

Urban Dirt

Gardening Events and Information for Texans

Perennial Freeze and Drought Resistant Plants with Seasonal Blooms for the Harris County Landscape

by Olina Raney PhD, Master Gardener

Which plants thrive in Gulf Coast winters surviving occasional freezing weather and also the hot summers with periodic dry spells while providing cheerful colorful seasonal blooms? This is a question many gardeners give much thought to throughout the year. Here are some options to consider.

Late Winter and Spring Color

Star Magnolia (*Magnolia stellata*) is one of the smallest magnolias, producing a brilliant display of white flowers in early spring. Originally from the highlands of the Japanese island of Honshu, the star magnolia is a slow growing deciduous plant



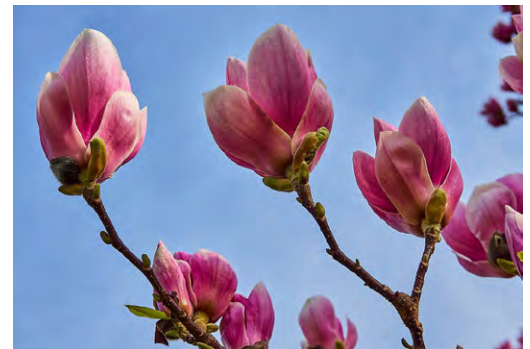
which can be grown as a large shrub or pruned up as a small multi-stemmed tree. It eventually reaches a height of 15-20 feet with a rounded crown spreading to 10-15 feet when mature. The fuzzy buds open in late winter before the foliage

Photo by Olina Raney

appears to produce clusters of lightly fragrant, three-to-four-inch white flowers. The plant creates a spectacular show when covered in blossoms, with flowers from the top of the plant to the lowest branches. The star magnolia blooms a few weeks before the saucer magnolia.

Tulip or Saucer Magnolia (*Magnolia x soulangiana*) – A harbinger of spring in the Greater Houston and Harris County

areas, this tree springs into purple tulip shaped blossoms in early spring. Saucer magnolia is a hybrid cross between *M. denudata* and *M. liliflora* that is



grown as a deciduous tree or large shrub. It prefers consistent and regular moisture in well-drained acidic, organically-enriched soils in full sun to partial shade. This plant makes a great specimen tree in the front or backyard.

cont'd on pg. 3



Upcoming Events	2	Ask a Master Gardener Online.....	17
Herb of the Month	5	Ask a Master Gardener - In Person.....	18
A Penchant for Perennials		Grapefruit.....	19
<i>Texas Superstars</i>	6	GFG Open Garden Days	20
The Rose Corner.....	7	2022 Home Grown Lecture Series.....	21
Plant of the Month.....	8	Master Gardeners in the City	22
February Gardening Calendar	9	2023 Green Thumb Lecture Series	23
Green Thumb Tomato Planting Workshop.	10	Master Gardener of the Month	24
Native Plant of the Month	11	GFG Garden Workdays	26
Getting Down to Earth	12	Master Gardener Birthdays	27
Bug of the Month	14	Gardening Tools	28
Growing with Plants and Nature	16	MG In-Person Gardening Opportunities..	29



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

UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY 2023

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: HomeGrown2023A.eventbrite.com/

Feb 2. , 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. *Backyard Poultry Fundamentals* by Shannon Dietz, Texas A&M AgriLife Harris County Extension Agent – Agriculture and Natural Resources

Feb. 7, First Tuesday 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Program: *Growing Grapes and Making Wine in TX* by Justin Scheiner, Assistant Professor and Extension Viticulture Specialist at Texas A&M. Meeting in-person at Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Road, Houston 77055

Green Thumb Workshop: Tomato Planting

Feb. 25, 10 -11 a.m. *Tomato Planting with a Master Gardener*, Learn how to prepare your garden bed and practice planting tomato transplants! Participants will go home with a tomato plant and fertilizer. \$20 Registration required: bit.ly/3H3K9ew
1210 Genoa Red. Bluff Rd., Houston TX 77034

Green Thumb Gardening Series

We have collaborated with the Harris County Public Library and Houston Community College. Join us for one, or both!

Spring Vegetable Gardening

Feb. 13, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. For the HCC program, register in advance to receive the link: hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops

Feb. 21, 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Simply visit the Harris County Public Library System. No reservation required. Watch on Facebook – facebook.com/harriscountyp/live

Plant Sales

Feb. 11, Northwest Fruit Tree Sale, 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. or until supplies last, 5373 Franz Rd., Katy TX 77493 @ St. Paul's Episcopal Church. All HCMGA citrus will be sold *only* at this location.

Feb. 1-16, Southeast Online Tomato Sale

The HCMGA online store, <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/shop/> opens Feb. 1st - 16th. Plant pickup day is February 18th, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Citrus is not available at this location. Remaining plant inventory is available for purchase. 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston, 77034.

Open Garden Day at Genoa Friendship Gardens

Feb. 20, 8:30 - 11:00 a.m. The garden will be open to tour and master gardeners will be available to answer gardening questions. Plants will be for sale in the greenhouse. And, visit the *Ask a Master Gardener* table for additional gardening information. 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston, TX, 77034

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:



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

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Perennial Freeze and Drought Resistant Plants..., cont'd from pg. 1

Spirea – Long-lived *Spiraea prunifolia* loves a sunny corner of a house and is one of the first mass bloomers of spring. This photograph was shared by Becky Lowicki, Harris County master gardener in a 2019 *Urban Dirt* newsletter.



Photo by Becky Lowicki

Rose – Becky Lowicki also shared a photograph of the perennial rose 'Peggy Martin', also known as Katrina Rose, which survived below freezing temperatures in February 2021, then produced beautiful prolific blooms in spring.



Photo by Becky Lowicki

Summer and Fall Color

Sage – *Leucophyllum frutescens* has purple flowers on silvery green leaves which typically bloom after or just before a rain. Texas sage grows best in full sun in very well drained alkaline soil. It tolerates extreme heat and poor soil, but not acidic conditions. 'Silverado' Texas Sage is full and dense to the base. It blooms in cycles during the summer and fall seasons. Once this plant is established, it is a very drought-resistant Xeriscape plant.



Photo by Carolyn Boyd

Mexican mint marigold – *Tagetes lucida*, is a perennial herb which blooms from late summer to early fall in full sun or partial shade. Suited to zones 7 to 10, its yellow blooms attract butterflies and bees. It tolerates drought and heat and does well in sandy, well-drained soil. The leaves have a fragrance similar to anise or licorice. As a kitchen herb, it has a scent of tarragon and a licorice-anise flavor.



