

Urban Dirt

Gardening Events and Information for Texans

Selections for My Fall Garden

Article and photos by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

In the past, I have not done a lot of fall gardening. By the time fall, our Texas “fall”, comes around, I'm looking forward to a break from summer gardening. I have grown a few things, but not often and not many. I do not care for some of the cruciferous or brassica members. Turnip, mustard and collard greens taste very strong to me. I will eat broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, bok choy, spinach and kale. I love the color and texture of lacinato kale but it's so beautiful I don't want to eat it. Growing one or two is fine for me. I will pick leaves from one to toss with eggs for breakfast and leave the other untouched so I can enjoy its visual color and texture. The same applies to cabbage. I have grown two, pick leaves off of one and leave the other alone.

Other fall plants I enjoy are parsley and especially cilantro. This year I have planted some slow bolt cilantro and a different variety called dwarf lemon cilantro. I have grown “slow bolt” cilantro before but was disappointed because it seemed to last only about a week or two longer than regular cilantro. The slo bolt (yes, that's how they spell it) cilantro has taken several weeks to make its appearance and the dwarf lemon cilantro hasn't made its entrance yet. The Hedou tiny bok choy has appeared, but it is tiny.



Large chijimisai on the left and baby bok choy on the far right. The cilantro is on the far left but it's being overshadowed by the chijimisai.

My favorite green may be the new one I am growing for the first time. It's called chijimisai and it's a cross between tatsoi and komatsuna. Sown at the same time as the others, it came up quickly and has grown tremendously. I tried a leaf and I believe it may have a milder taste than spinach but it is reported to have four times the amount of vitamin A as carrots. It can be eaten

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER 2022

Educational Programs

Nov. 1, First Tuesday 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Program: *Orchids!* Presented by Brandie Hill, from Orchid Leasing and Express. She will bring orchids for purchase. Meeting in-person at Genoa Friendship Gardens, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Houston 77034

Home Grown Lecture Series - This webinar is provided by our Harris County Ag/Natural Resources Department. Registration is required for these free events. Please visit: homegrown2022.eventbrite.com/

Nov. 3, 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. *Holiday Meats - Not Just Turkey* by Shannon Dietz, Texas A&M AgriLife Harris County Extension Agent – Agriculture and Natural Resources

Nov. 11, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. **Houston Urban Tree Conference** presented by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension – Harris County, Houston Community College - Katy Campus, 22910 Colonial Parkway, Katy 77449 To register: <https://hutc2022.eventbrite.com>

DECEMBER 2022

Educational Programs

Home Grown Lecture Series - This webinar is provided by our Harris County Ag/Natural Resources Department. Registration is required for these free events. Please visit: homegrown2022.eventbrite.com/

Dec. 1, 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. *Plantable Christmas Tree Alternatives* by Brandi Keller, Texas A&M AgriLife Harris County Extension Agent – Horticulture

Dec. 6, First Tuesday 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Program: *Master Memory* by Amanda Krippel, Texas A&M AgriLife Harris County Extension Agent – Family & Community Health. Meeting in-person at Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Road, Houston 77055

Dec. 16, 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. **Women in Agriculture Conference** presented by Urban Harvest, The United Way of Greater Houston, 50 Waugh Drive, Houston 77007 To register: <https://urbanharvest.networkforgood.com/events/47909-women-in-agriculture-conference-2022>

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 website:

COVID-19
AgriLife Extension
Web Hub



Texas AgriLife Extension Service
Horticulture Program in Harris County
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Houston, TX 77040
713.274.0950

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Selections for My Fall Garden, cont'd from pg. 1



Close up of chijimisai

raw or cooked. So far I'm pleased with my seedlings and they have already needed bumping up. I delivered some to my friend, Gene Speller, a fantastic gardener with the Galveston County Master Gardeners. Gene has gardened for years so I'm anxious to get his input about the new green. I have dubbed him "Mr. Greens Gene."



Chijimisai after being bumped up

The last thing I'm going to attempt to grow again is garlic. While I have failed miserably in the past, I recently attended two excellent seminars given by the Galveston County Master Gardeners on growing onions, garlic and herbs. Armed with new knowledge, I'm going to try again. What went wrong in the

past? Everything. My new Susanville variety garlic arrived a few days ago so I'm determined to try again. Soon to make an appearance in my freezer? Home made chorizo for the holidays. This year the Susanville won't be ready yet so I guess I'll have to buy garlic. I'll be disappointed, but I know the people I give the chorizo to for Christmas presents won't mind. Perhaps next year I can either dry store it or freeze it. In the meantime, enjoy our upcoming holidays.



Prepping my Susanville garlic before planting. It should be soaked in water for 24 hours before planting, then dipped in rubbing alcohol for 3-5 minutes before planting 2" deep, 6" apart.



HERB OF THE MONTH

Siberian Chives (*Allium nutans*)

by Karen McGowan, Master Gardener

In the event that you are like most of us, and don't study chives for a living nor for a hobby, you may not be aware that there are several varieties of them. Although I would definitely categorize myself as a chives fan and of alliums, in general, it had simply never occurred to me until researching for this month's article that there are several varieties of chives, just as there are of onion and garlic – a couple more notables in the allium family.

This month we are focusing on Siberian chives, of which there exists also a giant variety (*Allium ledebourianum*). Since, by most accounts, giant Siberian chives don't do quite as well in our growing zone, we will focus on Siberian chives (*Allium nutans*). Many may be aware of the handy gardening trick of pairing chives with roses to help ward off unfriendly insects, and that is definitely a

key usage of this versatile, attractive herb. A perennial such as Siberian chives that is both deer resistant and an inherent pest shield is a welcome addition to any garden; the beautiful blue to light purple orbs that dance at the end of relatively sturdy stems averaging between twelve and twenty-four inches makes Siberian chives a popular option for garden borders, particularly those housing roses. The greyish-green

stems of this variety together with the herb's flowering colors create a fetching foil within most garden styles, ranging from clean and modern to shabby-chic cottage. Enduring, spherical bloom bobs topping Siberian chives' stems establish great garden architecture. An herb that can accomplish all of these things in south Texas' rugged conditions is one to savor.

Speaking of savory (see what I did there?), Siberian chives aren't all looks; this is an herb for cooks! Common culinary uses include risotto, omelet, garnishes, salads, along with cheese and

Citations:

<https://housegrail.com/varieties-of-chives-to-grow-at-home/>

<https://garden.org/plants/view/126622/Siberian-Garlic-Chives-Allium-nutans/>

<https://www.thespruce.com/chives-plant-care-growing-guide-5078626>

vegetable dishes. And of course, baked potatoes...I don't know about you, but I for one look askance at any steak restaurant that doesn't offer chives on baked potatoes (or doesn't stock A1 steak sauce, but that's a different article). Chopped chives are a winning add to the flavor profiles of all of these dishes, and more.

If you happen to be a beginning gardener in need of a confidence-builder, meet Siberian chives, your new best friend. Plant this hardy perennial in the ground for best results, 12-18 inches apart in well-drained soil, anywhere from full sun to partial shade (the latter will cause the herb to produce less showy flowers).

