

Urban Dirt

Gardening Events and Information for Texans

Edimentals, My Dear

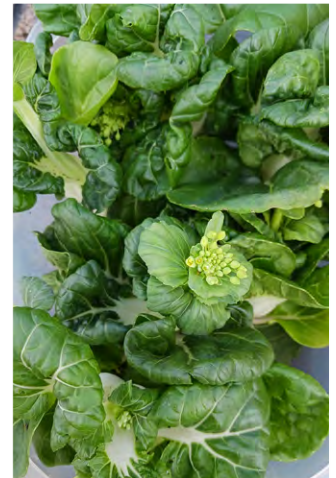
Article and photos by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

Edimental. I'm not sure who coined the word, but now that I've heard it I am not likely to forget it. The word is a fusion of two words, edible and ornamental. Edimentals are plants that are edible as well as being attractive. An edimental bed is planted for beauty and nourishment. There is also the hope that Home Owner Associations (HOAs) might be a little more lenient in regards to gardeners who plant edimental gardens in their front yard.

There are many types of foods a gardener can place in an edimental bed. There are herbal edimentals, vegetable edimentals, fruit edimental beds or a combination of any of the above. We have so many plant varieties available to us that it's only natural that some plants can be edible and beautiful. Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder and edible gardens naturally draw your eye to them. The fact that they can be harvested and eaten is a plus. You can select perennial edimentals or annual edimentals or a combination. The choices are unlimited. There are also "theme" edimental gardens you can plant. One of my favorites is a pizza edimental bed suggested by Cheryl Beesley in her book *Landscaping with Edible Plants in Texas*. Imagine a bed edged with variegated thyme and filled with spicy globe basil, pesto perpetuo basil, dark opal

basil, garlic, onions, oregano, and various peppers. I can practically smell the pizza already! The color combos would be fantastic.

Another edimental bed that comes to mind would be a bed with vegetables or spices used in Asian cooking. Hedou tiny bok choy used as a border, ginger root, some chijimisai and lemon grass. Chijimisai is a hybrid green I fell in love with last winter. It is offered from Baker Creek like the Hedou tiny bok choy. It is a cross of tatsoi and komatsuna and is loaded with vitamin A. Chijimisai is velvety and can be grown year round as long as the weather is not extremely hot. I will be starting some soon because while I grew it last winter, I want to see if it can handle any Texas heat. It can be eaten raw or cooked. I enjoyed mine both ways and loved it. It has a taste similar to spinach. I used



Hedou tiny bok choy

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

UPCOMING EVENTS - MAY 2023

Educational Programs

May 2, First Tuesday Cancelled for this month due to conflict with Texas Master Gardener Annual Conference.

Speaker's Bureau

May 9, 11:00 a.m., *Turf* by Debra Caldwell, Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Rd, Cypress 77433

May 10, 10:30 a.m., *Composting* by Teresa See, Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr, Houston 77042

May 12, 1:30 p.m., *Composting* by Teresa See, Fonteno Senior Education Center, 6600 Bissonnet St, Houston 77074

May 18, 11:00 a.m., *Organic Gardening* by Jean Fefer, Glazier Senior Education Center, 16600 Pine Forest Lane, Houston 77084

Green Thumb Gardening Series

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

Gardening with Less Water

May 8, 10 - 11:30 a.m. For the HCC program, register in advance to receive the link: hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops

May 16, 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. Simply visit the Harris County Public Library System. No reservation required. Watch on Facebook – [facebook.com/harriscountyp/live](https://www.facebook.com/harriscountyp/live)

Pop Up Close Out Spring Plant Sale !!!