Photo courtesy Henderson County master gardener photo library

Southern Magnolia – *Magnolia grandiflora*, an evergreen tree native to Texas and the South has large white or cream colored blooms may reach fourteen inches across and are followed by rusty brown cones studded with bright red seeds. The fragrance of the southern magnolia flowers is prized by many. For suburban yards and landscapes smaller cultivars such as 'Little Gem' can be substituted. These magnolias do best in full sun. When situated in partial shade fewer blooms are to be expected.



Evergreen plants – *Ilex crenata* 'Compacta' Holly is an example of an evergreen shrub for greenery throughout the seasons as a border, hedge or a container plant which is hardy to -10°F. It is easy to care for, disease and pest resistant, drought tolerant and prefers clay soil. This holly is also used in formal gardens and can be trimmed as a topiary.

Citations:

<https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/star-magnolia-magnolia-stellata/>
<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/magnolia-x-soulangiana/>
 "Resilience" Proven Recipe "Forecast" for Garden Success, *Urban Dirt*, pg.4,
https://hcmga.tamu.edu/files/2019/04/2019-04-urban-dirt-hcmga_public-rev1.pdf
 "What Freeze?," says Peggy Martin, *Urban Dirt*, pg. 14,
<https://hcmga.tamu.edu/files/2021/06/2021-06-hcmga-urban-dirt.pdf>
<https://counties.agrilife.org/hood/files/2011/07/Texas-Sage-Leucophyllum-frutescens.pdf>
<https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/plant-library/mexican-mint-marigold/>
<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/magnolia.html>
<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/ilex-crenata-compacta/>

2023 Harris County Master Gardeners Sales!

It's a new year and the area has just experienced another hard freeze. Hopefully, your fruit trees and other plants survived. If not we are here to help! Or if you just want to expand your fruit tree collection, grow some tomatoes and veggies or enhance your yard with colorful plantings in 2023, our sales are just around the corner.

We will have three in-person sales on the Northwest side of town. Our online sales have a pickup location on the Southeast side of town at Genoa Friendship Gardens. The pickup day offers an in-person sale opportunity of remaining plant inventory.

Check out the info below for the sale of your choice!



HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS 2023 PLANT SALES

For more information go to: hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-sales/
For questions, please email: plantsales.harrishort@gmail.com



NORTHWEST SALES

9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. or until supplies last

New location:

5373 Franz Rd, Katy, TX @ St. Paul's Episcopal Church

February 11th

Fruit Tree Sale

All HCMGA citrus plants will be sold only at this location.

April 22nd

Spring Sale -

Perennials & Peppers

Cy-Fair Home and Outdoor Living Show at the

BERRY CENTER

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. or until supplies last

8877 Barker Cypress Rd., Cypress, TX 77433

March 25th & 26th

Spring Sale - Fruit Trees & Perennials

SOUTHEAST SALES

Citrus not available at this location.

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. or until supplies last

Genoa Friendship Gardens (GFG), 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston, 77034

Online sale at: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/shop/>

February 18th & 20th

Tomato Sale

Online store opens Feb. 1st - Feb. 16th

Pick up day - Feb. 18th

March 18th & 20th

Fruit Tree Sale

Online store opens Mar. 1st - Mar. 16th

Pick up day - Mar. 18th

April 15th & 17th

Perennials & Peppers

Online store opens Apr. 1st - Apr. 13th

Pick up day - Apr. 15th

May 20th & 22nd

Vegetables & Herbs

Online store opens May 1st - May 18th

Pick up day - May 20th

An in-person sale option is available for remaining plant inventory on all Saturday pickup days. Southeast Sale ONLY: Order online for the best selections. Monday is our Open Garden Day; tours of our demonstration gardens and plant trials will be provided along with plant sales.



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

Calling All Master Gardeners & Interns!

by Carolyn Boyd, HCMGA President

The HCMGA needs YOU! Our plant sales are the primary source of funding for the organization, and member participation is vital for success.

This year there are six plant sales providing multiple volunteer opportunities. Read the *Weekly Update* for information and go to SignUp.com to sign up for any (or all!) of the six upcoming sales.

A plant sale is a great opportunity to gain plant knowledge. It may be by researching plant info for the database, creating plant signage or interaction with other master gardeners and customers. I've found that most customers on the hunt for a plant love to talk about their plants!

Please join in the 2023 HCMGA sale experience!

HERB OF THE MONTH

Summer Sunshine Germander (*Teucrium chamaedrrys dictamnus*)

by Karen McGowan, Master Gardener

Hello herb article readers and Happy Valentine's Day! This month we are featuring an herb within the grouping of germander, an evergreen shrub of the *Teucrium* genus (which also includes 'cat thyme'): February's Herb of the Month is Summer Sunshine Germander. If you are like me, and simply cannot get enough of chartreuse color in the garden, February's featured herb may be one to bookmark in your go-to plant list alongside creeping Jenny and Marguerite sweet potato vine.

Teucrium chamaedrrys 'Summer Sunshine' is a short, mounding sub-shrub with small, glossy golden green leaves possessing serrated edges. The plant produces purplish flower spikes in summer, with the entire presentation of the plant suggestive of a thick lime green carpet interspersed with the occasional extradimensional thrust of purple. It's creative and fun to think of decorating and dressing our outdoor spaces in a similar fashion and with as much attentiveness as our indoor ones! With that in mind, Summer Sunshine Germander can deliver incredible texture and color -- in relatively low-maintenance fashion -- within spaces in need of low story in-filling.

Spreading by underground rhizomes (but more slowly than the species' usual habit), summer sunshine prefers full sun to light shade and neutral to alkaline, moderately moist, well-drained soil. Since Summer Sunshine Germander is quite tolerant of coastal conditions, you may have noticed it along beaches or in gardens of coastal areas; I have spotted it in one or two Galveston gardens, just within the last year.

Summer Sunshine Germander is an herb in the mint (*Lamiaceae*) family that is native to Mediterranean regions. It is said that *Teucrium* is derived from the Greek name Teucer, who was the first king of Troy. The Latin word *Chamaedrrys* refers to the

foliage, which resembles an English oak; gathered together with its low growing habit, the nomenclature translates to 'ground oak'. Reaching a height of six to eight inches tall with a 1 to 2 foot spread, in late spring to summer the magenta pink to purple tubular flowers grow in whorls from the leaf axils, and the flowers are bee magnets! The leaves themselves are aromatic and shiny, and, when dried, can be used effectively in potpourri. The horizontal and ascending stems serve to form an attractive mound.

