley is also a food source for swallowtail butterflies. The swallowtail caterpillars will gobble parsley like they are at a Saturday night buffet, but don’t worry, it usually comes back and you can enjoy the butterflies as an extra gift.

Here’s a challenge for you. Try growing an herb garden by your back door. The French term for this type of garden is a potager. Impress your friends by working it into the conversation. Imagine how useful it can be. Just step outside the back door and snip the herbs needed for your meal. Herbs are wonderful. They can help reduce your blood pressure, by lowering your salt intake, and add lots of flavor to your meals. A win-win situation!

**PARSLEY AND CHIVE COMPOUND BUTTER**

This herb butter is great on baked potatoes, green beans, corn on the cob or red meats.

**Ingredients**
- ½ cup softened unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley
- 1 tablespoon fresh chopped chives
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice, freshly squeezed
- Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

**Instructions**
Allow the butter to soften. Mix the parsley and chives together and then stir them into the softened butter. Slowly add the lemon juice, stirring constantly. Mix in sea salt and pepper to suit your taste. Refrigerate the compound butter for about an hour. You can use wax paper to shape it into a log. Freeze any leftover.
Harris County Master Gardener Association invites you to join us at our

Annual Awards Luncheon

Wednesday, March 11th, 2020
Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion, Hermann Park
1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004
Centennial Garden Parking lot is located on Hermann Drive (cross street is Crawford St.)

• Check-in at 11:00 a.m.
• Catered Buffet at 11:30 a.m.
• Program begins at 12:00 p.m.
• Garden Tour following luncheon at 2:00 p.m.
• $15 per person
• Register by 12 p.m. Noon Wednesday, March 4th

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 eight days prior to the activity.

2020 HCMGA Awards Luncheon Reservation Form
Reservation and payment can be mailed to be received by Tuesday, March 4th to:
Attention: Awards Event, HCMGA, 15719 Echo Canyon Dr, Houston, TX 77084
Please email questions to Karen at kmbrene@att.net

Name:_________________________________________ Phone:_____________________
Number attending_________________________________ Vegetarian □
Amount enclosed__________________
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 March we are going to be in the following locations!

Mar. 7  **Urban Harvest** - 1st Saturday, 7:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
3401 Westheimer Rd. (corner of Buffalo Spdwy. & Westheimer), Houston

**Garden Oaks/Heights** - 1st Saturday, 8:30 a.m. - 11 a.m. at The Farmstand,
938 Wakefield, Houston

Mar. 14  **Tomball** - 2nd Saturday, 8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. at 205 W. Main Street, Tomball

Mar. 19  **Westchase** - 3rd Thursday, 3 - 7 p.m. at 10503 Westheimer Rd., Houston

Mar. 28  **Memorial Villages** - 4th Saturday, 8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. at 10840 Beinhorn Rd., Houston

**Towne Lake** - 4th Saturday, 2:30 - 7 p.m. at 9955 Barker Cypress Rd., Cypress

We will also have Ask A Master Gardener tables this month at the following events:

Mar. 6-8  **Azalea Trail** - 2503 Westheimer, Houston, TX 77098

Mar. 7   **Westside Plant Sale** - 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at Richard and Meg Weekley Park, 19110 Longenbaugh Rd., Houston

**Mercer Ambassadors**, at 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Houston

Mar. 19-20  **March Mart Plant Sale** at 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd.

Mar. 21-22  **Cy-Fair Home and Outdoor Living Show** at 8877 Barker Cypress Rd., Cypress, Texas 77433
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
in partnership with
Hermann Park Conservancy
are pleased to present

Master Gardeners in the City
at McGovern Centennial Gardens

Saturday, March 14th & 28th
McGovern Centennial Gardens at Hermann Park
1500 Hermann Drive
Houston, Texas 77004

Free tours and children’s activity. Adult workshop at 10:30 a.m.
No registration required.

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.
Growing with Plants & Nature

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Harris County Master Gardeners invite you to join us one day each month, January through November, 10:00 –11:15 a.m. Free for children ages three to twelve. REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. To register or for more information: ogd.harrishort@gmail.com

March
Tuesday, March 24 - Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Rd. Cypress, TX. REGISTRATION required by Sunday, March 22.

April
Wednesday, April 15 - Trini Mendenhall Community Center; 1414 Wirt Rd., Houston, TX REGISTRATION required by Monday, April 13.

(The Open Garden Day children's activities program name has changed to be more reflective of its mission.)

Children and their parents looking for hands-on ways to learn, create, and have fun inspire our Growing with Plants & Nature volunteers to offer programs that do just that.

This FREE monthly children's event includes a variety of activities:
- Planting seeds, veggies or ornamentals into pots so children can continue to grow them at home.
- Creating a "nature theme" craft project with materials that are provided.
- 30-40 minute hands-on lesson that focuses on a single topic each month.