We've reopened the online HGMGA shop through May 11th - <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/shop/>

May 13, 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at the Genoa Friendship Gardens greenhouse is pick up day for this sale. 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston 77034

Open Garden Day at Genoa Friendship Gardens

May 15, 8:30 - 11 a.m. If you missed our sales or just want one (or more!) plant, here's your opportunity! Remaining plant inventory will be available for sale in the greenhouse. The garden is open to tour and master gardeners will be available to answer gardening questions. And, visit the *Ask a Master Gardener* table for additional gardening information. 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston 77034

Youth Activities

GPN - Look for the **Growing with Plants and Nature** table at the following farmers markets:

May 20, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., Towne Lake Farmers Market; 9955 Barker Cypress Rd., Cypress 77433

JUNE 2023

Educational Program

June 6, First Tuesday, General meeting: 11:00 a.m., Speaker: 11:30, Topic: *Stop the spread! Identifying, reporting, and stopping invasive species with Texasinvasives.org* by Ashley Morgan-Olvera, M.S – Director of Research and Education for Texasinvasives.org

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
13105 Northwest Freeway, Suite 1000
Houston, TX 77040 713.274.0950

CEA – Horticulture
Brandi Keller - Brandi.Keller@ag.tamu.edu
Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator
Vacant



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Urban Dirt Editor

Carolyn Boyd
UrbanDirt.harrishort@gmail.com

Assistant Urban Dirt Editor

Terri Simon

Edimentals, cont'd from pg. 1

it raw in salads and even threw a few shredded leaves in my scrambled eggs. The Hedou tiny bok choy is adorable and delicious and I used it in a big batch of wonton soup. That one's definitely a keeper. Small, round, purple Vietnamese eggplants contribute to a beautiful bed. Cilantro works well in this garden bed as well.

Herbs also brighten up an edimental bed. I have already mentioned variegated thyme draped along the border. Pesto pertuo basil is my all time favorite basil I grow every year. It is not available in seed form because it is sterile. I grow several types of basil every year because I love it.



Chujimisai



Pesto pertuo basil

Holy basil, Everleaf Thai towers, dark opal purple, Chinese sweet, Genovese, lettuce leaf, purple ruffle basil and cardinal basil are a few varieties I am growing this year. Cardinal basil is not only edible but it is a show stopper in the bed and can be used for cut flowers. Prostrate rosemary, Arp, Gorizia, salem and barbecue rosemary are a few of my favorites I

have grown in the past and are perfect for an herbal bed. I am fond of barbecue rosemary because it has stems that can be used for barbecuing. Oregano, variegated thyme, parsley, lemon balm, chamomile, lemon grass, chives, cilantro, dill, stevia, Mexican mint marigold and fennel work great in an herbal bed. A new oregano hybrid called "Drops of Jupiter" is out and it is stunning. Bronze fennel with its coppery,



Dark opal purple basil

Photo courtesy Seed Savers Exchange

feathery fronds that sway gently in a breeze can be included. It's on my favorites list.

Don't forget you can have a fruit edimental in your yard. Strawberries, blueberries, dewberries or blackberries are perfect for children. Trees can also be included in landscap-



Artichoke heart flower

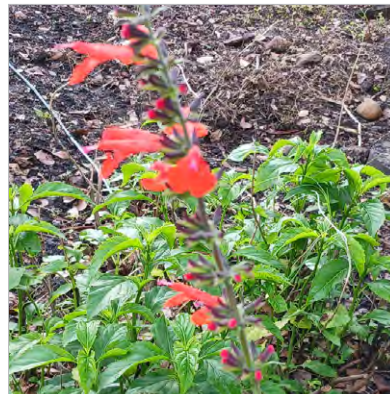
ing. Citrus trees can provide fruit and the scent from citrus flowers is wonderful. Fig, apple, plum, mulberry and others look great in landscapes. One tree I see frequently in front yards around town is a loquat tree. They are prolific and can be eaten out of hand or baked. They can also be canned into preserves, jelly or jam.

