

# Urban Dirt

Trees: Planting and Care  
(includes fruit trees)

Gardening Events and Information for Texans

## Growing Fig Trees in Texas

by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

Our paternal grandmother was strict. She was not cuddly like other grandmas, but she showed her love in different ways. One of those was calling our mother to let her know that the figs in her garden were ripe. She knew that we loved those figs and she would have a huge bowl set out on the table for us to eat. She also made fig preserves and made sure to have vanilla ice cream on hand. What a treat. When the tree was not loaded with figs, it was our organic jungle gym. It had low branches we could climb and perch on. She would sit outside and watch over us. Her purpose was twofold. She didn't want us falling out of the tree but she also cautioned us against trying to scoot over to branches that wouldn't hold us. I believe her figs were Brown Turkeys. It's one of the most popular trees in this area and it's the first tree to sell out at our Master Gardener sales. Many people still want a fig tree like the one grandma had.

Figs are originally from Western Asia. They are documented as far back as 5,000 BCE. From there they traveled to the Mediterranean by way of trade routes. They flourished in the Mediterranean area. The trees prefer hot summers and wet, cool winters. Mature trees can handle cold temps between 10-20 degrees F. The edible part of the fig is matured ovary tissue. The tiny seeds are

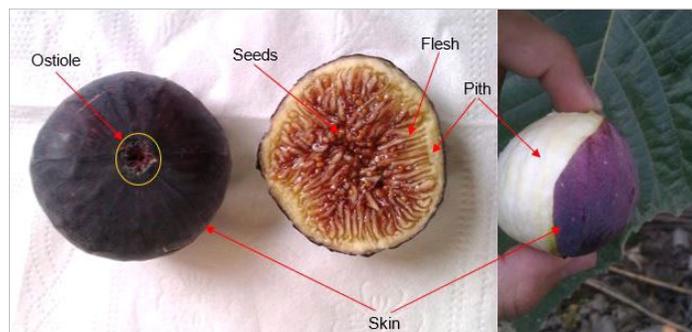


Fig fruit anatomy

Photo courtesy of Ali Sarkhosh, edis.ifas.ufl.edu

unfertilized ovaries. Don't focus on that too much. Just eat it and enjoy. If you want to learn more about figs from others in the area, Facebook has a Texas Fig Growers page if you want to learn from other growers.

There are more than 700 named fig varieties. I began growing figs a few years ago. They are one of the easiest fruit trees to grow. Fig trees like full sunlight, good drainage and the common types don't require another pollinator. In our area avoid growing varieties with an open eye. Figs with an open eye require pollination.

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Have Garden Questions? Submit your questions and photos at <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/>

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## OCTOBER 2020

### Green Thumb Gardening Series

#### Trees: Planting and Care (includes fruit trees)

**Oct. 20**, 11:00 a.m. & 7:00 p.m. Simply visit the Harris County Public Library System Facebook Live page at 11 a.m. or 7 p.m. and they will go Live shortly after that. You don't need a Facebook account, just click on this link: <https://www.facebook.com/harriscountypl/>

### Educational Programs

**Home Grown Lecture Series - Webinar** To register for these free events, please visit: [homegrown2020october.eventbrite.com](http://homegrown2020october.eventbrite.com)

**Oct. 1**, 10:00 a.m. - *Cool Season Color Annuals* by Paul Winski, Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent - Horticulture

**Oct. 8**, 10:00 a.m. - *Pig Out! Know Your Pork* by Shannon Dietz, Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent - Agriculture & Natural Resources

**Oct. 15**, 10:00 a.m. - *Kool Kid Plant Projects* by Brandi Keller, Harris County Master Gardener Program Coordinator

**Oct. 22**, 10:00 a.m. - *Food Safety* by Amanda Krippel, Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent - Family & Community Health

**Oct. 29**, 10:00 a.m. - *Wildlife-Friendly Garden Tips* by Brandi Keller, Harris County Master Gardener Program Coordinator

**Gardening on the Gulf Coast - Webinar** To register for these free events, please visit: [gardeningonthegulf.eventbrite.com](http://gardeningonthegulf.eventbrite.com)

**Oct. 7, Oct. 14, Oct. 21, and Oct. 28**

### Youth Activities - Growing with Plants & Nature

Please visit us on our Growing with Plants and Nature Virtual Group found at the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/GPNVG/>.