As most chive varieties do, Siberian chives tends to spread like a groundcover, so be prepared to train it back when necessary, should a ground cover not be desired. Deadheading the flowers

immediately after they're spent ought to preempt an aggressive spread. Again, chives make an excellent barrier to keep unwanted pests out of your garden, as they simply don't appreciate the strongly scented herb. Siberian chives also attract pollinators and butterflies, even as they ward off unwelcome garden visitors.

Growing Siberian chives from seeds is pretty much a cinch: Chive seeds

sown outdoors in the spring usually germinate within a few weeks. Ideally, temperatures will need to be between 65° and 75° Fahrenheit. Ensure that seeds are sown near to the surface and that they aren't spaced too closely together. Whenever germinating these seedlings indoors to transplant outdoors, harden them off first with increasingly long visits outdoors over a period of around 10 days. Chives are likewise easily propagated by division and, in addition to deadheading flowers, dividing every few years will prevent garden crowding.

Harvesting is just as easy! According to the experts at The Spruce, "chives are usually ready to harvest within a couple of



Siberian chives

Ask a Master Gardener – In-Person Activities

by Valerie Depew, Master Gardener

Our Farmer's Market table hosting activities have resumed. These events are in compliance with COVID protocols, such as wearing masks and social distancing.

Prospective volunteers and interns: if you see that an event is full and it is one that you would really like to attend, please

reach out to Valerie Depew so that we can add you to the volunteer list. Please remember that we want to provide as many opportunities for you to earn your hours and interact with the public!

The Signup is available here: <https://signup.com/go/wBSYeQe>

The full AAMG schedule for November

- Thurs., Nov. 3** **Centennial Gardens Sip and Stroll**, McGovern Centennial Gardens at Hermann Park, 1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004 – 5 to 7:30 p.m.
- Sat., Nov. 5** **Mercer Botanic Gardens**, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338 – 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Urban Harvest, 2752 Buffalo Speedway Houston, Texas 77027 – 7:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- Sat., Nov. 12** **Tomball Farmers Market**, 205 West Main St., Tomball, 77375 – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Thurs., Nov. 17** **Westchase Farmers Market**, 10503 Westheimer Rd., Houston, 77042 – 3 to 7 p.m.
- Sat., Nov. 19** **Mercer Botanic Gardens**, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338 – 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Towne Lake Farmers Market, 9955 Barker Cypress Rd., Cypress, 77433 – 9:30 a.m to 1:30 p.m.
- Sat., Nov. 26** **Memorial Villages Farmers Market**, 10840 Beinhorn Rd., Houston, 77024 – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Thank you to all of the hardworking volunteers who have been able to get back out there with the public events!

Siberian Chives, *cont'd from pg. 4*

months of seed germination, or about 30 days after nursery seedlings are planted. It's a good idea for aesthetics, and to encourage healthy regrowth, to cut the leaves right down to the base. You can harvest at any time, but be aware that old growth can be tougher and not quite as flavorful. New plants should be harvested four or five times in their first year. Mature plants should be harvested monthly." Since chives don't dry well – losing their flavor completely – consume immediately upon harvesting. And don't forget

the flowers --- these are consumable, as well; pick immediately after they have fully opened, as this is when they offer the very best taste.

If you're looking for the immediate impact of a mature Siberian chives plant, south Texas garden centers, even in November, are usually accommodating. If not, put this flexible garden charmer on your spring planting list, and enjoy its diverse benefits for years to come! Happy Thanksgiving to all!



AN PENCHANT FOR PERENNIALS

Lindheimer's Muhly Grass - *Muhlenbergia lindheimeri* (also called *Big Muhly Grass* or *Blue Muhly Grass*)

by Cindy Barger, Master Gardener

While many of us join other area gardeners during the pleasant fall months in planting cool-season annuals such as pansies, violas, and snapdragons, this is also an ideal time to consider adding ornamental grasses to your landscape. Muhly grasses are one group of ornamental grasses that can be great substitutes for aggressive grasses that are also available in our local nurseries.

Muhly grasses are drought- and heat-tolerant and generally not bothered by insects or disease. Always eye-catching with their swaying movement in the breeze, they offer interesting texture to the landscape and in some cases attractive flowers.

Among the many Muhly grasses are four main species: *M. lindheimeri* (Lindheimer's Muhly), *M. capillaris* (Gulf Muhly), *M. dumosa* (Bamboo Muhly), and *M. rigens* (Deergrass). While each offers many benefits as an addition to your landscape, Lindheimer's Muhly, a Texas native, has the distinction of being a Texas Superstar.

Lindheimer's Muhly is a clump-forming perennial grass that is extremely versatile and tough (clump-forming grasses grow by expanding their girth size in neat mounds and will not become invasive, and rhizome-forming grasses grow by spreading underground stems and may become aggressive). Appropriate

for hardiness zones 6-10, Lindheimer's Muhly can reach 2-5 feet in height and 3-6 feet in width. If you have been considering a small- to medium-sized shrub, you may want to take a look at this striking ornamental grass as an outstanding substitute.

The genus of Lindheimer's Muhly is named for Gotthilf Heinrich Ernst Mulhberg (1753-1815), an American-born

German-educated Lutheran minister who thankfully also had an interest in botany. Among his accomplishments is classifying and naming over 150 species of plants, and he has the distinction of being America's first outstanding botanist. The species is named for Ferdinand Jacob Lindheimer (1801-1879), often called the Father of Texas Botany. Lindheimer settled in New



M. lindheimeri (Lindheimer's Muhly)

Photo by Sandi Holmes

Braunfels and his house there is now a museum.

As a selected Texas Superstar, Lindheimer's Muhly has shown that it has adapted to all parts of the state. It is semi-evergreen in the warmer areas of our state, but in colder areas the foliage dies back to ground level each winter. Plant the grass in your prepared beds at the same level it was growing in its container. It does well with varied soil compositions but needs good drainage. It may be prone to root rot or crown rot in very poorly drained areas, so that is one important planting consideration. It

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Lindheimer's Muhly Grass, *cont'd from pg. 6*

prefers to be moist, not drenched. It prefers full sun but will perform in light shade. It does well with the addition of fertilizer in the spring and summer, but you will want to let it grow dormant in the fall. Because it is a tough Texas native, it is low-maintenance, needing less water and fertilizer; the grass may not grow as big, but it will thrive with less attention. In the late winter or early spring cut back the grass to about 6 inches high when you start to see new growth emerging at the base.

Lindheimer's Muhly is made of narrow arching leaves (light gray/green to light blue/green) topped with 8- to 18- inch feathery flower panicles (loose branching clusters of flowers, like seen with oats). These panicles open with a touch of purple or red and eventually turn to silver, white, and gray as they age. Finally, from summer to fall they will turn to light brown or gray/brown. The foliage is typically 3 to 4 feet tall with the panicles growing an additional foot beyond. Lindheimer's Muhly will bloom over a long period of



M. Capillaris (Gulf Muhly)

Photo by Lee Ann Foulger

time from summer to early fall, performing best in the fall.

The movement and sound of the foliage and extended flower stalks swaying in the wind add visual interest in the yard and can soften a landscape that may otherwise look stagnant or even austere. Lindheimer's Muhly works well as a stand-alone focal point or in mass plantings as a privacy hedge. It also looks great as a background plant in a bed of colorful perennial or annual flowers.

As a plus, the panicles can be brought in for fresh or dried flower arrangements. This grass is beneficial to butterflies, hummingbirds, and other birds, insects, and wildlife in the garden.