According to the Juniper Level Botanic Garden blog, when using edimentals, make sure you eat the correct part of the plant. Research the plant before eating it. Seeds, seed oil, roots, stems, bulbs, bark, pith, leaves, fruits, pollen, nectar, flowers, flower buds and fruits are all considered plant parts. Some parts may be consumed, but not others. Never consume plants that have recently



Garlic

been sprayed. Always refer to the package insert of the product you are using before consuming any part of the plant. One good reference for the edimentals is the "Plants for a Future" website, www.pfaf.org. The main reference I used for this article is Cheryl Beesley's book I listed above. If you feel you have an outstanding "edimental" please submit it to us at the *Urban Dirt*. You are entitled to bragging rights.



Pineapple sage

NATIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH

Pigeonberry (*Rivina humilis*)

Article and photos by Robin Yates, Master Gardener

It is no surprise to anyone that it is warming up. As I write this, we are topping out at 90° F, and that is my cue to be looking for the shade! Having grown up in northwest Iowa, with blizzards that can kill, I love our weather here on the Gulf Coast of Texas. Yet, I find myself less tolerant of the extreme heat through much of our summer. So, as I head for the shade, why don't we talk about some shade tolerant native groundcovers? All the ones we have looked at so far this year do their best in full sun. I have spent a lot of time in the last six years looking for turf grass alternatives, which requires plants that can withstand the brutal Southeast Texas summer sun. Some, such as Frogfruit, Lyreleaf Sage, and Corpus Christi Fleabane will grow in part shade, although you may find growth to be slower, and blooms may be less than those in full sun.

If you have visited the Genoa Friendship Gardens (GFG), you may have viewed the beautiful perennial garden led by Michelle Getz. There is an area in the shade of the large oak tree that is populated by Pigeonberry, *Rivina humilis*, our native plant of the

month. Pigeonberry is a perennial herb in the Phytolaccaceae or Pokeweed family. It typically grows to one foot tall below trees and shrubs. It prefers moist, well-drained soil in part shade. It has a beautiful white to pink bloom on the last one to two inches of the stems. It blooms



Pigeonberry

from March to October, and produces fruit, a bright red, sometimes translucent berry simultaneously.

The berries have been used in cosmetics, thus one of its common names is Rouge Plant. But caution is advised, as the leaves and berries are toxic to humans. Birds adore the berries, so you can take comfort in the fact that you are providing for the sustenance of our songbirds, even if you cannot use them for jam.

One of the many things I love about gardening, is the sharing of plants. I encourage you to come and volunteer at GFG if you haven't already. By helping Michelle one day in the perennial bed, I came home with some Pigeonberry seedlings to plant in my front yard. Now I am learning how it gets along with Corpus Christi Fleabane below my American Beautyberry and Buttonbush. I will have more to say as they grow and merge into the same space. I enjoy these types of botanical experiments that benefit nature, and my landscape, and enable me to pass on what I learned to you, my friends! Next month we will look at another of my favorite native plants that makes a great shade tolerant groundcover. Until then, happy gardening!



Pigeonberry blooms

Master Gardener Awards Luncheon

The Master Gardener Awards luncheon was held on April 4th. The following is a listing of the awards and the recipients.

The luncheon was held at Trini Mendenhall community center and catered by Benjamin Sunderland, Harris County Master Gardener Intern. He created a delicious salad bar. Drinks and dessert were provided by the Hospitality committee. Approximately sixty volunteers attended the event.

The feeling at the event was one that everyone was happy to be together and enjoyed sharing the results of the hard work of the volunteers who help keep the organization functioning by providing gardening information to the public. Thank you to all who helped with the luncheon.