### For Harris County Master Gardeners Only!

#### Master Gardener Garden Work Day at GFG!

**Oct. 10 and 24**, 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. at Genoa Friendship Gardens, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Houston, Texas 77034

An opportunity for Interns and Master Gardeners to meet with other gardeners, and to learn by working in a variety of gardens. Work tasks will be outlined and garden leads will be available to guide you through the task.

.....  
If you have horticulture questions, visit our Master Gardener Hotline at <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/>

Please visit us at the social media pages below:

- *Harris County Extension Horticulture Facebook Page*
- *Harris County Master Gardeners Facebook Page*
- *Harris County Family and Community Health Facebook Page*

For more information on COVID-19, please visit the following websites:



Texas AgriLife Extension Service  
Horticulture Program in Harris County  
13105 Northwest Freeway, Suite 1000  
Houston, TX 77040  
713.274.0950

Master Gardener Program Coordinator  
Brandi Keller - 713-274-0956  
CEA - Horticulture  
Paul Winski - 713-274-0981



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## PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

When it comes to gardening, I want the instant gratification of a potted plant. From digging a hole to planting, mulching and watering can take just a few minutes, followed by extended self-congratulations and satisfaction.

Gardeners who propagate from seeds, cuttings, root divisions, layering and other means have my respect. Master Gardeners on the plant research trials team overseen by Harris County AgriLife Extension Agent Paul Winski are among those. Seeds are placed in a special planting medium in trays with small cells, bumped up to 4" pots, and sometimes to 6" pots in the greenhouse before being transplanted to the trial beds. They're monitored closely before and after planting while records are kept on the plants' growth, resistance to pests, flower/fruit/edible production and other criteria which are reported back to Paul.

That takes patience.

The collected data helps greenhouse and nursery producers to expand their offerings of reliable ornamental plants and vegetables to the public. Kale and chard varieties are among the plants being trialed for the coming cool weather season.

The hub of this valuable research is Harris County Master Gardeners' Genoa Friendship Gardens at 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road To read more



*Swiss chard seedlings in GFG's Fall vegetable trials*

and view colorful photos of the trial beds, visit: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-research-trials/>

Patience is also needed when it comes to fruit trees. A neighbor's Meyer lemon tree took 10 years to start producing in quantity, and last year produced over 500 lemons. I picked off the small fruit on my kumquat and pomegranate during the first year after planting, and finally got respectable harvests in the fourth year.

Speaking of fruit trees, orders for our early-2021 sales have already been placed! Our sales took a hit earlier this year when the three remaining plant sales were cancelled due to the pandemic. We were left with almost 300 citrus trees, which were sold off online through our new Master Gardener Store. Big thanks go to Plant Sale Coordinator **Jonathan Correia** for getting the Store off the ground, to **Marsha Van Horn** for the database of photos and plant descriptions that were plugged into the Store, to **Janice Muhm** who maintained a careful inventory of sold and remaining plants, to **Danny Dunn** who handled the accounting, to **Carolyn Boyd** and **Kathryn McLeod** for getting the trees under drip irrigation, to **Evan Hopkins**, **Jarvis Taylor** and others who were on hand to load the trees on designated pickup days, and everyone else who had a hand in the successful sale. It takes a team.

Plant sales teams are forming now, and we want you to claim your spot! See page 7 for details and watch the Weekly Update for opportunities.

Beth Braun

*HCMGA Board President, 2020*



*On the left, Vinca Valiant Magenta, and on the right, Celosia Foliage Sol Lizard Leaf in the current Perennial/Annual trials at Genoa Friendship Gardens*

## HERB OF THE MONTH

# Vick's Herb (*Plectranthus tomentosus*)

by Karen McGowan, Master Gardener

Given the delightfully vast variety of herbs available in Houston, much of 2020's Urban Dirt herb focus has purposefully been on relatively lesser known herbs, and this month's selection falls within that category. Referenced also by the name "succulent coleus," Vick's herb is considered rare and can be somewhat difficult to locate. A member of the mint family, Vick's herb is classified as a bi-annual in south Texas, and tolerates neither cold nor heavy rains; therefore, makes a wonderful and interesting indoor plant, as well as a patio plant that can be protected during our infrequent bouts of cold weather.