The leaves offer great nesting material for birds. The plant itself offers a winter habitat for many (another good reason to not cut back too soon).

Another noteworthy grass classified as a Muhly is *M. capillaris* (Gulf Muhly). While it is not a Texas Superstar (yet), it is worth mentioning because it is a showstopper and is in its element, so to speak, in the fall. I say it isn't a Texas Superstar "yet" not because I have inside knowledge but because it seems to be readily available, hardy, popular, and just plain amazing. In the fall its pink feathery stem heads seem to almost glow in the sun.

You cannot fail to notice this late-season standout grass if you have passed it this fall. Slightly smaller than Lindheimer's Muhly, the Gulf Muhly is another low-maintenance perennial grass that you may want to consider for your yard. A cultivar of *M. capillaris* is "White Cloud," with dazzling white flower stalks instead of pink.

Ornamental grasses offer both practical appeal and

aesthetic appeal to our gardens. Practically speaking, their Texas native status ensures that they will not be demanding about soil conditions or maintenance needs once established. Aesthetically speaking, the many available heights, textures, and colors offer an abundance of choices to gardeners, with movement and sound of the grasses as added bonuses. You may want to consider Lindheimer's Muhly, a stand-out Texas Superstar. Whatever you may be planting this fall, I hope you are enjoying these fall months. Happy gardening!

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Cardinal Climber (*Ipomoea sloteri*)

by Becky Lowicki, Master Gardener

Sporting a vibrant, regal red trumpet bloom as stunning as its namesake songbird, this profuse climber is making a resurgence across the southern United States.

With delicate wisps of fern-like foliage, this vigorous annual vine provides a quick growing cover for fences and trellises alike.

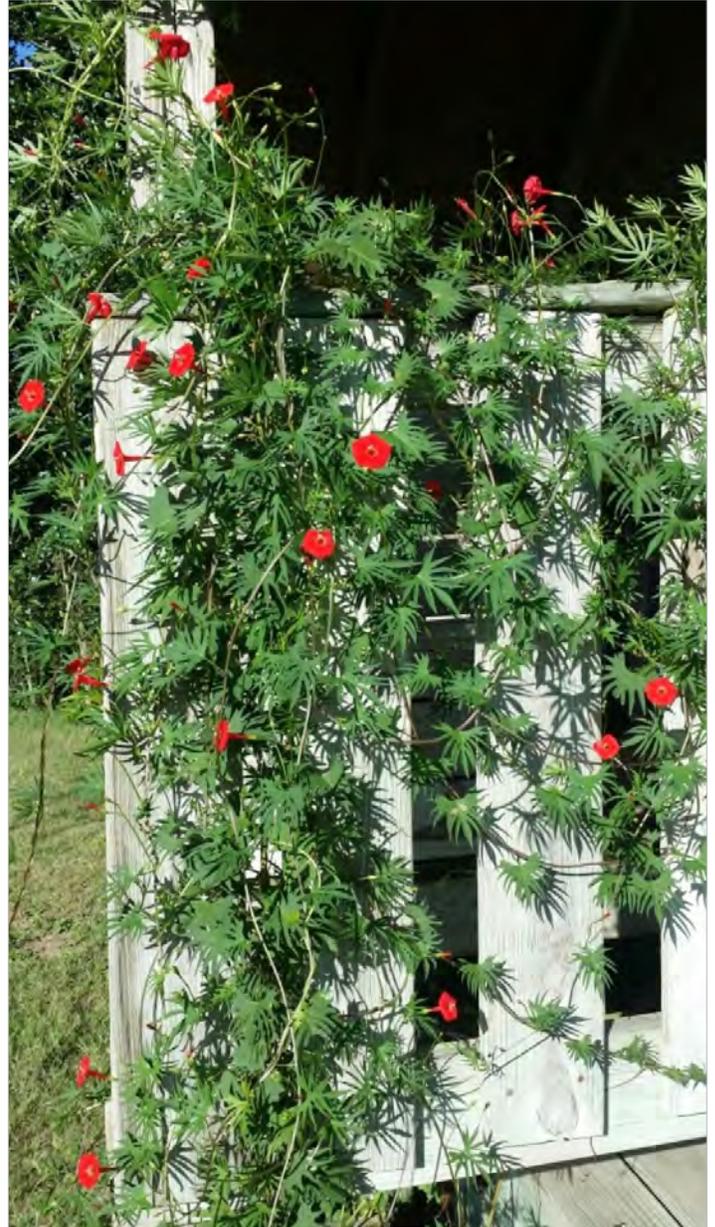
Comprised of a cross more than 100 years ago between a red morning glory (*Ipomoea coccinea*) and cypress vine (*I. quamoclit* – as the parent) both native to Central and South America, by Logan Slotter of Columbus Ohio, in 1897, this hybrid descended from the single plant which took 11 years to produce a single seed.

Within the morning glory family (Convolvulaceae), Cardinal Climber has been grown as an ornamental both for its attractive foliage and prolific flowers. The alternate leaves are halfway between the finely divided, feathery leaves of cypress vine and the entire, heart-shaped leaves of red morning glory.

The triangular, medium green leaves divide into numerous deep, narrow lobes of varying numbers (usually 3-7 pairs plus one wider terminal lobe), resembling little palm leaves and giving a lacy appearance to the foliage.



Cardinal Climber



This vigorous, twining tropical plant grows up to 10 feet long, growing slowly under cool conditions, then rapidly growing and blooming in hot, humid weather. The slender, flattened stems intertwine and tangle amongst themselves or whatever they are rambling up or over.

cont'd on pg. 9

Green gratitude for the good dirt for this article: <http://ekps.tamu.edu>; <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/cardinal-climber-ipomoea-sloteri/>

Cardinal Climber, *cont'd from pg. 8*

Ranking a 10 on the Earth-Kind® index, which indicates a high adaptability to the average environmental conditions in the Houston region, this gem's requirements are as follows:

- Heat tolerance: High, prefers full sun or part shade
- Water Requirements: Low, prefers moist, well-drained soil but will tolerate dry soil if watered regularly
- Soil Requirements: Low
- Pest Tolerance: High
- Fertility Requirements: Low, unless the soil is very poor, does not require fertilizer

Versatility abounds as it can be trained as a vine, used as a ground cover, or grown in containers.

Highly attractive to birds, butterflies and bees, this species also grows quickly from seed, providing a pop of color, nourishment for pollinators and welcome beauty to any landscape.



Hummingbirds are attracted to the Cardinal Climber.



November Gardening Calendar

by Karen Shook, Master Gardener

As the weather cools, our garden task list is getting shorter. Personally, a break from mowing the lawn twice a week sounds good. Although mowing is good exercise!

November comes with a chance of frost. Historically, first frost in Zone 8 is November 7 to November 28. First frost in

Perennials and Ornamental Grasses

- Clean up perennial beds and mulch. A thick mulch over the base of the plant will help protect tender perennials.

Annuals

- Plant cool season annuals. Fertilize and mulch. Pansies and violas are pretty cold tolerant. But you can also still plant others like dusty miller, snapdragons, and stock.

Bulbs

- Finish planting spring bulbs (except tulips and hyacinths . . . patience, wait until December for those).
- Cut back foliage that has browned. Mark the location of dormant summer bulbs. It is also a good idea to mark where you plant spring bloomers so you don't accidentally dig them up or damage them digging in the vicinity.