Annual awards for 2022

Honorary Life Membership for Past President

Jonathan Correia

New Master Gardener award for up to 3 years following graduation

Valerie Depew

*Outstanding volunteer award
200 hours plus impact*

Rick Castagno

*Meritorious service award,
committees choice for members
who have shown exceptional work*

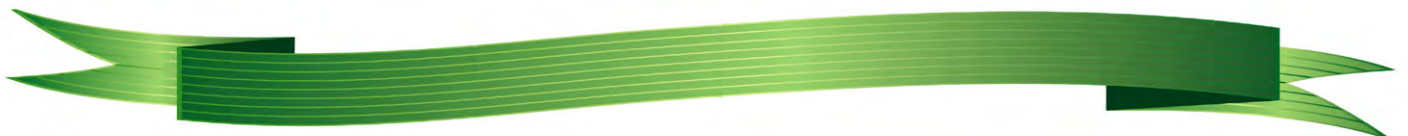
**Debra Caldwell, Karen Kabacinski,
George Kabacinski, Jim Rath,
Mary Stokman**

*Volunteer of the year volunteer with
the most volunteer hours*

Carolyn Boyd

*Lifetime Achievement Award
10 years of service and impact*

Karen Breneman



HCMGA Thanks You for Your Support!

“Close-Out” Plant Sale online for May 13th pickup AND Open Garden Day, May 15th at Genoa Friendship Gardens

by Carolyn Boyd, HCMGA President

The Harris County Master Gardener Association thanks every customer that attended our sales, either on-line or in person! Plant sales are our primary source of fundraising and are conducted entirely by Master Gardener volunteers. The funds we raise are used to support Texas A&M AgriLife Extension in its educational mission to bring relevant, research-based information about horticulture to the public.

Speaking of sales! In case you want just one more plant (or two!) we may have exactly what you need! Go online - <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/shop> through May 11th for our *Close Out* sale. Pick up day is Saturday, May 13th. Remaining inventory will also be available on Open Garden Day, May 15th, 8:30 - 11:00 a.m. at Genoa Friendship Gardens, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., 77034. We hope to see you then!

Plant varieties, including the following will be offered:

All 1 gal Perennials, \$8

Artemesia, Powis Castle
Coreopsis, Dwarf
Coreopsis, Early Sunrise
Duranta, White
False Indigo
Firespike, Lavender
Gaura, Sparkler White
Hibiscus, Luna Rose
Hibiscus, Luna White
Honeysuckle, Purple Leaf
Iris, Black Gamecock
Iris, Burgundy
Iris, Laura Louise
Lily of the Valley
Rudbeckia, Goldsturm
Salvia, Cherry Chief
Salvia, May Night
Salvia, Radio Red
Salvia, Raspberry Autumn Sage
Salvia, Skyscraper Orange

All 1 gal Trees, \$10

Tree, Parsley Hawthorn
Tree, Two Winged Silverbell

All 2 gal Perennials, \$18

Gerbera Daisy, Sweet Love
Gerbera Daisy, Sweet Sixteen
Gerbera Daisy, Sweet Vibe

All 3 gal Perennials, \$24

Beautyberry, American
Bottle Brush, Little John
Bromeliad, Hardy
Rose, Belinda's Dream
Rose, Cinco de Mayo
Rose, Coral Drift
Rose, White Ice Cap
Vitex, Montrose

All 4" Bedding, \$2

Begonia, Cocktail Gin
Begonia, Cocktail Whiskey
Coreopsis, Early Sunrise
Coreopsis, Nanna
Coreopsis, Sunfire
Coreopsis, Sunkiss
Iris, Sinfonietta Blue
Iris, Wine Country
Rudbeckia, Goldsturm
Rudbeckia, Indian Summer
Verbena, Colonial White

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/

Log on to listen to a recent interview with Master Gardener volunteer Rick Castagno. He shares his experiences at Houston demonstration gardens, and a few stories of what's been grown in the vegetable beds.





May Gardening Calendar

by Karen Shook, Master Gardener

May reminds us why we need to get our gardening advice from local sources. We are preparing for the start of summer and harvesting from our spring gardens. For our Northern friends, it is time for spring planting.