If it's important to maintain a neat appearance in your garden, you may find it necessary

to cut back the plant after it flowers. The spent flowers tend to create an untidy impression, and pruning also allows the plant room to fill in where the spent flowers have been removed. Generally, Germander is a great plant

for usage in a cottage garden or in more informal gardens, while, in more formal gardens where the plant is used, it is kept from flowering by repeated sheering throughout the growing season.

With no serious insect or disease problems, Summer Sunshine Germander is somewhat susceptible to mildew, leaf spot, rust and mites. Keeping it on the drier side in well-drained soil will serve to curb these issues. Cold temperature injury, die-back to the ground or death may occur in harsh winters, although covering the plant has provided some success in preventing this. The plant tolerates drought, and is resistant to both deer and rabbits. Resilience and beauty in one compact, colorful package!

If you have experience with this wonderful herb in your garden, we would love to hear about it! Email me at bienvenuebykaren@gmail.com, and please do include photos, if possible. Hope your new year has gotten off to an amazing start, and here's to brighter, more beautiful gardens in 2023!



Summer Sunshine Germander

Photo courtesy El Nativo Growers



Citations:

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/teucrium-chamaedrrys/>

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=f910>



A PENCHANT FOR PERENNIALS

Nacogdoches Rose - *Rosa x hybrida* “Grandma’s Yellow”

by Cindy Barger, Master Gardener

It is probably no secret that I am a big proponent of Texas Superstars. For gardeners who just aren’t sure where to start or what to plant, checking out the Texas Superstar website (<https://texassuperstar.com>) is a perfect way to begin. Even for seasoned gardeners this website offers invaluable information.

I have mentioned before in previous articles that Texas Superstars are selected not only because they are beautiful but also because they repeatedly do well for both growers and consumers across Texas. Sometime in the late 1990s a group of Texas horticulturists set out to find the perfect yellow rose. Here was a specimen that had yet to be found, a yellow rose that maintained its vibrant yellow color, was disease and insect-resistant, and was a standout both in the garden and in a bouquet.

These three horticulturists, Jerry Parsons, Greg Grant, and Larry Stein, zealously took on the quest for the perfect yellow rose, setting out across Texas to find a hardy yellow rose that was well established in a location where it had been thriving for a considerable length of time. They found possible candidates in 5 different locations, one being at the Old Stone Fort Motel in Nacogdoches. After years of trial studies they eventually eliminated all but the Nacogdoches rose, which in 2010 was named as a Texas Superstar. Their proclamation was that it may not be the perfect yellow rose but your grandmother might say it’s “mighty dang near close.”

And while it is true that “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet,” the story behind this rose’s name might be the real sweetness here. Larry Stein, one of the “yellow rose” men, planted a test garden of these yellow rose contenders in his grandmother’s yard. Miss Tillie Jungman loved roses and was pleased to help tend these roses in her garden near Castroville from

about 1999-2003. In 2005 the Nacogdoches rose was renamed “Grandma’s Yellow Rose” when Miss Tillie passed away.

This rose has proven to be both beautiful and tough. It produces generous yellow blooms from spring until frost. The blooms are deemed “Valentine’s Day” blooms, a term that rose enthusiasts use to identify the type of long-stemmed cutting roses preferred by florists for Valentine’s Day arrangements. The scent is considered to be light and spicy.



Nacogdoches Rose

Photo courtesy TexasSuperstars.com

This bushy, upright rose requires little TLC but does not necessarily want to be all-out neglected. As with most roses it does best in full sun, and it is a repeat bloomer that will reach 4-5 feet in height and 3 feet in width. New leaves will be bronze and in time will turn dark green. Stems will be sturdy with a healthy presence of thorns. Drastic changes in temperature will cause this rose to stop blooming, but a steady

production of beautiful yellow blooms will resume in a short time. Well-drained soil that is slightly acidic is best, but as a true Texas Superstar it will adapt to other soil types as long as the drainage is adequate. Regular water and fertilization attention will keep this rose happy. For excellent rose care check out <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/publications/roses/rose.html>.

As far as maintenance goes with this rose, it will not require constant fungicide use and in fact may need very little if any. All roses are susceptible to black spot, the biggest disease problem that roses face. Prolonged wet periods are no friend to roses and unfortunately promote the likelihood of having to deal with black spot. Some people treat their roses with fungicide for 3-4 days in

cont'd on pg. 7

ROSE CORNER

What to do in February-March

by Christa Kaiser, Master Gardener

After some frosty days around Christmas, we all lost quite a few plants in our gardens. My roses recovered quite well so far and are already developing fresh new leaves, hopefully we will not have this kind of temperatures in February. Very resilient roses in my garden seem to be Old Blush, Carefree Beauty and Cramoisi Superieur. The roses at the Genoa Friendship Garden need a little more time to recover. I will mention later on which ones did best.

Pruning for bloom time is at the end of February and beginning of March - it doesn't have to be exactly on Valentine's Day!



Cramoisi Superieur

Photo by Chris Reid - garden.org

February is also the month for raised bed building and planting. Roses need good drainage and a rich, moisture-retentive soil, with a pH between 6.5 and 7. Compost can be added and topped with a layer of mulch.

Here are the pruning basics:

- **Clean and disinfect your sharp pruners**
- **Prune out old, less productive wood using loppers or a pruning saw, make a straight cut**
- **If suckers grow from the root stock below the bud union, remove them**
- **Cut away spindly shoots and crossing or rubbing branches, remove dead, diseased and damaged wood**
- **Shape the plant to prevent overcrowding**
- **Remove flowers and old, diseased leaves**
- **Roses have alternate buds - make angled cuts above a healthy one**
- **Bush heights: Miniatures should be reduced down to one 2"-18", Hybrid Teas and taller Floribundas should be pruned down to 24" to 30", but use your own judgement**

After pruning, fertilize and start a spraying program - all organic is preferred.

Nacogdoches Rose, *cont'd from pg. 6*

early spring and find that to be adequate disease prevention, with occasional extra applications during excessively wet periods. Roses tend to handle black spot in stride and will produce new growth after defoliation of the black spot (when removing the affected leaves, dispose in a trash bag instead of letting the diseased leaves fall back into the soil).