Shrubs

- Shrubs can be planted or moved in Nov.
- Avoid severe pruning.

Zone 9 is November 25 to December 13. Forecasts show temperatures slightly above the historic average of 62° F. Precipitation has been hit or miss, but expect a bit lower than normal.

Gather those fallen leaves and use them as mulch or as the “brown” in your compost.

Natives

- You can still spread wildflower seeds in zones 8b to 9 in early November. Rake the soil, scatter seeds, lightly rake in and water.

Lawns

- Apply pre-emergent herbicide in early November if you didn't do this in Oct.
- Gather fallen leaves so they don't shade your lawn. Or using a mulching mower, mulch them down into the lawn to help cover the soil surface and deter cool season weeds.

Edibles (vegetables, herbs, berries, fruits)

- See the following link for recommended planting times:
Harris County Vegetable Planting Guide

Groundcovers and Vines

- You can plant hardy perennial groundcovers and vines. They will not grow, but will establish roots for better growth in spring.
- Mulch tender vines, covering the roots and lower stems.

Citations:

A Garden Book for Houston. *2nd ed., River Oaks Garden Club, Houston, Tx 1968.*
 Groom, Dale, and Dan Gill. *Texas Gardener's Handbook.* Cool Springs Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2012.
 Richter, Robert. *Month-by-Month Gardening Texas.* Cool Springs Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2014.
Weather.gov/wrh/climate

NATIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH

Snow-On-The-Prairie (*Euphorbia bicolor*)

Article and photos by Robin Yates, Master Gardener

With the interest recently noted in native plants, I have decided to rename this monthly article. We will call it Native Plant of the Month. I plan to cover more than wildflowers, as there are many diverse types of native plants we can grow in our gardens and landscapes. There are groundcovers, grasses, and trees that I look forward to learning about with you, in addition to the wildflowers I love so much. By the way, if you are enjoying this part of *Urban Dirt*, I would really appreciate any feedback you may have. You can find me at the Genoa Friendship Garden on most Monday and Wednesday mornings. Or you can comment during the annual readership survey.

If you happen to drive through an area with undeveloped land, you may have noticed a beautiful, white, blooming wildflower appearing in late July or early August. Snow-On-The-Prairie, *Euphorbia bicolor*, often forms large colonies, which can give the appearance of a snow-covered field. Yes, here in southeast Texas, that is sufficient grounds to believe you are hallucinating, especially when the mercury continues to top 90° F! To those accustomed to its appearance, it can be a harbinger of cooler weather just around the corner. By the time this wildflower blooms, most of us in the greater Houston area are ready for a reprieve from the heat!

E. bicolor is in the Euphorbiaceae or spurge family, which takes its name from the Greek physician, Euphorbos, who lived 2,000 years ago. Spurge comes from the Latin *purgare*, meaning to purge or cleanse. The stem of *0000*, when broken, exudes

a white milky sap, containing a toxic chemical, euphorbium, that is irritating to the skin of some people. The juice of many members of the Spurge family is a serious emetic or cathartic. Honey made from the nectar and pollen is referred to as “jalapeno honey” due to its tendency to irritate the throat and mouth after ingesting it!



Snow-On-The-Prairie

A potential medicinal use for this plant was brought to light in a 2019 study that found that a latex extract of *E. bicolor* can induce long-lasting non-opioid peripheral analgesia for inflammatory pain in a rat model. Taking something that can be a nuisance or irritant and turning it into something useful and helpful is no small feat!

Snow-On-The-Prairie is native to Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. It is an annual that grows 1-4 feet tall in full sun to part shade. It prefers hard clay soil and the edges of woodlands. Thus, it is an excellent plant for poor soils. It adapts well to both moist and dry conditions. I have noticed it continuing to thrive in fields here in southeast Houston well into October, even though

our rainfall is well below normal. It is deer resistant, likely for the same reason we find it irritating. Its upper leaves are slender, 2-4 inches long, and green with white edges. It blooms July through October, bringing nectar to migrating pollinators and color to the landscape just starting to go dormant. I hope you have noticed it in your journeys. If not, you might find yourself looking for it next year! Who knows?

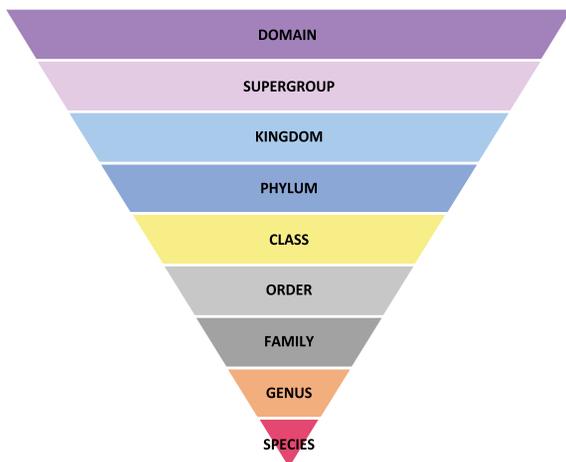
What's in a Name

by Debra Caldwell, Master Gardener

William Shakespeare wrote, “That which we call a rose by any other name would smell just as sweet.” There are hundreds of species of roses and thousands of varieties so each of us may have a different plant in mind when we use the name, ‘rose’. Understanding the basics of classification and methods for naming plants will help demystify the chaos of common names, scientific names, varieties, cultivars, etc.

The common name of a plant is what the plant is generally called in an area. There are often regional differences and different names in different languages. One man’s bee balm might be another man’s Oswego tea or scarlet monarda. Common names, such as rose, sunflower or daisy, can refer to a number of different types of plants.

To bring order to this chaos, a Swedish naturalist named Carl von Linne, developed an organized system for grouping organisms that shows relationships (family trees) and gives each species a unique scientific name. A plant species is a group of plants in which two individuals share a gene pool, can breed together in nature and produce fertile offspring. Due to DNA research, the Linnean system has been modified to include larger groups but remains similar to the system developed 300 years ago.



A scientific name consists of a generic and specific name. For example, the generic name for humans is *Homo*, the specific name is sapiens, so our scientific name is *Homo sapiens*. BOTH generic and specific names must be used, and the name must be written in *italics* or underlined because it is in a foreign language (Latin or Greek). The generic name is capitalized and the specific is lower case.

The person who discovers a new species has the honor of naming it. Some name a plant after themselves while many scientific names are descriptive. Guess the inspiration for the dark-leaved *Begonia darthvaderiana*! The genus, *Magnolia*, is named for Pierre Magnol, a French botanist. *Magnolia grandiflora* is named for its large flowers in contrast to *Magnolia macrophylla* which has huge leaves.



Magnolia grandiflora

Nature and plant breeders have produced numerous variations within plant species. A variety is subgroup of plants that differs due to natural mutations from other members of the species. A variety is italicized and written in lower case unless the variety name is a proper noun. *Cornus florida* var. *rubra* is a pink flowering variety of dogwood.

A **cultivar** is a cultivated variety that has been produced by selective breeding to have particularly desirable characteristics. Cultivars are named based on rules developed by the International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants. The cultivar name includes the accepted scientific name (underlined or italicized) followed by the cultivar name within single quotation marks. A cultivar name is not underlined or italicized. *Cornus florida* ‘Cloud Nine’ is a cultivated variety of dogwood. Note that the cultivar name is usually in English and each word is capitalized.