While it “feels” like we’ve had lots of rain this year, through March we are about three inches below normal. The May forecasts

Perennials and Ornamental Grasses

- Continue deadheading (remove spent blooms). If blooms start to dwindle, consider cutting back by 1/3. Fertilize and water after cutting.
- Fertilize your perennial beds.
- Ornamental grasses can be planted through summer.
- Divide chrysanthemums late April, early May.
- Perennials that can stand our summer heat can be planted in May.

Annuals

- Clean out cool season annual beds, plant warm season annuals. Most transplants benefit from addition of compost to the soil at planting time.
- Cut back petunias by 1/3. Fertilize and water.
- Feed your annuals every 4 to 6 weeks.

Bulbs

- Cut back yellow foliage of spring flowering bulbs. But not until yellow or brown color tells you the bulbs have replenished stored reserves. Dig, and reset the bulbs if desired.
- Fertilize bulbs as needed to encourage vigorous growth.
- Cannas and agapanthus are examples of summer bulbs that can be planted now. My cannas have been blooming and brightening the yard.

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

I look at say to expect near historic averages in May (five inches of rainfall, 77° F average temperatures.)

Pests may be enjoying your plants as much as you are. Some damage is inevitable, but watch and limit (pick them off, spray them off).

Hurricane season is coming June 1. Now is the time to make sure trees are trimmed, no dead branches are waiting to fall.

Roses

- In your morning garden rounds, cut some roses (to first leaf with five leaflets) to enjoy indoors.
- Continue to spray for blackspot, powdery mildew, aphids, etc., every seven to ten days through November. Fertilize every four to eight weeks (some sources say four weeks, others say eight weeks, so I say depending on health of the rose).

Shrubs/Trees

- Prune spring flowering shrubs after they finish flowering. Azaleas are probably finished.
- Other shrubs can be lightly pruned to shape.
- Keep mulch several inches thick.
- Fertilize camellias (lightly).

Lawns

- We are probably well into mowing season. Mow when grass height is 1/3 more than you want (don't cut more than 1/3 height each mowing).
- Fill low areas with soil similar to native soil.
- It is probably your last chance to apply broadleaf weed killer before it is too hot. Check the labels!

Groundcovers and Vines

- Watch for snails, slugs in low growing groundcovers.
- Dig and divide established ground covers

Vines

- Prune spring vines after they finish flowering. Snip back, wind vines through support to keep looking neat.

Edibles (vegetables, herbs, berries, fruits)

- Harvest and enjoy (I hope!)
- See the following link for recommended planting times:

[Harris County Vegetable Planting Guide](#)

HERB OF THE MONTH

Marjoram (*Origanum majorana*)

by Karen McGowan, Master Gardener

Last month, cumin held the distinction as April's featured herb, the first in our new drought-tolerant Mediterranean herb series. For the second herb selection in the series, May's profiled herb is marjoram, also referred to as "sweet marjoram".

Unlike cumin, which is an annual, marjoram in warmer climates is a perennial herb, and is believed to have originated in Greece and southern Turkey. Today, Egypt is the major exporter of marjoram, and it is cultivated worldwide. Marjoram in appearance is close to that of oregano's and is closely related to it; however, marjoram offers a sweet flavor profile in contrast to the spicy one of oregano. The two herbs are frequently paired together, to great piquant success; the sweet pine and citrus flavors of marjoram contrast well with the warm spiciness of oregano.

The ancient Greeks and Romans held marjoram to be a symbol of happiness, and one of the cultural practices of these societies entailed weaving marjoram into garlands worn by both brides and grooms, which

was believed to ensure marital bliss. Other uses of marjoram in antiquity included the Greeks' planting marjoram on the graves of their beloved in the belief that by doing so, the deceased would enjoy eternal peace and happiness. Hippocrates ascribed several medical uses to marjoram, and the herb was one of the herbs and spices used by the ancient Egyptians in the embalming process.