Reaching a mature height of between two and three feet with an approximate eighteen-inch spread, Vick's herb is a succulent that requires little care under the right conditions, which include filtered sun and moderate, regulated temperatures. Native to South America, this fascinating herb, as you may have guessed, closely mirrors the fragrance of Vick's VapoRub, a nostalgic liniment that was invented by a North Carolina pharmacist in the late 1800s. Incidentally, perhaps of interest considering this year's pandemic, Vick's VapoRub shot from Carolina cold treatment to international recognition during the Spanish Flu epidemic, when, in 1918, sales of VapoRub increased from \$900,000 to \$2.9 million in just one year.

Perhaps due to this year's Covid 19 pandemic, or to millennials' kindled interest in traditional gardening and medicinal herb practices, or a combination thereof, Vick's herb has seen a resurgence in popularity, although the herb remains somewhat elusive, as previously noted. While it seems to be a foregone conclusion that Vick's VapoRub's camphor and mint qualities would originate with Vick's herb, I could locate no reliable information regarding the medicine's direct named connection to the plant world,

#### Citations:

<https://garden.org/plants/view/162863/Vicks-Plant-Plectranthus-hadiensis/>  
<https://plantswithapurpose.net/product/vicks-plant/>  
<https://gardeningbrain.com/vicks-plant/>

let alone Vick's herb. If such a connection exists, possibly this is proprietary information, or the details have simply been lost somewhere within the annals of history.

Like its fragrance counterpart in the squat blue jar, Vick's herb is used medicinally as a poultice to help clear nasal passages. Some users of the plant for this purpose create a poultice by pounding the herb's velvety leaves into a pulp, and then transferring this into a linen container or sock, anchoring the minty pouch from a shower nozzle. Others prefer to simply enjoy the herb for its appeal as a uniquely large succulent, making it an



Vick's herb

aesthetically-pleasing plant that pairs particularly well with contemporary and modern décor.

Most sources indicate that Vick's herb is native to the Mediterranean. An also reliable mosquito repellent, Vick's herb blooms twice a year; once in spring and again in fall, producing beautiful white to light purple flowers. Mature leaves are two to three inches in length, with opposite leaves covered by short, hairy outgrowths. The structure of Vick's herb is dependent upon maintenance

and location of the plant, varying from subshrub to cascading vines to groundcover. It appreciates a water schedule following the common "soak and dry" method for succulents: Water thoroughly and then allow the soil to dry completely before watering again. Particularly until established, the soil should be monitored in every weather condition, thus producing a reliable routine to accommodate the plant's needs.

Vick's herb is a great plant to try this fall, providing fun foliage against all those autumnal pumpkins and traditional color plantings. Enjoy!

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

### *Vitis Mustangensis*

by Don Tyler, Master Gardener

If you have done your fair share of neighborhood walks during this pandemic, no doubt you have encountered *Vitis mustangensis* along the pathways....not only along the pathways but also on the bottom of your walking shoes. Exactly what is a *Vitis mustangensis*....wild mustang grape.



Photo courtesy of [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu)

The fruit starts off green but when ripe is a very dark purple to almost black berry. As noted in the Aggie horticulture website, the mustang grape is a prolific vine. It will grow in upwards of “30 to 40 feet” and you normally see it hanging over large trees and shrubs along neighborhood nature paths. The grape has a very high heat tolerance.

My first encounter was when a co-worker asked if I was interested in some muscadines. I was familiar with muscadines and had planted a muscadine vine in our yard a couple of years ago. However, I was not satisfied with the location I picked and so I decided to relocate it. Let us just say I did not take the appropriate precautions and the plant died. I guess I should be honest and say, “I killed it!” Nonetheless, when the offer came to get some muscadines, my wife and I jumped on the offer.

The next message I received from my co-worker mentioned the “grapes” as initially thought were not muscadines but were Texas wild mustang grapes. I had never heard about the mustang grape before even though I had been walking past tons of vines on our daily COVID walks!

Foragers among us are no doubt quite familiar with the wild mustang grapes. The website, [www.foragingtexas.com](http://www.foragingtexas.com), has a short synopsis of the mustang grape. They state, “*Mustang grapes*

are easy to tell apart by their leaves from other wild grapes. The topsides are dark green and smooth while the undersides are gray and fuzzy like the nose of a horse. These grapes are the first to ripen in the summer here in Texas.