A relatively new term you may see is nativar which refers to a native plant that has been found in the wild and brought into cultivation or is a variation of a native plant that has been developed by a breeder to have specific characteristics. *Echinacea purpurea* ‘Pink Double Delight’ was bred from native coneflowers to have pom pom-like double flowers.

Getting Down to Earth

Article and photos by Pam Longley, Master Gardener

News from Genoa Friendship Gardens

We have had a lot of excitement at the gardens lately! GFG hosted the *Plant and Seed Swap* on September 23, 2022 and the 2022 MG Interns for a class and tour on October 4th, **Lili Bauerlein**, our MG Coordinator, co-hosted. The Plant and Seed Swap drew veteran MGs and interns. Everyone had a great time getting to know one another while sharing native seeds and plants, bromeliads, plumeria, a Buddha Belly plant and many others. The most unusual was the wicked doll planter **Terri Simon** brought, but would not sell because it is part of her “dog and pony show”. **Robin Yates** brought big bags of coneflower seeds. I am sure his wife is glad to get some seeds out of the house, as he said their living room is full of them. One thing is for sure, any time MGs gather, we are automatically bonded by our love of nature and plants, and the conversations flow easily.

On October 4th, 42 members of the 2022 MG intern class came for a talk given by **Pam Longley** on the history of GFG and volunteer opportunities at our gardens. Several of our regular volunteers were on hand as well. Bottom line: We need lots of help! **Dianne Lawrence** and **Carolyn Boyd** each led tours through the orchard, greenhouse, perennial beds, Earth-Kind garden, perennial trial garden, vegetable production beds, cylinder garden and the herb garden. We had great weather and I think we may have recruited some helpers.

Many thanks to Lili and the hospitality committee for setting up the room and making everyone feel welcome.



Master Gardeners gathered at the GFG Plant and Seed Swap.



Dianne Lawrence leading a tour of the GFG greenhouse



Pam Longley speaking to the intern class at GFG.

cont'd on pg. 14

Getting Down to Earth, *cont'd from pg. 13*

Article and photos by Dale Hudson, Master Gardener

Christ the Good Shepherd Garden - Spring, TX

At Christ the Good Shepherd (CGS) Garden this is the time every year when 8 a.m. actually feels good on your skin. Even more importantly, it is the time of year when the vegetable beds in the garden enjoy the cooler overnight temps and the plants get a chance to recharge and perk up as well.

This year the garden planning team has done things a little differently. Mother Nature did not play nice earlier this year with too much rain and then too much heat, and some of our spring crops did not deliver the expected yields. So rather than take our lumps, we decided to go all in on Fall gardening this year. We have planted Fall tomatoes, we have planted zucchini and yellow squash, as well as winter squash. We have planted cucumbers that



Our newest Master Gardener, Jack Goodwin (l), takes a rest with Mike Chidalek, CGS volunteer (r) under the lemon grass "tree" in the herb garden.



Our two beds of Fall cucumbers are producing more cukes than our Spring planting.

are doing as well as, maybe better than, they did in the spring. We have continued to plant okra each month all summer long and it continues to grow vigorously even as the weather cools.

We continue to hold two beds in reserve for the broccoli trials proposed by Texas AgriLife for Master Gardeners in five SE Texas counties. We in Harris County will conduct trials at both GFG in Southeast Houston and CGS in Spring. Transplants will arrive soon, and we will have more to say about this next month.

This month we give a special welcome to the newest member of the crew at CGS. Jack Goodwin, a certified MG transfer from Victoria County Master Gardeners, recently relocated to a neighborhood near our garden, and he wasted no time finding us and coming on board. Jack was for many years active at the Victoria Educational Gardens, which are well-known for their extensive display of flora native to the Gulf Coast. Jack was a long-time volunteer who helped host hundreds of kids and adults visiting those gardens every year and also contributed to publication of a weekly article titled *Gardener's Dirt* in the *Victoria Advocate*, the local community newspaper. Jack's experience and gardening skills have been on display from his first day at CGS and we look forward to enjoying his participation in the mission of the CGS Garden to serve the community with donations of fresh vegetables year-round.



Our first attempt at Fall tomatoes (4th of July variety) is blooming and fruiting and should easily beat the first frost of the year.



Honoring NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

What is it?

Native American Heritage Month is celebrated each year during the month of November. Native Americans were the original inhabitants of the lands that now constitute the United States.

Why is it celebrated?

Native American Heritage Month celebrates the rich and diverse traditions, cultures, and histories of Native Americans and acknowledges the important contributions of Native peoples. It provides an opportunity to learn about the tribes of Native Americans, and to raise awareness about the unique challenges Native people face both historically and, in the present, as well as the ways that Native people approach and rise above these challenges.

Horticulture and Native American Peoples

Indigenous people have a deep connection to and reverence for the land. Many of the gardening techniques we use today originated with Native peoples. The Wampanoag people used companion planting, planting certain vegetables together to improve the yield and overall health of each vegetable. Terracing, which originated with the Anasazi people, is a technique that involves the creation of flat planting beds in hilly terrain to slow rain runoff. The Anasazi people and their descendants, the Hopi people, developed irrigation techniques including building catchments and reservoirs to collect water during times of infrequent rain.

Native Americans grew beans and squash and were the first people to grow corn, which they called maize. Native Americans contributed greatly to American agriculture, including teaching the first settlers how to cultivate corn which remains one of the largest crops grown in America.

WRITTEN BY HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER INTERN – STEPHANIE MCINTYRE



Resources:
www.ncal.org/initiatives/native-american-heritage-month
www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/American_Indian_Heritage_Month.htm#:~:text=In%201990%20Congress%20passed%20and,as%20Native%20American%20Indian%20Month
www.almanac.com/native-american-gardening-techniques
www.culturalsurvival.org/news/happy-native-american-heritage-month?gclid=CjwKCAjwSP2aBhAIEiWAAdY7dHMDC4SmWfKlqLRPvccehXzPf-H_uoStOYl0dA7DVNwzCYFoJ0EB8cW0lQAVD_BWE

Growing with Plants and Nature

Growing with Plants and Nature offers children and their families opportunities for learning about gardening and nature through hands-on activities and lessons focused on plants and the creeping, crawling, and flying creatures with whom the plants share the natural environment.

We provide programs to community organizations, plant sales, fairs, farmer's markets, and other events. Also, we reach out through our informative Facebook Group, and our Growing with Plants and Nature Virtual Group. We welcome questions, comments and requests at: ogd.harrishort@gmail.com.

Growing with Plants and Nature had an opportunity to provide cylinders for the children at Friends of Northside, thanks to the generosity of the cylinder Gardening Committee. The children showed great creativity with the new experience of designing and painting cylinders, followed later in the month by planting them and placing the completed cylinders in sunny spots around the center's yard. A welcome addition for our program at Northside is that the children now have their own space in the raised beds built by community volunteers for inground planting.



Children at Friends of Northside decorating cylinders that become planters for fall veggie seeds and planting carrots.

They were assisted by Master Gardeners Karen Kabacinski, Diane Walker, Lois Pierce, Amanda Mendoza and Linda Perse.