Many people shy away from growing roses as they think of rose care as being too particular or labor-intensive. This is not the case with the Texas Superstar roses - and actually many others as well. My rose obsession has evolved into mostly growing roses in

containers, which I like because I can more easily monitor sun and water requirements. I am always tempted when I see a rose I don't have. Consider giving yourself a Valentine's Day present this year and try one rose in a container and see what you think. Happy gardening, all!

References

<https://texassuperstar.com>
<https://www.centralextexasgardener.org>
<https://www.mortellaros.com>
<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>
<https://plantanswers.com>

The Rose Rustlers (book) by Greg Grant & William C. Welch

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Dianthus

by Becky Lowicki, Master Gardener

Amazingly when the latest subfreeze left most landscapes the color of a wheat field, I spotted the vibrant green foliage of Dianthus peeking out of the bedding around my shivering roses. Much to my surprise, within a week's time, regal purple blooms the color of gemstones emerged, lifting their faces to the sun as if to say – “we made it!”

It's important to note, these hardy specimens were the exact same Dianthus plants that had survived the winter wallop exactly two years ago – making them the ultimate cold-hardy perseverance plants. Granted they, like everything else, took a while to regroup after that ice-fest, but they came back in full color again without much tending on my part.

Mostly evergreen, these cool season bloomers are at their peak in early spring through early summer as seen in fragrant pink, white, rose, purple or combination-colored flowers. A bounty of blooms develops on stems above the foliage.

The Dianthus genus includes an astounding array of more than 27,000 registered cultivar names, which are grown as annuals, biennials and evergreen perennials.

These old-fashioned garden plants are often mislabeled, but generally comprise single-flowered varieties which are known as ‘pinks,’ and hardy double forms known as ‘carnations.’

Pinks are bushy plants with gray-green leaves and small flowers that can be single, semi-double or frilled, in shades of lavender, pink, purple, red, salmon and white. Each flower has toothed petals creating a delicate fringe. Pinks get their name not from the color, but from the fact that their fringed petals that look like they've been cut with pinking shears. Some species have a spicy fragrance, much like cloves.

Pinks (*D. chinensis*) are low-growing annuals. Pinks, and hybrids bred from pinks, are the most commonly planted varieties.



Dianthus barbatus, the sweet William, is a species of flowering plant in the family Caryophyllaceae, prized for its attractive border planting and has a spicy fragrance with hints of clove and cinnamon.

Perennial dianthus is often called sweet William, due to its spicy fragrance with hints of clove and cinnamon. Related to carnations, but much smaller and more delicate, dianthus plants make a cheerful addition to any garden.

Carnations (*D. caryophyllus*) are taller and popular in the floral industry for bouquets, but tend to be less hardy than other dianthus.

‘Bath's Pink,’ a cultivar of *D. gratianopolitanus*, the perennials known as ‘cheddar pinks,’ will tolerate full sun, heat and humidity. It has blue-tinged foliage and single pink blooms with red eyes.

The tri-color blooms of Dianthus ‘First Love’ (*D. caryophyllus*), open initially as white, then turn to pink and eventually lavender. Its blossoms are fragrant and reported to be resistant to fungus disease.

Culture

Most varieties prefer morning sun, afternoon filtered shade and moderate moisture.

Dianthus likes well-drained, neutral to alkaline soils. To prevent disease, provide good air circulation and do not overwater or use excessive mulch.

Growth Habit

The dense foliage is mostly evergreen, grassy or mat-forming green or gray, depending on the variety. Dianthus may be used in borders or containers, and make excellent bedding plants when massed together.



Dianthus 'First Love' is one of the longest flowering perennials known as ‘pinks,’ due to the intricate fringed petals that appear as though they were cut with pinking shears. Its mounding foliage is attractive, especially in the bleak months of winter.



A pink bi-color beauty, ‘Moulin Rouge,’ is an easy to grow variety sporting a vivid flower display that lives up to its show-stopping name.

References:

Texas A&M Agri-Life Extension; The University of Florida Institute of Food & Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) Gardening Solutions; North Carolina Extension Gardener



February Gardening Calendar

by Karen Shook, Master Gardener

To clean or not to clean. As I write this note in mid-January, the weather has been so pleasant that the temptation to clean up from our December cold is very strong. Good advice is to clean out the mushy, learn to live with the rest. We will see if I have the willpower to follow that advice at least until we are closer to the last frost date in Zone 9 (February 18 or February 28th depending on the source).

Perennials and Ornamental Grasses

- Plant spring and summer blooming perennials. Examples are daylily, canna, daisy.
- Divide fall and summer blooming perennials, ornamental grasses.
- In late February, fertilize actively growing perennials.

Annuals

- Set out transplants of cool season annuals like alyssum, coneflowers, pansies.
- Start seeds of warm season annuals indoors.

Bulbs

- Plant gladiolus (and other summer flowering bulbs). Plant gladiolus bulbs every two weeks from February through May for successive blooms.
- Provide a light application of fertilizer for spring blooming bulbs showing active growth.

Roses

- January through early February are good times for planting and transplanting roses. Transplanting needs to be complete by the end of February.
- Finish spring pruning early to middle of February (according to my mother-in-law who had beautiful rose beds, Valentine's Day is pruning day. I admit I lean more toward end of January).

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

Average temperature in February is 57° F and average precipitation is 2.6 inches. The weather forecasts I look at conflict more than is usual, so I will go with my monthly mantra, check for "too wet, too dry, just right" and water accordingly.

Shrubs/Trees

- Prune shrubs as needed while still dormant. Any new shrubs you want to add should be planted by the end of February.
- Finish fertilizing most trees and shrubs by late February. You want the nutrients to be available to support spring growth, but don't want to encourage spring growth too early in case of another cold snap.
- Prune fruit trees as needed. Pruning needs are specific to type of fruit tree, so check with County Extension Office for pruning guides.
- Prune summer blooming trees like crape myrtles, chaste trees.

Lawns

- Keep your lawn raked so the grass can see the sun. Use leaves as compost or mulch.
- Pre-emergent herbicides may help keep the spring weeds down. Check the label for appropriate temperatures before applying.

Edibles (vegetables, herbs, berries, fruits)

- Trim blackberry and blueberry bushes. Again, check with county extension office to get specific pruning advice.
- See the following link for recommended planting times: [Harris County Vegetable Planting Guide](#)

Groundcovers and Vines

- Most woody vines bloom in the spring; don't prune until after bloom.
- Consider planting ground cover in areas that are difficult to mow or where grass has not done well in the past. Remove vegetation, till the soil, add organic matter to prepare.
- Every 2 to 3 years, shear groundcovers back to 6 to 10 in above soil before new growth begins.