Previous lessons have included making a worm farm, putting together a compost bin, learning about the importance of butterflies, and making a feeder to attract pollinators.

Past projects

Seed Pod mobile
Fantasy Garden
Recycled soda bottle

For information about upcoming topics, dates and registration, please email us at ogd.harrishort@gmail.com. Registration is required before each program.
Junior Master Gardeners

by Don Tyler, Master Gardener

The JMG program was created and is managed by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. JMG is “an international youth gardening program of the university cooperative Extension network. JMG engages children in novel, “hands-on” group and individual learning experiences that provide a love of gardening, develop an appreciation for the environment, and cultivate the mind.”

One of the objectives of the Texas Master Gardener program is to establish Junior Master Gardener (JMG) groups. Sometimes this is done in connection with a 4-H horticulture club, but a group can be started by individual Master Gardeners. In this case, Don and Suzanne Tyler, Texas Master Gardeners since 2019, recently started a JMG group using their backyard garden as the classroom.

The Tyler’s were first approached through friends to provide some one-on-one gardening lessons to their children. Having heard about the JMG program, the Tyler’s reached out to the JMG coordinator and quickly learned the JMG program offered well-established curriculum, accountability and certification for the participants. The structure of the JMG program provided a much-needed framework for age appropriate garden teaching.

JMG offers two program levels with associated curriculum. The elementary program, Level 1, offers:

• Level 1 core curricula – comprehensive curricula covering a broad range of gardening topics.
• Wildlife Gardening – thematic curricula focusing on habitat gardening to support birds, insects, and other living organisms.
• Literature in the Garden – thematic curricula integrating gardening, nutrition and physical activity.
• Learn, Grow, Eat & Go – thematic curricula integrating gardening, nutrition and physical activity.

The middle/jr. high program, Level 2, offers:

• Operation Thistle – highlights plants and how they grow.
• Operation Water – highlights soil and water and how they support plants.

The Tyler’s chose the Operation Thistle curriculum focused on plant growth and development. Operation Thistle consists of eight lessons centering on key horticulture topics, in-class group and out-of-class independent activities. The topics are:

• Importance and uses of plants
• Plant Classification
• Plant Parts
• Plant Needs
• Plant Growth
• Plant Processes
• Seed Propagation
• Vegetative Propagation

The program also consists of a life skill and career exploration activity and service project for JMG certification. The Tyler’s JMG Spring club meets once a month and they are currently halfway through the Operation Thistle series.

cont’d on pg. 14
Junior Master Gardeners, cont’d from pg. 13

Although it is not necessary, conducting the class in a garden setting provides tremendous opportunity to bring the class material to life. For instance, the Plant Identification lesson involved the various leaf types, arrangements and shapes. Walking through the garden and yard, the students were able to find and identify a multitude of various types of leaves. The February class, Plant Needs, enabled the kids to learn about plant nutrients, witness the brewing of compost tea and learn about synthetic and organic fertilizers.

The class also occurred at the perfect time for potato planting. Each student was given a grow bag and seed potatoes to plant and take home as an out-of-class activity.

The JMG program is a wonderful opportunity to share the love of gardening with the younger generation. Through JMG, the Tyler’s can share their passion for gardening while at the same time learn so much from the kids. It is a true win-win!

If you want to learn more about JMG, please contact your Program Coordinator, Brandi Keller. In addition, you can reach out to the program office at:

Junior Master Gardener Program
Website: www.jmgkids.us
International Junior Master Gardener Program
225 Horticulture/Forestry Building
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
College Station, TX  77843-2134
979-845-8565

Master Gardeners and Interns who celebrate a birthday during March include the following. Wish them a \textit{HAPPY BIRTHDAY} when you see them!


\textit{If your name is missing, please check that your online profile is complete.}
Open Garden Days at Genoa Friendship Gardens

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Harris County Master Gardeners invite you to join us for

**Open Garden Days**

on the 3rd Monday of the month, March through October, 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Admission to the Exhibit Gardens is free. Register at the Welcome Table to receive additional monthly notices for children and family events.

The Genoa Friendship Gardens is located at

1202 Genoa Red Bluff Road
Houston, Texas 77034

To schedule a special event for your garden club, school or professional organization please email brandi.keller@ag.tamu.edu to make your arrangements.

- Tour the variety of exhibits to inspire you with vegetable, perennial, rose, tropical and native gardens.
- Meet and talk with a Master Gardener about planting citrus, fruit or berries for your home orchard.
- Contemplate the joy in the Serenity Garden and catch a view of the Water Garden.
- Don't leave the GFG until you have shopped the Greenhouse where seasonal herbs, vegetables and perennials are available for sale until September.