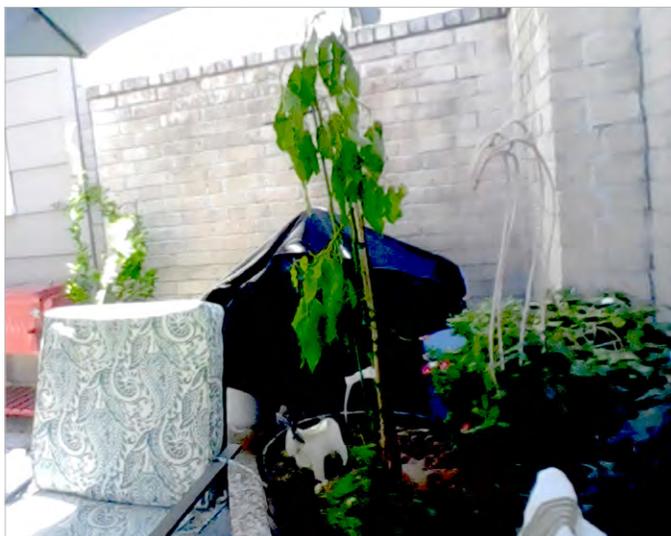
Other October activities in the community included the Towne Lake Farmer's Market, alongside AAMG with Lois Pierce, Linda Perse and Deepali Cykowski assisting in making leaf rubbings that provided a creative opportunity for the children as well as a chance to show the leaf veins that are a part of a plant's circulatory system. We also participated at the Buffalo Bayou Partnership's KBR Kids Day at Tony Marron Park. This has been a large, well attended event we share with a range of other providers. It enables us to reach out to many new families.



Ask A Master Gardener Online

by Master Gardeners Debra Caldwell and Caroline O'Hara

Q: I purchased a Wurtz avocado tree from a nursery in California, in early September. It arrived with the root ball wrapped in paper then 2 layers of plastic. The root ball was drenched and the leaves are droopy and curled inward. I put it in a pot, but it didn't get any better. I purchased a 1/2 whisky barrel, drilled 12 3/4-inch holes in the bottom and repotted in mostly cactus soil. It doesn't seem to be getting any better. Do you have any suggestions or am I loving it to death?



A: Thank you for your email. I'm sorry to hear about the condition of your avocado tree. The leaves are curling inward because the plant isn't getting enough water. That may seem odd because it sounds like the root ball was a soggy mess. It may have dried out before they shipped it which killed roots and then they drenched it. Or, more likely, the heat, excess water and lack of air during shipping killed the roots. In either case, the plant wasn't able to absorb water and tried to reduce water loss by curling up its leaves. Now that you're taking care of it, new roots may grow, and it may recover.

The Wurtz avocado variety is hardy in USDA plant hardiness zones 10 and 11. We are in zone 9 which means that you will have to keep the tree in a container and protect it by keeping it in a greenhouse or indoors during cold weather. The best varieties for Texas are the Mexican type avocados,

because they are more cold tolerant. This Texas AgriLife publication has more information about growing avocados - <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/homefruit/avocado/avocado2.html>. This link, to another fact sheet, provides more information on avocado trees in zone 9 - <https://counties.agrilife.org/galveston/files/2012/03/Fruit-Nut-Production-Avocados.pdf>

Good luck with your plant—I hope it will be able to recover. Thanks for using the Master Gardener helpline. Please contact us if you have additional questions.

Q: Do you have any reliable references for companion planting in the Houston area? Thank you!

A: Thanks for your question about companion planting. While we don't have a lot of research-based information about companion planting, there are some resources out there such as the Farmer's Almanac that give information. This publication link to the Galveston County Master Gardeners has some articles about companion planting - https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/GCMG_Newsletters/190_April-May_2014_MG_Newsletter_Large.pdf.

This master gardener's article adapted from the almanac that has some information as well - <https://txmg-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/orange/files/2017/03/COMPANION-PLANTING-GUIDE.pdf>

Finally, here is an interesting article from TAMU that discusses planting flowers near vegetables to increase yields - <https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2021/09/01/benefits-of-pollinator-attracting-companion-plants/>. The article is focused more on agricultural fields, but the same principles should apply to your vegetable garden in attracting pollinators. Good luck with your garden!

2022 HOME GROWN LECTURE SERIES

Lectures will be presented on the first Thursday of each month on Microsoft Teams and include live demonstrations. Register now so you don't miss one!

Winter

STARTING PLANTS FROM SEEDS

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

January 6, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

BASIC GRAFTING TECHNIQUES

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

February 3, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

TOMATOES FOR THE PATIO

Brandi Keller - Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Horticulture

March 3, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

Summer

IDENTIFYING PEST & DISEASE ISSUES IN THE GARDEN

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

July 7, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

SAFETY IN THE HOME GARDEN

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

August 4, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

ALL ABOUT MINT

Brandi Keller - Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Horticulture

September 1, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

Spring

STARTING PLANTS FROM CUTTINGS

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

April 7, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

HOME BUTCHER: MAKING BOUDIN

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

May 5, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

10 REASONS FOR YELLOWING LEAVES

Brandi Keller - Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Horticulture

June 2, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

Fall

PROPER PRUNING IN THE LANDSCAPE

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

October 6, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

HOLIDAY MEATS - NOT JUST TURKEY!

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

November 3, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

PLANTABLE CHRISTMAS TREE ALTERNATIVES

Brandi Keller - Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Horticulture

December 1, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

Registration

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

homegrown2022.eventbrite.com



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..

*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

are pleased to present

Master Gardeners in the City at McGovern Centennial Gardens

The Harris County Master Gardeners maintain the vegetable, herb, berry, and citrus beds in the Family Garden on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, so if you see one of us working there, feel free to say hi. We look forward to our formal in-person programming resuming soon. Please check back periodically for those dates.

**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.

Genoa Friendship Gardens



The Flower Trial Garden



The Water Garden



The Greenhouse

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

The Genoa Friendship Gardens

located at

1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road
Houston, Texas 77034

Weekly Garden Hours: Open all year round, Monday and Wednesday mornings, 9 a.m.-11a.m. (weather permitting).

We welcome professional organizations, schools, churches, and individuals tours of the garden! If interested in a tour, please email Lili Bauerlein, Program Coordinator at lilianna.bauerlein@ag.tamu.edu.

Open Garden Days

are 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, and register at the Welcome Table to receive additional monthly notices for children and family events.

- Tour the variety of exhibits to inspire you with vegetable, perennial, rose, tropical and native gardens.
- Visit our Ask a Master Gardener table for information about planting citrus, fruit or berries for your home orchard, or planting your vegetable garden.
- Contemplate the joy in the Earth-Kind 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.



Houston Urban Tree Conference

November 11, 2022 | 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Houston Community College (Katy Campus)
22910 Colonial Parkway | Katy, TX 77449

Using PGRS (Plant Growth Regulators) for Urban Tree Management

Corey McCurry, Rainbow , Ecoscience, Arborologist

Installing & Preserving Trees at the Leach Teaching Gardens at Texas A&M University

David Marks, Environmental Design Inc., Central Division V.P.