GREEN THUMB TOMATO PLANTING WORKSHOP

February 25th

Learn how to properly prepare your garden bed and practice planting tomato transplants. ***Each participant will go home with a tomato plant and fertilizer!***

BYO gardening gloves! Adults with children welcome to bring children free of charge.



	25 FEBRUARY 10am-11am	RICK CASTAGNO MASTER GARDENER
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	Genoa Friendship Garden 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Houston, TX 77034
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\$20 REGISTER HERE : [BIT.LY/3H3K9EW](https://bit.ly/3H3K9EW)

For questions email lilianna.bauerlein@ag.tamu.edu

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NATIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH

Lyreleaf Sage (*S. lyrata*)

Article and photos by Robin Yates, Master Gardener

As I began gardening seriously after retiring, I found myself attracted to the family of salvias. I saw how the pollinators concentrated around the shrubs in the nurseries I visited. That is where I developed the habit of following the pollinators whenever I visit a nursery. It came as no surprise to me that the name salvia is derived from the Latin root word for salvare, or “to heal.” I feel the pollinators who find the nectar they need to survive on these plants would agree 😊. Some of my other salvias bloom throughout the year, right up to the first freeze, supplying nectar when the choices are few and far between.

From this family we find our second native groundcover option, *S. lyrata*, commonly known as Lyreleaf Sage or Cancer Weed (https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=SALY2). It is a lovely spring bloomer with many favorable attributes. It is a perennial in the Lamiaceae, or mint family. It



Lyreleaf sage

grows in full sun to shade, in most soils, and once established, is both drought and flood tolerant. It will grow 1-2 feet, with a slender, square stalk, producing beautiful light blue to lavender flowers for a few weeks from March through June. It may bloom in part shade, but the color will be lighter. It needs full

sun for the darkest lavender and blue to show.

One of the things I love about this plant is the base or rosette. It is a perennial, providing green all year long. The leaves are deeply three-lobed, thus invoking the resemblance to its namesake lyre. They turn maroon or purple in the fall and winter, giving your bed a splash of color when most plants have lost theirs.

Lyreleaf sage, with its ability to reseed and form a solid cover makes a great evergreen groundcover. It will tolerate mowing and can be walked on, thus it can find a place in your flowerbed

as well as an alternative to turfgrass. I find many are frustrated, as I was, with trying to keep St. Augustine, an introduced species, alive. As we learn how important biodiversity is for any ecosystem to thrive, having multiple options can be integral to successfully meeting our landscaping needs. Monoculture, as in a lawn of one type of grass, is not a recipe for supporting the soil food web that Debra



Lyreleaf sage dormant rosette

Caldwell so eloquently taught us in the January Green Thumb Lecture. If you missed it, I highly recommend listening to the recording and reading her article in last month's *Urban Dirt*.

S. lyrata is a magnet for butterflies, hummingbirds, and other pollinators. It is also a larval host for the caterpillars of several butterflies and moths. Once the blooms have gone to seed, it can be either mowed or mulched-in-place, or as some refer to the technique-chop & drop. This returns the nutrients to the soil, decreasing the fertilization needs of your lawn or garden. The lack of synthetic chemicals the many-cides (herb, fungal, & insect) and decreased compaction of the soil due to less or no heavy machinery and foot traffic all add up to healthier soil. Healthier soil means healthier plants, and if you're like me, a happier gardener!

One of its common names, Cancer Weed, comes from its history of the root being ground and used in a salve for many ailments, including skin cancer. No research has confirmed any cancer fighting or cancer-causing substances in *S. lyrata*. However, the entire plant is edible. Its leaves can be brewed as tea or added to a salad.

Please drop by any Monday or Wednesday morning at the Genoa Friendship Garden and I'll be thrilled to show you this lovely plant in the new Native Plant Landscaping bed. I have it covering the bed directly in front of the Little Bluestem and Rattlesnake-master. Now that plants and seeds are in the ground, I am excited for spring to come. Next month I encourage you to join me as I talk about the benefits of growing native plants at the Green Thumb Lecture Series. It should be fun!

Getting Down to Earth

Article and photos by Pam Longley, Master Gardener

News from Genoa Friendship Gardens

The gardens suffered a lot of freeze damage but little green shoots saying “I’m still alive!” are visible already. We are preparing for the February tomato plant sale and the 500 starts in the greenhouse are beautiful and we had an outstanding germination rate. We will also be ordering more for a total of about 1,000.

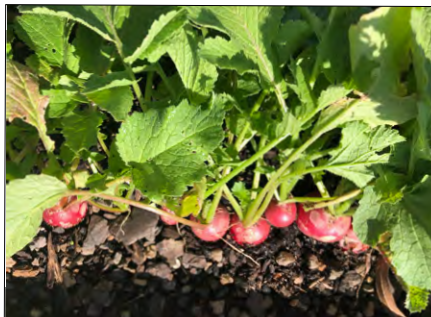
Our volunteers who heard **Janis Teas** at the January First Tuesday meeting said that she spoke about the citrus canker quarantine in the Harris and Fort Bend County areas. A search of GFG’s address showed that we are in the zone. Our fruit tree sale in March will not contain any citrus. The quarantine requires that no citrus trees can be taken out of a quarantined area, and we are obligated to follow Texas Department of Agriculture instructions. So, we will sell more berry trees, avocados, peaches and possibly grape vines. However, our Northwest plant sales will have citrus trees.

Robin Yates obtained a Native Black Cherry Tree and it will be planted near the GFG entrance in memory of **Georgia Lau**, who passed away last year and was a long-time GFG volunteer.

Seen at GFG:



Christa Kaiser surveying the Rose Garden



Our lovely little Cherry Belle radishes

I have never seen so many toasty brown bushes and shrubs in my life as after the Christmas freeze! Any of you that are looking for a super hardy replacement for some of yours might consider the *Distylium* (winter-hazel or Hamamolidaceae). I have seen it called “The Best Little Shrub You Never Heard Of”. The variety I bought at Cornelius Nursery on Voss is called “Blue Cascade.” I have 2 that I planted after Winter Storm Uri and they had not one single bit of freeze damage, and they just started putting out tiny maroon flowers at mid-January. It will flower until the end of March. They will grow to three feet high and four feet wide at full maturity. Light requirements range from full sun to part shade and it is disease resistant as well as heat and drought tolerant. A real winner!!