### 2020 Monthly Open Garden Days & Special Events

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**Second Chance Sale** bargains can be found in the Greenhouse after our February and March plant sales.
The Commercialization of Mary Jane

by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

The Controlled Substances Act of 1970 listed marijuana as a Schedule I substance along with heroin and LSD. This Schedule I designation is used for drugs with no permissible medical need and a high possibility for misuse. In spite of this, marijuana (Cannabis sativa), an annual herb, has been used for centuries for its seed oil, for religious reasons, as an industrial fiber, and for medical reasons. Those of you who are my age may remember Cheech and Chong’s primary use of it, as a recreational drug. Mary Jane, weed, pot, grass, reefer, ganja, herb – all of these are common slang terms that refer to marijuana.

Now, marijuana has gone mainstream. Two colleges are offering graduate degrees on the subject. On February 13, 2020, the American International College announced that its new master’s degree in cannabis science and commerce will begin accepting students this fall. Located in Springfield, Massachusetts, the 30 credit program with a hybrid format will educate students who wish to pursue a career in the quickly growing commercial cannabis trade.

In Rockville, Maryland, the University at Shady Grove offered the first graduate program in the study of medical cannabis in 2019. Offered through the University of Maryland’s School of Pharmacy, students enrolled in the two-year program can interact with experts at a live seminar and complete assignments online. The courses are aimed at individuals with or without a background in medicine or science. The explosion of the marijuana industry and its potential for growth is opening doors for entrepreneurs and encouraging research in the scientific field. In 2019, the Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission documented revenues of $420 million for the state’s legal cannabis trade. The burgeoning industry also generated new jobs.

The public’s zeitgeist in regards to marijuana is evolving. The FDA will not approve the marijuana plant itself as a medicine, but more chemical derivates from the plant, called cannabinoids, may gain approval. Many clinical trials using human volunteers are an FDA requirement. The volunteer numbers range from hundreds to thousands. To date, the FDA has approved three synthetic cannabinoids and one plant-derived cannabinoid. Marinol® (dronabinol), Cesamet® (nabilone) and Syndros® (also a dronabinol) are used to treat adult AIDS patients with anorexia. Adults receiving chemotherapy who suffer from nausea and vomiting and have not responded to other antiemetics may also use the medications. Ongoing clinical trials using marijuana and its extracts are being conducted to alleviate symptoms for HIV/AIDS, MS (multiple sclerosis), and other conditions such as inflammation, pain, seizures and mental disorders. In Canada, the United Kingdom and other European countries Sativex® (nabiximol), a mouth spray that has CBD and THC is being used for muscle control problems associated with MS. It does not have FDA approval. In states that allow the use of medical marijuana, and if you meet certain requirements, it may be prescribed for Alzheimer’s, glaucoma, Crohn’s disease, cancer and other conditions. Medical marijuana is available as an oil, a pill, dried leaves and buds, oral solutions and topical applications. Smoking marijuana is a quick way for the THC to enter your bloodstream, but it has drawbacks. Your clothes smell and the inhalation of smoke has health risks similar
In 2018, Canada legalized the use of recreational marijuana. In California, there is a 15% excise tax and a cultivation tax for growers of $9.25 per ounce of cannabis flower along with state and local taxes. A recent industry report estimated that income from the cannabis industry will reach $30 billion by 2025. Global sales are predicted to be $75 billion by 2030. In the U.S., the prediction is that recreational usage throughout the country will not happen before 2021. In the meantime, jobs, business revenues and tax revenues are expected to increase due to medical and recreational marijuana usage.

Cannabis plant

Photo courtesy society6.com
Congratulations Leewen Shen! Leewen, a 2000 graduate, is a spry 92-year old, who is proud of her age. A self proclaimed health nut, she actively works at keeping healthy. She reads health articles and books. She and her daughter are eating plenty of kale plus avocados, nuts, yogurt and kefir for the probiotics, lots of vegetables.... One of Leewen's principles for good health is to eat moderately at home, for she eats most frequently at home (“I like my own cooking best.”) and to eat heartily when dining out with friends, for that makes the hostesses happy.

Always a hard worker at whatever she takes up, Leewen is extremely active. She is not often found at home. Prior to her hip replacement surgery, her orthopedist, assessing her mobility, asked how she got to his office. Her reply, “By bus”. After a serious car accident, she has given up driving and relies on Meter Lift. She has not allowed this to stop her volunteer activities. She rarely misses a First Tuesday or a work day at Centennial gardens where she is the self proclaimed “weed eater”, pulling weeds no matter the weather, even when the temperatures reach 100.

Leewen grew up in the hilly countryside of Szechuan, China during WW II after her family fled their home town before the Japanese occupation. She tells stories that they had no toys and played only by running up and down the hills. They had no cars for transportation and depended on the #11 bus - the number that your two legs make - i.e. walking. About the time the war ended, Leewen had earned a BA in horticulture from the National Central University of China, where she met her future husband, Edward Shen.