Current Tree Issues: Laurel Wilt, Phytophthora and Drought Stress

Dr. David Appel, Professor & Plant Pathologist Texas AgriLife Extension

Scale Management Programs

Corey McCurry, Rainbow Ecoscience, Arborologist

CEU's

ISA - Pending

TNLA - Pending

Click the link below or scan the QR Code to Register:



<https://hutc2022.eventbrite.com>

Paul Winski | Horticulture Agent, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension - Harris County | paul.winski@ag.tamu.edu

Texas A&M AgriLife (AgriLife) is committed to upholding the highest standard of ethical conduct and compliance with the legal obligations of the AgriLife components. In support of these efforts, the AgriLife Ethics & Compliance Office has been established within AgriLife Administrative Services to provide risk and management advisory services, as well as to promote compliance with applicable federal, state, Texas A&M University System, and agency laws, policies, regulations, rules, and procedures.

The 2022 Green Thumb Gardening Series lectures have concluded. Below is the 2023 schedule to assist in your gardening plans for the coming year.

Green Thumb 2023 Gardening Series

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Harris County Master Gardeners are pleased to offer the FREE **Green Thumb Gardening Series of Lectures**
Got questions? Go to hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/

Second Monday, 10:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.
Houston Community College @Home Gardening Series
Register in advance to receive the link: hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops
Second Monday of each month

January 9 – *Soil and Food Web*
February 13 – *Spring Vegetable Gardening*
March 20 – *Benefits of Growing Native Plants*
April 10 – *Tips for Great Lawns*
May 8 – *Gardening with Less Water*

June 12 – *Pollinator Gardening*
July 10 – *Fall Vegetable Gardening*
August 14 – *Exploring Ethnic Vegetables*
September 11 – *Growing Roses in Texas*
October 9 – *Trees and Tree Care*

Third Tuesday, 11:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
Harris County Public Library Facebook Live
No reservation required – facebook.com/harriscountyppl/events/
Third Tuesday of each month

January 17 – *Soil and Food Web*
February 21 – *Spring Vegetable Gardening*
March 21 – *Benefits of Growing Native Plants*
April 18 – *Tips for Great Lawns*
May 16 – *Gardening with Less Water*

June 20 – *Pollinator Gardening*
July 18 – *Fall Vegetable Gardening*
August 15 – *Exploring Ethnic Vegetables*
September 19 – *Growing Roses in Texas*
October 17 – *Trees and Tree Care*



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. 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 Harris County Extension Office at 713-274-0950 for assistance five working days prior to the activity.



Prepping for Spring

Article and photos by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

Harrington's Rule - Seed longevity decreases by one-half for every 1% increase in moisture content or every 10°F (6°C) increase in temperature. – *James F. Harrington, Professor Emeritus (1916-2002) University of California*

Bradford's Metronome Rule - The "clock" starts running as soon as the seeds are mature and they have a total number of ticks before death. The rate at which the metronome ticks depends upon the temperature and moisture content. – *Kent J. Bradford, Director of Seed Biotechnology Center, UC Davis*

Definitions: (Courtesy of empressofdirty.net)

Viability: the ability of seeds to germinate

Germination: the beginning of growth of a seed, spore, or bud

In the September edition of the *Urban Dirt*, in the article "Plant Propagation Gone Wild", I mentioned that my seed gathering began in the fall of 2021. Fall has arrived in Texas, at least according to the calendar and it's once again time to start collecting seeds for next year's plants. Choosing the right time to collect seeds and storing them properly is important for growing new plants. Have I mentioned before what happened to me the first time I tried to grow new seedlings from "Big Mama", my Buddha belly plant (*Jatropha podagrica*)? Buddha belly plants need a covering on their seed pods because when they are ready to be harvested, the pod pops and the seeds scatter. I didn't know that, but I had been watching the pods mature on Big Mama so I could gather them. When the time came, I carefully harvested the "seeds" and planted them. I waited, and waited and waited. My germination rate was 0%. Zero, zilch, nada. When I saw my friend who had given me the plant, I asked him where I went wrong. That's when he told me the pods needed to be covered immediately when they turned brown. He used small organza bags that would allow air and light to filter through. What I had planted and watered were not seeds, but the empty hulls of the seed pods.

Growing plants from seeds is one of the cheapest ways to get new plants. Proper collection of a viable seed is important but another factor to consider is the correct storage of that seed. Seeds have a shelf life. There is nothing more frustrating than putting time, effort and materials into something that does not

produce. Seed viability and storage is important for professional growers and home growers as well. Corporate growers, farmers and others who derive their income from crops in particular need long term seed storage in the event of a drought or other disaster. Our homes and most businesses are not equipped to preserve seeds for long term (decades or centuries) under special storage conditions like the Global Seed Vault.

Critical factors for seed storing are moisture, temperature and light. Storing seeds in water proof, air tight containers protects the integrity of the seed and shield it from vermin. To protect the seeds from moisture you can also add silica gel packets. The gel packets are used in many industries. You might see them in your shoes, your medications, etc. They are reusable. I use a variety of containers to store my seeds in. For plant swaps I primarily use 2"x 3" re-sealable plastic bags or glassine envelopes. These are good for short term storage, usually under a year. I also have small metal boxes and brown kraft & foil hybrid zipper bags that seal. The latter two I use if I want to store seeds in the freezer. One important tip: always write the name of the seed and the date.

cont'd on pg. 24



Different storage packages I use for saving seeds include: (from the far left) 2" x 3" resealable plastic bags, 1" x 2" metal tins, 6" x 4" brown Kraft paper, foil lined packets, and 2" x 3.5" glassine envelopes.

Prepping for Spring, *cont'd from pg. 23*

Allow seeds to dry on the plant before harvesting. Never store moist seeds because they will mold or rot or both. Learn to recognize seeds that are ready to be harvested. Label the appropriate package with the seed name and date before placing mature seeds in it.



It is way too early to harvest seeds from these garlic chives. Flowers are still in full bloom. Photo was taken in June.



This photo shows 3 stages of pod development on Hibiscus laevis. The top seed pod is still too green. The middle pod is perfectly ripe for harvesting seeds. Notice the pod is dark and pointing upward. The seeds are still inside and waiting to be crushed and released from their holding cell. The dark pod on the bottom is past its prime. It is hanging downward and the seeds have been released. Too late. Sorry, Charley.



Perfect for harvesting garlic chives seeds. Heads are brown and dry and you can see the small black seeds if you look closer. Picture taken in October.



It's too early to harvest any seeds from this Buddha belly. The green pods are immature.

cont'd on pg. 25

Prepping for Spring, *cont'd from pg. 24*



All three pod stages are visible on this Buddha belly. In the front you can see a green immature pod. The center brown pods are fully developed and will rupture at any moment. I covered this with an organza bag to capture the seeds. On the back left is a bare stem. The pods have ruptured and disappeared.

The majority of seeds are good for a year at room temperature as long as they remain dry, are kept from light and stored at a fairly constant temperature. Light can confuse seeds and they may want to sprout. Moist seeds can develop mold. Temperature fluctuations can shorten the life span of a seed. Optimal temperature for most seeds is 0-5°, the same as most refrigerators. Room temperature is approximately 70°F so seeds will last approximately one year. Home freezer temperatures are under 0°F and seeds can be stored for longer. Seeds from tropical plants or trees should not be stored in the freezer. Again moisture is not good for seeds and can cause them to mold or rot. Humidity should be below 50%.

If you are in doubt about the integrity of a seed, you can always check your germination percentage by performing a germination test. This extra step will save you money, time and effort. A seed flotation test is not dependable. This link will give you instructions for the germination test: <https://empressofdirt.net/seed-germination-test/>

Plants that grow from the seeds I sow next year will be used for either the plant swap, as gifts or as prize donations. I plan to share my wealth.