Distylium flowers



Distylium shrub, Blue Cascade in my garden

cont'd on pg. 13

Getting Down to Earth, cont'd from pg. 12

Article and photos by Dale Hudson, Master Gardener

Christ the Good Shepherd Garden - Spring, TX

Good bye 2022. Hello 2023!

Man, were we ever happy to rip off that December page from our calendar. All the volunteers at CGS Garden swore that they were good boys and girls last year, but that didn't stop Santa, a.k.a.



Love it or hate it, kale transplants rule the CGS greenhouse in January.

Mother Nature, from dropping a 15° F lump of ice in our stocking for Christmas. No worries; our gardeners answered the call for all hands on deck and we covered everything growing with either leaf mulch or heavy mil plastic sheeting. Additionally, a quick harvest of anything we couldn't cover was a welcome surprise at the area pantries just before the holidays.

I'm pleased to report that everything we protected survived. Even the young broccoli transplants in the TX AgriLife trial, some with only two true leaves, survived. They along with the onions, carrots, and kale all sat in shock for about a week after we uncovered them, but then they charged off into the new year.



Hard to believe. These broccoli starts for the TXAgriLife trial survived the December freeze with only two true leaves, but are determined to complete their mission



Team leader Brenda Fabian directs MG Jack Goodwin and volunteers Charlie Dorchak and Amy Vross in planting the kale from the greenhouse

Admittedly, this is a slow month for our garden. Sadly, we just don't have much we can harvest and share with our partners at the pantries. For the CGS volunteers however, this is the time we upgrade our facilities, make repairs where needed, and focus our efforts in the greenhouse and the composting area as we prepare to launch the Spring season. Ever optimistic, we already have February 20th penciled in on our calendars as the last frost day. Wish us luck.

'BUG' OF THE MONTH

Fleas

by Lynetta Freeman, DVM, MS, Master Gardener intern

“Why an article on fleas?”, you ask. After all, fleas feed on mammals, not plants! Gardeners may encounter fleas while working outside. Fleas are crafty little creatures. The adult fleas sense movement or vibration. That lets them know there is a potential blood meal available in the neighborhood and they emerge from their cocoon. They then use their powerful legs to hop onto their prey. Gardeners may get flea bites around the ankles and lower legs. These bites are usually nothing more than an “irritation”, but sadly, fleas can transmit diseases to pets and people. So, it’s helpful to know a little bit about the flea and it’s lifecycle to decrease your chances of being attacked and to know what to do if you do encounter fleas in the garden, on your pets, or worse yet, in your home.

While there are many types of fleas, the most common type on domesticated animals and people is the cat flea (*Ctenocephalides felis*) (Fig. 1). According to information from the CDC, the cat flea can transmit the plague virus (although thankfully for us, it doesn’t do as well as fleas on ground squirrels) and cat scratch



Fig. 1 *Ctenocephalides felis*

disease. The dog flea (*Ctenocephalides canis*) (Fig. 2) is less common, but both dog and cat fleas act as an intermediate host and aid in spreading tapeworm. As you can see from the photos, both types of fleas are 3-4 mm long, both have powerful legs for jumping, and “whiskers” on the legs that allow them to embed in hair, however, the mouthparts of the two fleas are different.



Fig. 2 *Ctenocephalides canis*

Flea Bites

The mouthparts of adult fleas are adapted to puncture the skin. Although fleas prefer animals, people can also be bitten. The bites usually occur on the feet and legs and appear as a red spots with a white center with a single puncture point that distinguishes it from other insect bites. Usually, the reaction is a mild redness in people. Dogs, however, can develop a severe allergy to flea bites that results in massive scratching, redness, and loss of hair, which requires treatment by a veterinarian.

Flea Life Cycle

There are four stages in the life cycle: eggs, larva, pupa and adult. It can take from as little as 20 to 35 days to five or more months to complete the entire life cycle. In Texas, fleas are active year-round, although they may be more noticed in spring and summer. Because of the flea’s life cycle, a single treatment is usually not effective at eliminating an infestation and multiple treatments or chemicals with residual action may be required.

After biting a person or animal and taking in a blood meal, adult fleas mate and begin laying eggs. The eggs hatch in 1-10 days, depending on environmental conditions such as temperature and humidity. The fleas then enter their larval stage. Larvae are free moving and feed on blood and flea feces (“flea dirt”), to continue their development. (If the larvae should happen to feed

cont'd on pg. 15

Fleas, cont'd from pg. 14

on a tapeworm egg sac, the flea becomes infected with tapeworms. Then when a dog or a child eats the flea, they become infected with tapeworms.) Within 5-20 days the larvae then will spin a cocoon and enter the pupa stage. The cocoon protects pupa from environmental conditions and insecticides/repellents until adult fleas are ready to emerge. When there is a clear presence of a host, such as vibration, movement or body heat that signals a blood meal readily available, the adults will emerge from the cocoon. The adults will then feed on the unsuspecting host and the cycle begins again.

Fleas don't survive well in sunny lawns. Low relative humidity and soil temperatures above 95° F kills flea larve, so fleas are usually found in moist, shady spots near pet bedding areas or near damp, cool floors, cracks, and crevices. Indoors, fleas are found on pets and pet bedding. They can gain access to the home through pets or by "hitching a ride" on people. Fleas can be found in rugs, furniture, and in cracks and crevices in the home. For this reason, one may consider not purchasing used bedding, rugs, or upholstered furniture.

Control

The best way to prevent fleas is to keep pets free of fleas. Fortunately, there are several good products available for preventing and eliminating fleas on pets. The citations listed below contain information on these products, how they are applied, and their effectiveness. Consult your veterinarian for the most appropriate treatment for your pet, as they will know which products perform best in your region.

In some cases, it may be necessary to treat the interior of the home and yard. Begin by washing pet bedding, vacuuming

thoroughly, and be sure to discard the vacuum bag. Vacuuming removes the eggs, larvae, and pupae developing in the home. It also stimulates the fleas to emerge from the cocoon and raises the carpet nap to allow better penetration of the insecticide down to where the fleas are living. Decide if you want to hire a professional or do your own treatment. Many of the commercially available insecticides are a combination of a product to kill the adult fleas and an insect growth regulator that keeps the eggs and larvae from developing. Always read and follow the directions on the container and be sure to dispose of the container properly when finished. Depending on the product, it may be necessary to do one or more follow-up treatments. If you decide to work with a pest control company, ask them to use the least toxic materials necessary.