Photo courtesy of a co-worker

Their skins are thick and tough, surrounding a very tart, gelatinous interior containing several small seeds. This acidic tartness of the mustang grape skins makes the unpleasant to eat raw and can result in acid burns on your mouth and fingers. However, this acid gives them a complex flavor when made in jam/jelly or wine. When making jelly include some skins of green/unripe grapes as a source of pectin.” ([www.foragingtexas.com/2008/08/grape-mustang.html](http://www.foragingtexas.com/2008/08/grape-mustang.html))

And make jelly we did!



Photo by Don Tyler

There are numerous mustang grape jelly recipes online. One in particular can be found at <https://bishopsbackyardfarm.com/tag/jelly/>.

As I write this, we are nearing the end of mustang grape season. Most of the grapes I see now are just purple splotches on the walkways. However, I encourage you to take note of vines in your area and should the opportunity arise next year, harvest some and try your hand at making grape jelly. You will be surprised at the taste of Texas wild mustang grape jelly!

## Growing Fig Trees in Texas, *cont'd from pg. 1*

There are four fig types. Smyrna figs have all female flowers and must be pollinated by a caprifig. Caprifigs never have fruit; their job is to pollinate female fig trees. San Pedro figs have two crops. One crop doesn't need pollination, the crop that grows on new wood needs pollination from a male flower. The last type is that of common figs.

Common figs are what home gardeners grow. They have a closed eye and don't need a pollinator. Types that do well in our area are Brown Turkey, Celeste, Alma, Purple Genca (also called Black Genoa or Black Spanish), and LSU purple figs. Fig colors can range from a pale cream color, to green to light purple and a deep purple-black color. My favorite fig is a Tiger Stripe Panache.



*Tiger stripe panache fig*

*Photo courtesy VanMeuwen.com*

It is beautiful and sweet. I'm trying to grow one now. Check our Master Gardener sales or at local nurseries to find other figs suitable for our areas since the list continues to grow. One thing to keep in mind: when picking figs remember that some people are allergic to the white sap, or latex, that is exuded from the figs,

its leaf stems and its branch cuts. Figs have a high fiber content, but they are also high in vitamin K. If you are taking anticoagulant medications, you may want to avoid eating figs.

The trees can grow from 10-30 feet depending on the variety and growing conditions. Some varieties are suitable for pots. Fig trees have shallow roots and prefer "cool feet." This means they like a layer of mulch. One advantage of the green variety of figs is that it takes birds, squirrels, rats and other critters longer to determine if they are ripe. They will catch on though. Keeping your crop safe from critters is a challenge. On smaller trees netting may help, but some pests will chew through that as well. Pick them as quickly as you can if they are ripe. Figs do not handle transporting well, which is why stores carry fresh figs which must be used

or eaten quickly. Usually, figs don't require pruning. They like a rich soil, but do not like frequent fertilizing. You can use compost, cottonseed, soybean or alfalfa meal in the spring. The main pests are root-knot nematode, fig rust, and cotton root rot. Cotton root rot kills the most fig trees in Texas and is seen in trees planted in alkaline soils. I encourage you to try growing your own figs. I can't wait until I can process my own home grown figs for Christmas gifts.

For more information on growing figs, visit the website <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/fruit/Figs/figs.html>



*Marseille fig affected by Texas heat*

*Photo by Terri Simon*

# Claim Your Spot on the Plant Sales Teams!

by Jonathan Correia, Master Gardener

There's nothing quite like the buzz at Master Gardener plant sales. These fundraising events make our mission of public education and outreach possible. Miss the camaraderie of working with fellow MG's? Here's your chance to engage. Whether you're new to the program or a veteran volunteer, there is a place for you. Work has already started on the four 2021 plant sales:

**January 23 – West Side Fruit Tree Sale in Cypress**

**February 20 – Genoa Friendship Garden's Fruit Tree & Tomato Sale in Pasadena**

**March 13 – West Side Spring Vegetable & Perennial Sale in Cypress**

**March 20 – Genoa Friendship Garden's Pepper, Perennial & Herb Sale in Pasadena**

THE TOP PRIORITY NOW is to add volunteers to the **catalog team**. Click **HERE** to see open positions, and **HERE** for detailed descriptions of each position. Claim your spot and get started by emailing [PlantSales.HarrisHort@gmail.com](mailto:PlantSales.HarrisHort@gmail.com). We are counting on you!