MG of the Month - *Jeanie Dunnihoo*

by Karen Breneman, Master Gardener

Congratulations **Jeanie Dunnihoo!**

Jeanie was born in Atlanta, Georgia, and her early love of plants and all that grows was nurtured by her grandmother, a naturalist who grew roses, daffodils, and herbs in her garden. Her father was also a strong influence often bringing home unique plants and adding them to the “room of plants” in the house.

Jeanie attended the University of South Alabama in Mobile, Alabama pursuing a degree in Geography and Meteorology.



Jeanie Dunnihoo

During the summer one year she went to Florida and enrolled in a floriculture class, where she found her true calling in growing and nurturing plants.

In 1980, she married her college sweetheart and they moved to Houston where they started their young family. The desire to continue to learn about growing plants was even greater with little people to feed.

In 1988, Jeanie attended the Master Gardener classes at Bear Creek Agriculture Extension. During that same time she also

took organic vegetable growing classes with Urban Harvest. She completed her Master Gardener certification and volunteered for a number of years answering the hotline phones, working with the cylinder gardening programs in local schools, and managing the large herb gardens at Bear Creek. She helped with the plant buying for many of the Master Gardener Plant Sales and hosted a few of the Green Thumb lectures over the years. Jeanie is also an active member of the Herb Society of America, South Texas Unit.

In 2013 she was awarded the Master Gardener Lifetime Achievement Award for her outstanding contributions to the organization.

Jeanie currently works as the Greenhouse Coordinator for PaRC Discovery Behavioral Health drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility in Houston. Her duties include the care and maintenance of the greenhouse, growing plants, flowers, and herbs, and most importantly, teaching Horticultural Therapy to the patients to help them reconnect with nature in their recovery. For the past 8 years she also provided unique opportunities for other Master Gardeners to volunteer at the facility and put their skills and knowledge to work for a good cause. Even after all these years, Jeanie continues to teach and inspire others through her love of plants and all things that grow.

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.

Thank you in advance for your nomination!

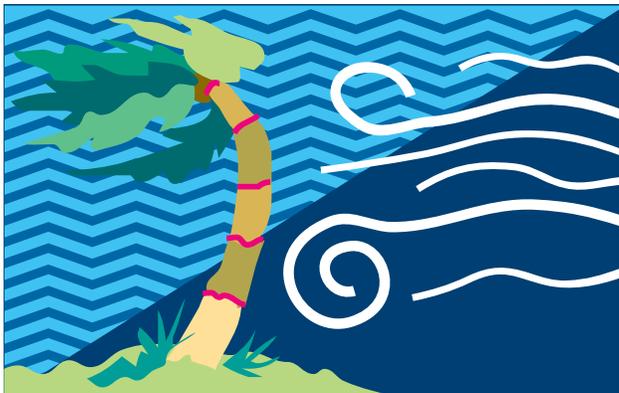
Home Grown Podcast

The Home Grown podcast is presented by the Agriculture & Natural Resources (ANR) Unit of the Harris County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office. The series provides information on urban agriculture / horticulture / gardening and ag literacy. The program focuses on topics that are relevant to the urban gardener.

<https://bit.ly/3w4cUAR>



The podcast can also be found at the following site: www.listennotes.com/podcasts/home-grown-podcast-paul-OM7PKqityX/



Hurricane Season is here!

Our hurricane season is June 1st through November 30th. Hopefully, storms will bypass our area this year. But, to make sure you and your families are prepared for an event, check out <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/prepare/ready.php>.

For Harris County Master Gardeners Only!

November 12th & 19th GFG Saturday Workdays

8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Houston TX

Please email Jonathan Correia at jonathan@jonathancorreia.com
or text to 832-687-5604 if you would like to work
at GFG on a Saturday.



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 on hand to guide you through the tasks.



For some of you that have considered this a distance you couldn't commit to on a regular basis, it is *always* available if you want to be surrounded by old or new friends.

GFG also offers Mon./Wed. workdays (8:45 a.m. – Noon) for MGs who can attend during the week.

Please join us at our GFG Garden Workdays!

Evan J. Hopkins,
Master Gardener



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.



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

Thank you for your support.

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



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

Wendy Barr, Deepali Cykowski, Fatma Dokumaci Ozel, Nancy Graml, Toni Lawrence, Bea Lindzon, Kim Messer, Patricia Metzinger, Judy Padar, Ruthann Pechulis, Aida Pita, Rebecca Spurlock and Chevy Tang

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

Gardening Tools

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

 Vegetable Garden Planting Dates for Harris County	Texas AgriLIFE Extension Service Harris County Office 713-274-0950 https://harris.agrilife.org/hort/											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Planting times are for seeds unless otherwise noted												
Artichoke	Dormant Crowns								Transplants			
Asparagus (dormant crowns)												
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
[English](#) [Spanish/Espanol](#)

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE

EXTENSION SERVICE

13105 NORTHWEST FREEWAY, SUITE 1000

HOUSTON, TX 77040

713-274-0950

harris.agrilife.org/program-areas/hort/

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

www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyHorticulture



<https://twitter.com/pharrishort>



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



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

MG In-person Volunteer Gardening Opportunities

Learning Tuesdays at Centennial Gardens

As a reminder, every Tuesday, we will have a 30-minute lesson on a component of the garden for MGs and Interns. So you can get in an hour and a half of volunteer work and 30 minutes (sometimes more!) of continuing education. The workday begins at 9 a.m. We'll take a break mid-morning for a rest and the 30 minute class, then should finish up by 11 a.m. Email **Will Isbell** at mcg.harrishort@gmail.com, if you are interested in attending.

Genoa Friendship Garden

1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Houston 77034

Weekday Workdays 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Every Monday and Wednesday we are working in a variety of gardens. They include a large vegetable production garden and Texas AgriLife research plant trial beds. Feel free to drop in to get service hours!

Weekend Workdays 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Join us every 2nd and 4th Saturday at our Weekend Workdays. These are opportunities for Interns and MGs to learn and work in a variety of gardens. **Please contact Jonathan Correia** at jonathan@jonathancorreia.com or text to 832-687-5604 to confirm work day schedule.

Gardening on the North side at Christ the Good Shepherd Church (CGS)

Monday, Thursday and Saturday - 8:00 -10:00 a.m. CGS garden is located between TX 249 and I-45 just north of FM 1960 at 18511 Klein Church Rd, Spring, TX 77379.

All work tools and equipment are provided, including gloves, water, sunscreen, and bug spray. We welcome new faces to join our group. Contact **Dale Hudson** by phone or text at 832-659-7799, or email at UTVOL66@gmail.com.

The garden has 28 raised beds for vegetables and two uniquely designed raised beds for herbs. There is a heated greenhouse where veggies and herbs are started from seed. And, there is a specifically designed composting area where all of the compost and mulch requirements for the garden are met on site. Gardeners with special skills or interests can focus on a particular area and lead or learn in the setting they enjoy.

CGS garden is approved as a Texas AgriLife research site, and as such we conduct plant trials throughout the year.

Would you like to contribute to the Urban Dirt?

Send all questions and/or submissions to: UrbanDirt.harrishort@gmail.com