For the gardener, preventing flea bites is important. When cleaning up a rodent or flea infested area, the CDC website contains information on flea repellents and a link to the Environmental Protection Agency web site to help you find a product that will best suit your need. The CDC also recommends wearing gloves, long-sleeve clothing, long socks, and pants to minimize exposure to bites. There are instructions for treating clothing with products containing 0.5% permethrin for extra assurance when working in rodent infested areas that may be harboring the plague.

The references listed below contain more information about fleas and their prevention and treatment. Be sure to read and follow all directions to ensure the safest outcome for people and pets.

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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 planet shares 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.

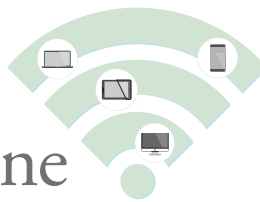
Our Team was excited to begin work sessions to prepare “grab and go” bags for the upcoming plant sales and other events for February and March. We are gathering and “bagging up” all of the supplies needed for children to make pinecone bird feeders and Chia garden gnomes over the coming weeks.

We were delighted to join other Master Gardeners and AgriLife Extension Agents at the MLK Peace through Pies celebration. This was a large, well attended community event and we provided a seed planting opportunity, a chance for children to share their plants with one another, and a brief lesson about “how seeds grow into plants.” We worked along side the Diversity, Equity and Inclusiveness Committee that encouraged children to think about how we can make our world better. Each child received a “hands” folder to decorate, open and add their personal answer to this question. Master Gardeners and Interns contributing their thoughtfulness, knowledge and creativity to this event were: Connie Bihner, Marcia Braschayko, Vicki Brooks Deepali Cykowski, Celeste Germany, Karen Hayes, Allen Hentges, Ana Jaramillo, Julee Jackson, Pam Jackson, Toni Lawrence, Stephanie McIntyre, Linda Persse, Jacque Tatum, Jarvis Taylor, Rita Whipple and Pat Whipple.



Patrick Ripple, Pam Jackson, Julee Jackson and Connie Bihner getting Chias together.





Ask A Master Gardener Online

by Master Gardeners Lisa Rawl, Debra Caldwell, and Caroline O'Hara

Q: I have always wanted to start my own seeds indoors. I am a (fairly) successful gardener, but am a TOTAL failure when it comes to starting seeds indoors. Whenever I start seeds in seed trays, I end up with spindly plants that ultimately fail. I know I am doing something (several things) wrong, but I'll be darned if I can figure it out. I would love some guidance. I am attaching a couple photos of this year's failure. I would love some input/redirect.

While my ultimate goal is to start my own tomatoes and peppers, this run was lettuce, spinach and onions. I planted them in my planters and they came up beautifully. I started them on my back patio since we were still having warm weather. When the threat of cold was eminent, I moved them inside. I have a blue/pink grow light (hence the eerie purple glow in the photos). The first couple days I had it on a 12-hour timer...by the end of day 2/3, all plants looked devastated. I switched to six hours of light but I don't know if I cooked the plants or what. Again, I just don't seem to have a clue what to do starting seeds. Thanks in advance for your guidance!



A: Thank you for the question about your seedlings. I'm so sorry to hear that you haven't been successful in growing seedlings—that must be frustrating.

Many factors affect growth of plants including water, oxygen, temperature, light and soil (or starting mix). Based on your photos, I don't think your seedlings are getting enough light. Light usually isn't needed for germination but is necessary after the shoot breaks the surface and begins to photosynthesize. Low light levels cause the stems to grow in a desperate search for more light which results in tall, spindly, weak plants. There are several types of light systems that people use, but they all provide strong light for many hours. I use fluorescent lights that are about three inches above the surface of the soil as seedlings germinate. As seedlings grow, I move the lights to a point just above the tops of the seedlings. I also leave my lights on 16 hours per day. Too much light will make the seedlings look brown and dry as though they have been burned. This Earth-Kind publication is about starting seedlings indoors (<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/landscape/starting-seedlings-at-home/>). This article focuses on the importance of light (<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/news/yard-and-garden-starting-seeds-indoors-under-lights>).

A second possibility is that your seedlings are damping off, a disease caused by fungi. Seedlings may seem to be healthy one day and suddenly keel over. To prevent damping off, use sterile potting mix and clean pots and trays with a 1 part bleach to 9 parts water solution. Be sure there is good air circulation and water from the bottom to avoid getting water on leaves. You can use a heat mat to provide warm temperatures (70-75 degrees) to speed germination. This article has more information about damping off (<https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/damping/>). We hope you will have more success and please contact us again if we can help you in the future.

cont'd on pg. 18

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 February

Sat., Feb. 4 **Mercer Botanic Gardens**, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338 – 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Urban Harvest, 2752 Buffalo Speedway Houston, Texas 77027 – 8:00 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Sat., Feb. 11 **Tomball Farmers Market**, 205 West Main St., Tomball, 77375 – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Thurs., Feb. 16 **Westchase Farmers Market**, 10503 Westheimer Rd., Houston, 77042 – 3 to 7 p.m.

Sat., Feb. 18 **Mercer Botanic Gardens**, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338 – 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Towne Lake Farmer's Market, 9955 Barker Cypress Rd., Cypress, 77433 – 9:30 a.m to 1:30 p.m

Sat., Feb. 25 **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!

Ask a Master Gardener Online, *cont'd from pg. 17*

Q: I have 3 avocado seeds - can they be planted now?

A: Thank you for your email. Do you know which variety of avocado your seeds came from? If they are from the grocery store, they are probably from Haas avocado trees that grow in southern California where it rarely freezes. Mature Haas avocados can withstand temperatures as low as 28° F, but young plants are less cold tolerant. Our recent freeze would kill a Haas tree. You will have to keep the trees in a container and protect them by keeping them in a greenhouse or indoors during cold weather.

The best varieties for Texas are the Mexican type avocados, because they are more cold tolerant. The following site has a publication about sprouting avocado seeds (<https://hort-news.extension.iastate.edu/1999/7-16-1999/sproutav.html>)

The time you start the seeds doesn't matter as long as they are in a warm area indoors. After they sprout, they should be in a spot with enough light for the seedlings to grow. Here is a publication with more information about growing avocados (<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/homefruit/avocado/avocado2.html>). You will find another fact sheet at the following link (<https://counties.agrilife.org/galveston/files/2012/03/Fruit-Nut-Production-Avocados.pdf>). Thanks for using the Master Gardener hotline. Please contact us if you have additional questions.