Though she never worked as a horticulturist, Leewen has enjoyed working in her garden ever since she had her first house and yard here in Houston. In years past, she had grown Chinese vegetables, but now, with plenty of Chinese groceries in Houston, she enjoys growing flowers more. She says she can buy vegetables much cheaper and easier from the stores after adding the cost of fertilizer, water, and gasoline to deliver the extra harvests to her friends’ homes. (“Never throw away food.”) She is still in her garden every day: pruning, weeding, hauling quarter-full buckets of collected rain water to water her potted plants.

After fleeing the communist take-over of China, Leewen and her husband, following short stays in Hong Kong and Taiwan, finally settled in Houston in 1959. In Houston she raised her daughter, Lan, and worked for many years, first at Lan’s elementary school and then at the HISD central office. The year Leewen retired, she took the Master Gardener class and has been a hamburger Tuesday regular ever since, helping with hospitality when needed.

Thank you Leewen, you are an inspiration to us all.

Nominate a Master Gardener of the Month

Is there a fellow MG you think should be recognized for their hard work and commitment? If the answer is YES, you can submit their name for an MG of the Month nomination.

Submit your MG of the Month nominations to the Membership Committee by e-mailing the information to kmbrene@att.net (West) or gclau@comcast.net (Genoa Friendship Gardens).
TMGA 2020 State Conference

Proudly hosted by the McLennan County Master Gardener Association in Waco, TX.

**May 12-14, 2020** at the Waco Convention Center

*Keep up to date on our conference Facebook page.*

**LODGING:** We have contracted with two great hotels for you! The host hotel, and its partner hotel directly across the street, are now accepting reservations. Our agenda will have Leadership Training on the afternoon of May 11th, with conference registration opening at 7:00 a.m. on May 12th. The conference will close at 5:00 p.m. on the 14th. Our special hotel rates are valid for three days before, and three days post-conference. Come, enjoy all that Waco has to offer!

**Hilton Waco:** This riverside hotel is connected by a covered walkway to the Waco Convention Center - $149
Phone: 254-754-8484

**Courtyard Marriott:** This newly remodeled hotel is immediately adjacent to the Waco Convention Center - $145
Phone: 254-752-8686
https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1558020957260&key=GRP&app=resvlink

**NOTE:** If you wish to stay longer, both hotels will honor the above rates three days BEFORE and three days AFTER our conference block, however, you must make these reservations by phoning the Reservations Desk directly at the hotel using the phone numbers provided above.

The presentation from the August 3rd Director’s Meeting, with an overview of the Event site, Keynote Speakers, Tours, Workshops and Breakout Sessions, may be viewed [here](#).
Gardening Tools

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetable Garden Planting Dates for Harris County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideal Planting Time</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artichoke</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asparagus (dormant crowns)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Beans - Snap &amp; Lima (Butterbean)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Broccoli (transplants)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Brussels Sprouts (transplants)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cabbage (transplants)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cabbage - Chinese (transplants)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Carrots</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cauliflower (transplants)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chard, Swiss</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collards (transplants)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corn</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cucumbers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eggplant (transplants)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Garlic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kale (transplants)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kohlrabi (transplants)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leeks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lettuce - also Arugula, Mache, Sorrel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Melon - Cantaloupe, Honeydew</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mustard</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Okra</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Onion - bulb</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Onion - multiplying/bunching</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peas - English &amp; Snap</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peas - Southern</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pepper (transplants)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potato - Irish (cut pieces)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potato - Sweet (slips)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pumpkin</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Radish</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spinach</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Squash - Summer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Squash - Winter</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tomato</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Turnips</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summer Greens - Malabar, Amaranth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Watermelon</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Last Freeze Dates (Hobby 3/8, Bush 3/1):
Plants grown over winter may require protection during freezing weather.

Download the Vegetable Garden Planting Guide here!
Follow Us On Facebook, Twitter & Instagram
The Harris County Master Gardeners as well as Texas A&M AgriLife Extension - Harris County Horticulture are actively participating on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram offering tips, lists, news and plant advice almost daily. The best part, instead of locating planting guides or insect documents, and sale dates for individuals, you can add the HCMG site to your account and easily share information with others. This is a definitely a timesaver for these busy garden days and helps promote our organization.

www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners
www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyHorticulture
https://twitter.com/pharrishort
https://www.instagram.com/harriscountymastergardeners

Green Thumb Gardening Series
Herbs

March 12
Barbara Bush Library
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

March 17
Spring Branch Memorial Library
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

March 19
Freeman Branch Library
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

March 21
Maude Smith Marks Library
10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.