## Harris County Master Gardener

Online & In-Person  
Plant Sale Dates for 2021

Store location  
***HCMGA-online.company.site***



<p><b>Fruit Tree Sale January 23</b> <b>Pick up only location</b> (No in person shopping)</p> <div style="background-color: #fff9c4; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;"> <p>RICHARD &amp; MEG WEEKLEY PARK 19110 LONGENBAUGH ROAD CYPRESS, TX 77433</p> <p><b>Online Sale November 1-December 31</b></p> <p>Order at <a href="http://HCMGA-online.company.site">HCMGA-online.company.site</a></p> </div> <p>• Spring Vegetable &amp; Perennial Sale March 13<sup>TH</sup></p> <div style="background-color: #fff9c4; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;"> <p><b>TBD IF IN PERSON</b> RICHARD &amp; MEG WEEKLEY PARK 19110 LONGENBAUGH ROAD CYPRESS, TX 77433</p> </div>	<p><b>Fruit Tree &amp; Tomato Sale February 20</b> <b>Pick up only location</b> (No in person shopping)</p> <div style="background-color: #fff9c4; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;"> <p>CAMPRELL HALL, PASADENA FAIRGROUNDS 7601 RED BLUFF ROAD, PASADENA, TX</p> <p><b>Online sale November 1-January 31</b></p> <p>Order at <a href="http://HCMGA-online.company.site">HCMGA-online.company.site</a></p> </div> <p>• Peppers, Perennials and Herbs, March 20<sup>th</sup></p> <div style="background-color: #fff9c4; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;"> <p><b>TBD IF IN PERSON</b> <b>New Location</b> GENOA FRIENDSHIP GARDEN 1210 GENOA REDBLUF ROAD HOUSTON, TX</p> </div>
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In response to the needs of the public we will have contactless sale events for 2021. Our first two sales will be 100% online/pickup only. The second two sales will be held as usual whether in person or online is to be decided.

Ask A Master Gardener - [hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/](http://hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/) OR 713-274-0950



# The Survivor Tree

by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

*2,996 people were killed, including the hijackers.*

*The death total included people from 78 countries.*

*Of the 2,763 killed at the World Trade Center, 343 were paramedics and firefighters, 23 were NYC police officers and 37 were Port Authority police.*

*When American Airlines Flight 77 crashed at the Pentagon, 189 people died.*

*Flight 93 crashed in Pennsylvania and 44 people died.*

*1.4 million TONS of debris was cleared away; the cost for cleanup was approximately \$750 million.*

*The approximate cost of damage to the World Trade Center was \$60 billion.*

*Within the first three months after the attack, New York City's economy lost 2.8 billion in wages and 143,000 jobs a month.*

*As of 2018, 10,000 people have been diagnosed with cancer that is due to 9/11.*

Last month on September 11, 2020, we commemorated the 19th anniversary of 9/11. On September 11, 2001, 19 al Qaeda members hijacked four airplanes to launch an attack on the U.S. Four planes were used. Two crashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third plane struck the Pentagon and the fourth plane crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Immediately, life in the U.S. was changed. A war was launched on American soil.

In October, 2001, the last living survivor from 9/11 was discovered in the debris at ground zero. It was a tree, a Callery pear tree.