Grapefruit

by Karen Shook, Master Gardener

Grapefruit, a family favorite since we picked our first Ruby Red from a backyard tree 20 years ago, originated as an accidental hybrid between the pummelo and the orange. The generally accepted botanical name is *Citrus X paradisi*.

The grapefruit was first described in 1750 as the “forbidden fruit” of Barbados. Commercial development in the US began in Florida in the late 1800’s. By 1910, grapefruit had become an important commercial crop in the Rio Grande Valley and to some extent in Arizona and California. Commercial production continued to grow and has developed in Jamaica, Trinidad, Brazil, Israel, Mexico and other countries.

Grapefruit trees grow well in warm, subtropical climates and can be grown in cold hardiness zones 8 B to 11. Hot days and warm to hot nights result in higher sugars and lower acids than grapefruit produced in cooler night temperatures. Ideal annual rainfall for grapefruit is 36 to 44 inches evenly distributed through the year, a good fit with Houston’s mean annual rainfall of 48 inches spread fairly evenly across the year.

Grapefruit trees are at risk and should be protected when temperatures are in the mid 20’s ° F. Keep in mind that duration of cold temperatures, health of the tree, and age of the tree are factors in cold hardiness.

A grapefruit tree is typically 15 to 20 ft tall, although taller is possible, with 6-to-8-inch trunk and a 10 to 15 ft spread. The fruit grows in clusters, similar to grapes. Most varieties will be ripe in November to December. While many sources say quality improves with later harvest, late harvesting may reduce the following years crop. My personal experience with leaving some on the tree into March wasn’t positive. We harvest in December. Any citrus can be grown in a container, but grapefruits are very vigorous and will outgrow even large containers. Expect a better result by planting in ground.

Two popular varieties for the Houston area are Rio Red and Bloomsweet.

Rio Red is a cross between a pummelo and a sweet orange. Fruits are large with a smooth, thin, yellow rind that blushes red

when mature in mid to late November.

The fruit is sweet, seedless (or few seeds), juicy, and low acid. The pulp and flesh are deep red.

Rio Red trees tend to produce at an early age and are reported to be heavy bearing in alternate years.

Bloomsweet, also known as Kinkoji, is reported to be a cross between a pummelo and a mandarin. They are slightly more cold hardy than most grapefruit and may be okay with temperatures in the mid to high teens. The fruits are yellow-orange, the flesh is pale, juicy, and sweet. While different sources report thin skin or moderately thick skin, all say they are easy to peel and segment. Bloomsweet ripens in November to December.



Rio Red

Photo courtesy Fast-Growing-Trees.com



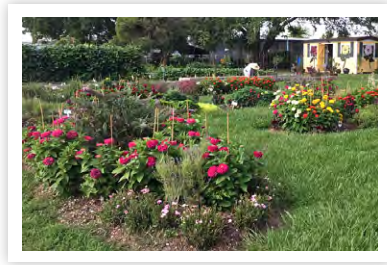
Bloomsweet

Photo courtesy discountreesofbrenham.com/nursery/fruit/citrus/grapefruit

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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.

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

Home Grown
Lecture Series
2023

05
JAN

10:00 - 11:00 AM

Groundcovers for the Landscape

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

02
FEB

10:00 - 11:00 AM

Backyard Poultry Fundamentals

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

02
MAR

10:00 - 11:00 AM

Top "T" Questions: Tomatoes, Turf & Trees

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

Lectures are free & presented on Microsoft
Teams. Please register at:

<http://HomeGrown2023A.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.

McGovern Centennial Gardens at Hermann Park

**1500 Hermann Drive
Houston, Texas 77004**

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.

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 – <i>Soil and Food Web</i> | June 12 – <i>Pollinator Gardening</i> |
| February 13 – <i>Spring Vegetable Gardening</i> | July 10 – <i>Fall Vegetable Gardening</i> |
| March 20 – <i>Benefits of Growing Native Plants</i> | August 14 – <i>Exploring Ethnic Vegetables</i> |
| April 10 – <i>Tips for Great Lawns</i> | September 11 – <i>Growing Roses in Texas</i> |
| May 8 – <i>Gardening with Less Water</i> | October 9 – <i>Trees and Tree Care</i> |

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

- | | |
|---|--|
| January 17 – <i>Soil and Food Web</i> | June 20 – <i>Pollinator Gardening</i> |
| February 21 – <i>Spring Vegetable Gardening</i> | July 18 – <i>Fall Vegetable Gardening</i> |
| March 21 – <i>Benefits of Growing Native Plants</i> | August 15 – <i>Exploring Ethnic Vegetables</i> |
| April 18 – <i>Tips for Great Lawns</i> | September 19 – <i>Growing Roses in Texas</i> |
| May 16 – <i>Gardening with Less Water</i> | October 17 – <i>Trees and Tree Care</i> |



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.



MG of the Month - *Bev DeMoss*

by Karen Breneman, Master Gardener

Congratulations! Bev DeMoss, a 2008 graduate, is from Washington state and spent 10 years in Minden in northern Nevada. She moved to Houston 32 years ago and worked as a Community Manager. She currently works at Quilts



Bev DeMoss

Inc where she has worked since moving to Houston.

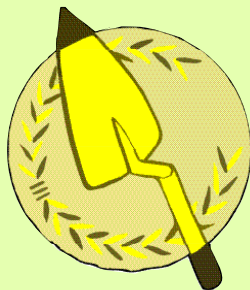
Bev has always loved to grow plants and work in the yard when not square dancing which she has enjoyed for 20 years.

Bev has served on the Genoa Friendship Gardens (GFG) Steering Committee and helped with the Green Thumb lectures. She

built the first cylinder GFG demo garden and designed and built the landscape beds at the GFG front gate. Bev also ran the the hospitality services for the GFG sales for several years, as well as helping with several Master Gardener classes. She has been running the Master Gardener store for nine years and is currently also on the Membership committee.

Thank you Bev for all you do.

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.

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

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



For Harris County Master Gardeners Only!

February 25th
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>

If you would like to receive new editions of the *Urban Dirt* newsletter each month, please add your name to the mailing list [HERE](#).




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

**Alexa Haass, Vicki Harbers, James Kingsbury,
Stephanie McIntyre, Daniel Scott, Robbie Sharp,
Susan Visinsky-Bracken, Any Wadivkar**

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/											
Planting times are for seeds unless otherwise noted	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
[English](#) [Spanish/Espanol](#)



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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 the 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