*Callery pear tree in at ground zero on 9/11*

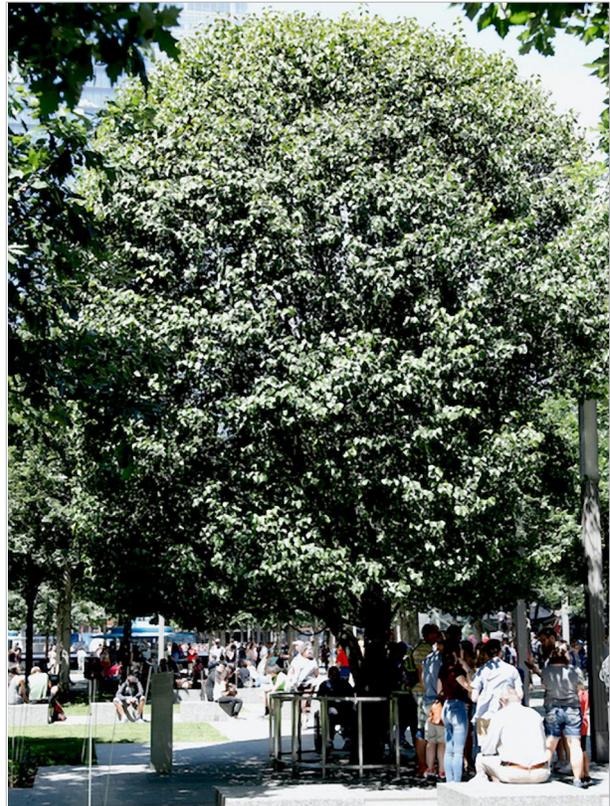
*Photo courtesy onemanswonder.com*

It had burned and gnarled branches and its roots were broken, but the tree had a green leaf. The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation claimed the tree to try and revive it. The tree was about eight feet

tall when it was pulled from the rubble and eventually was sent to the Arthur Ross Nursery to see if it could be saved.

At the nursery, the pear tree was nearly been destroyed by the 100 mile per hour winds of a nor'easter. Once it recovered, the tree was transferred to the 9/11 Memorial Plaza in 2010. There, it survived Hurricane Irene. The tree was truly one tough, resilient survivor, just like Americans. Today the Callery pear tree stands proudly and is nearly 30 feet tall. It is surrounded by swamp white oak trees. The tree is glorious when it is in bloom and is called the Survivor Tree.

The Survivor Tree has been mentioned in 9/11 documentaries and news stories, written about in magazines, and has a children's poem written about it that is available online. Every year, seedlings from the Survivor Tree are donated to three communities which have suffered from tragedy. The tree's saplings should continue to thrive after the original tree is gone. For a listing of areas that have received saplings from the Survivor Tree click on the link [www.911memorial.org/visit/memorial/survivor-tree/survivor-tree-seedling-program](http://www.911memorial.org/visit/memorial/survivor-tree/survivor-tree-seedling-program). We will never forget.



*The Survivor Tree in the 9/11 Memorial Glade*

*Photo courtesy 911Memorial.org*

# HOME GROWN LECTURE SERIES

Hosted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension—Harris County  
10:00 a.m. Thursdays in October 2020  
Join us for 30 minutes from a computer, laptop or mobile  
device with internet capabilities.

**October 1st**

**Cool Season Color Annuals**

Paul Winski, Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Horticulture

**October 8th**

**Pig Out! Know Your Pork.**

Shannon Dietz, Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-  
Agriculture & Natural Resources

**October 15th**

**Kool Kid Plant Projects**

Brandi Keller, Harris County Master Gardener Program Coordinator

**October 22nd**

**Food Safety**

Amanda Krippel, Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-  
Family & Community Health

**October 29th**

**Wildlife-Friendly Garden Tips**

Brandi Keller, Harris County Master Gardener Program Coordinator

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION



To register for this free event, please visit  
<https://homegrown2020october.eventbrite.com/>

A link to the program will be emailed before the webinar.

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. Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service or accommodation in order to participate in this meeting are encouraged to contact the County Extension Office prior to the meeting to determine how reasonable accommodations can be made.

# MGs of the Month - *Karen Kabacinski & George Kabacinski*

by Karen Breneman, Master Gardener

## *George Kabacinski*

Volunteering is something **George Kabacinski** does a lot of. He is involved with several local organizations covering a variety of interests.

George grew up in Detroit, Michigan. He and his wife, Karen, moved to Houston in 1979. They settled in the Northwest area and they continue to live in the area.

George spent nearly all his working years primarily in IT. He wrote his first computer program in middle school as part of an advanced math class. That is where it all began, and he still works with computers today. George held a variety of IT roles from computer programmer through management. He retired from a local high-tech firm in 2012. At that time, he was working from home and caring for his mother.

As a child, he recalls growing tomatoes and onions with his grandfather. He learned even more about gardening from his wife, Karen assisting her in the garden with various tasks. During their creation of the current backyard garden he designed and installed the multi-station irrigation system. He also handles the home outdoor composting station and worm composting bin.

He is also heavily involved with the Gulf Coast Woodturners Association (GCWA) leading their education and programs. He hosts their hands-on classes at his workshop. Several of George's turnings can be viewed in the GCWA display case at the Trini Mendenhall Community Center. Over the years, he's also been active in the local chapter of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors and has taken several hands-on classes in the repair of antique clocks.

In addition to his woodturning endeavors and on-going interest in antique clocks, he is an amateur travel photographer. George enjoys seeing far off parts of the world with his travels with Karen. George completed the Master Gardener training in 2019 and has participated in several committees including Ask a Master Gardener (farmers markets), First Tuesday programs assisting Brandi Keller, helping with accounting for the 2019 west side plant sales and his on-going involvement with Growing with Plants and Nature. George says he is eagerly awaiting the 2019

class graduation and receiving his official Master Gardener name badge.

## *Karen Kabacinski*

Gardening is certainly not new to **Karen Kabacinski**. She grew up on a family farm in Southern Illinois where her family raised livestock and farmed acreage. There was always a large family garden where Karen participated in planting, growing, harvesting, and canning the bounties.

After obtaining an associate degree in Computer Technology, Karen moved into the IT industry holding several positions in organizations before launching into IT consulting. During her working years she continued her education, obtaining her bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Our Lady of the Lakes in San Antonio.

Karen's career in IT spanned a variety of positions including software design and development, project management, and consulting. It also included a good deal of travel for several years prior to her retirement in 2014. She says she retired to be able to travel the world and work in her garden. She has done a good deal of both since she retired.

She does have some flowers, but the emphasis in Karen's garden is clearly on fruits and vegetables. She enjoys getting into the garden nearly every day to care for her plants. A good deal of that time is early morning hours given the high temperatures of Houston summers. Karen uses a combination of raised beds and large containers for her garden. She has an area that is netted to keep the birds away from her tomatoes. There is an additional area outside the netted space for crops that are not as prone to bird feeding. She utilizes a multi zone drip irrigation system for the garden space.

Karen is a member of the 2019 Master Gardener class. She says she really enjoyed the program and has leveraged her newly acquired knowledge, as well as her past experiences in her work with the Ask a Master Gardener and Growing with Plants and Nature teams. While most of her family live in Illinois, Karen lives in Cypress with her husband, George, and their two Maltese rescue dogs.



*Karen and George Kabacinski*

## *For Harris County Master Gardeners Only!*



# October 10th and 24th GFG Garden Workdays!

8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Houston TX

*Appropriate Covid-19 protocols will be observed. As a reminder, please remain socially distanced at least six feet apart, wash your hands and use hand sanitizer. If working closer than six feet, a mask is required.*

Genoa Friendship Garden Workdays are an opportunity for Interns and Master Gardeners to meet with other gardeners, and to learn by working in a variety of gardens. Test your practical gardening skills and learn from other gardeners' knowledge. Explore the various options of working in a collection of gardens with perennials, proven Earth-Kind winners, the fruit tree orchard, native plants, composting, and greenhouse activities.

Come and enjoy a few hours working in the garden with fellow Gardeners while gaining your required membership service hours.

Work tasks will be outlined, and available to gardeners to seek their interest. Garden leads will be available to guide you through the tasks.



The GFG is located 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Houston, Texas 77034. For some of you that may have considered this a distance you could not commit to on a regular basis, it is *always* available if you have a need to be surrounded by old or new friends.

Please join us at our Open Garden Workdays!

Evan J. Hopkins  
*HCMGA Past President*



## Nominate a Master Gardener of the Month

We want to recognize the people who are working hard to keep our organization functioning.

To let the Membership committee know about the volunteers deserving of the award, contact Karen Breneman at [kbreneman2017@gmail.com](mailto:kbreneman2017@gmail.com) or phone at 281-463-2110 or 832-923-1712.

Thank you in advance for your nomination.



Please subscribe to our Harris County Horticulture YouTube page for access to recorded videos.

Thank you for your support.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel>

PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE IS NO SHIPPING AVAILABLE – ALL PICKUPS ARE IN PERSON.

78<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL



THE GARDEN CLUB OF HOUSTON

OCTOBER 16-17, 2020

CHANGE OF PLANS! CHANGE OF LOCATION!

The 2020 Bulb & Plant Mart is  
ONLINE ONLY

Our bulbs and selected plants are available for order on our website:  
[www.gchouston.org](http://www.gchouston.org)

Order pick up will be October 16-17:

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2020  
Pre-orders are available for pick up  
9:00am - 5:00pm

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2020  
Pre-orders are available for pick up  
9:00am - 2:00pm

Silver Street Studios at Sawyer Yards  
2000 Edwards Street

The 2020 Horticulture Guide was generously underwritten by

HOUSTON TRUST COMPANY

## Have Garden Questions?

We have developed a new form located at <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/>

You can submit your question and up to three photos. Be sure your photos are focused and clear.

# 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.

**As a public health precaution to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Harris County Master Gardener Association is suspending events for the month of October.**

**Our top priority is the health and safety of our staff, guests and volunteers. We thank you for your understanding.**

Look for an *Ask a Master Gardener* table at the following locations when events resume.

**Urban Harvest** - *1st Saturday*, 7:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., at 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

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

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

**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



Master Gardeners and Interns who celebrate a birthday during October include the following. Wish them a **HAPPY BIRTHDAY** when you see them!

**Nancy Ayers, Robin Brady, Irene Crutchley, Pat Daniel, Bev DeMoss, Terry Garner, Celeste Germany, Karen Gerlach, Dana Goeggel, Bruce Heiberg, Dale Hudson, Rose Marie Israwi, Mary McGowen, Christine Smith-Byerly, Stan Stevenson and Marsha VanHorn**

*If your name is missing, please check that your online profile is complete.*

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

*[www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners](http://www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners)*



## MASTER GARDENERS in the city

**Texas A&M AgriLife Extension**

in partnership with

**Hermann Park Conservancy**

are pleased to present

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

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**McGovern Centennial Gardens at Hermann Park**

**1500 Hermann Drive**

**Houston, Texas 77004**

When events resume: 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

Growing with Plants & Nature has moved all in-person events online until further notice. Please visit us on our Growing with Plants and Nature Virtual Group found at the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/GPNVG/>

We hope this helps educate more families and children on gardening and nature. Programs are tailored to children and their families and include lessons, crafts and other activities combining the Facebook presence and a monthly live Family Zoom session.



The August Family Zoom session was provided by Karen Kabacinski titled “Flight of the Ladybug”. It is available for viewing on the group Facebook site. Topics within the presentation included: anatomy, life cycle, types, and Fun Facts. This was the first in the GPN Family Zoom meetups and was well received.

Jerri Grimland presented the September topic, Plants that Survived the Dinosaurs. The presentation focused on woody and vascular plants that have survived hundreds of millions of years after the dinosaur period. It also included several Fun Facts on herbivores from that era and is available on the group Facebook site.



Ever wondered what happens in your gardens while you sleep? October’s topic “While You Sleep” will explore insects, birds, plants, and mammals that are active at night ... featuring the Mexican Free-Tailed bat. Join Candy Friday on Tuesday October 13<sup>th</sup>. at 10:00 am. Registration is required (see below).

*Photo: Ron Groves of EOL Learning and Education Group*

For information about upcoming topics, dates, and registration, please email us at [ogd.harrishort@gmail.com](mailto:ogd.harrishort@gmail.com). Registration is required before each program.

# Open Garden Days at Genoa Friendship Gardens



The Perennial/Annual Trial Garden



The Water Garden



The Greenhouse

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  
1210 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](mailto: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.

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### *2020 Monthly Open Garden Days & Special Events*

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# 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.

Download the Vegetable Garden Planting Guide here!

# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE  
EXTENSION SERVICE  
13105 NORTHWEST FREEWAY, SUITE 1000  
HOUSTON, TX 77040  
713-274-0950

[harris.agrilife.org/program-areas/hort/](http://harris.agrilife.org/program-areas/hort/)

[hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

## 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. Reach us via these links:



[www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners](https://www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners)  
[www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyHorticulture](https://www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyHorticulture)



<https://twitter.com/pharrishort>



<https://www.youtube.com/channel>



<https://www.instagram.com/harriscountymastergardeners>



## Green Thumb Gardening Series *Trees: Planting and Care* *(includes fruit trees)*

Join us ONLINE October 20th, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. We will be offering this talk twice this day. This FREE talk is co-hosted between AgriLife Extension, Harris County Master Gardeners and the Harris County Public Library System. Simply visit the Harris County Public Library System Facebook Live page at 11 a.m. or 7 p.m. and they will go Live shortly after that. You don't need a Facebook account, just click on this link: <https://www.facebook.com/harriscountyp/>

Would you like to contribute to the Urban Dirt?  
Send all questions and/or submissions to: [UrbanDirt.harrishort@gmail.com](mailto:UrbanDirt.harrishort@gmail.com)