A member of the mint (*Lamiaceae*) family, marjoram is grown for a multitude of culinary purposes, including being used as one of the herb components of Herbes de Provence, which is a mixture of dried herbs considered typical of the Provence region of south-eastern France. At first simply a descriptive term, commercial

blends were created and formally sold under this name beginning in the 1970s. These blends often contain savory, marjoram, rosemary, thyme, and oregano. If you are unfamiliar with Herbes de Provence, I recommend it highly, particularly for usage in soups, stews, and some sauces.

In Mexico, the sweet leaves of marjoram are paired with oregano and thyme to create hierbas de olor, the equivalent to a Mexican bouquet garni*. In Middle Eastern cooking, marjoram is featured yet again in a popular seasoning mixture, here in za'atar, which also includes sesame seeds, ground sumac, thyme, and oregano.



Marjoram

It's very interesting that marjoram is used in a similar seasoning blend fashion throughout the globe, in a multitude of cuisines. Marjoram can be used fresh, chopped finely and frozen in small ice cube trays for storage, or it can be dried for later use.

Marjoram is a low-growing herb, excellent for garden edging. Sow seed indoors in early spring or outdoors once

threat of frost has passed, and seed germination can be accelerated by soaking seeds in water overnight. When seeding, cover with a thin layer of potting soil and water lightly. In the permanent location, plant about twelve inches apart in a sunny location within well-drained soil. Although marjoram does need regular irrigation, be careful not to overwater, as the plant is prone to root rot and aphids. If you plant marjoram in the garden, you may find yourself the host of a new group of rabbit friends. Rabbit fencing, particularly in certain areas, is a noted necessity. If you'd like to avoid rabbit visitors or the fencing, marjoram works quite well in

cont'd on pg. 10

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Sun-loving *Rudbeckia* welcomes summer

by Becky Lowicki, Master Gardener

With their sunny disposition and colorful bloom, *Rudbeckia*, a hardy flowering perennial standout in the Houston heat, makes a stunning statement in the summer landscape.

Easily spotted in local nurseries by common names, Black-eyed Susan, Gloriosa Daisy and Yellow Ox Eye, to name a few, *Rudbeckia* are members of the Asteraceae family, comprised of some annual species as well, such as *Rudbeckia hirta*, *Rudbeckia fulgida*, *Rudbeckia grandiflora*, and *Rudbeckia triloba*.

The genus name, *Rudbeckia*, is in honor of Swedish botanist, Olaus Rudbeck (a.k.a. Olof Rudbeck the Elder born in 1630), a prominent anatomist, author and physician, who also founded the first botanic garden in Sweden.¹

Bring on the heat

With a preference for more than six hours of direct sunlight daily, *Rudbeckia* are exceptionally heat- and drought-tolerant, while also tolerable to partial shade. The species thrives in evenly moist and well-drained soil, but can adapt to average or poor soil fertility as well.

Noted for their exceptional clumping and upright habit, *Rudbeckia* is a “go-to” choice for its vibrancy as a cheerful accent and targeted focal point among companion plantings.



Prairie Glow Rudbeckia

Judicious advance planning for adequate spacing when planting is important as some varieties, the Black-eyed Susan, in particular, may average 2–3 feet in height and about 1–2 feet in clump width. Allowing proper spacing for expansion between the clumping colonies increases air circulation between the plants as well as keeps the leaves dry to help prevent the spread of diseases. Overcrowding can also be prevented by simply dividing the clumping areas every three to four years.

To propagate from seed, sow seeds in early to mid-fall, or early to mid-spring. Seeds sown in the spring will need to be stratified (subjected to a cold treatment to mimic winter conditions) for three months at 40°F. Cover the seeds lightly with ¼ to ½ inch of soil and keep moist. Germination should take about two weeks. Seeds can be sown indoors up to two months before frost; however, it may take 2 years or more to develop a sizeable plant.²

Once *Rudbeckia* is established in the landscape, dead foliage and stems can be removed in the fall, winter or early spring. By deadheading spent flowers, the plant will encourage re-blooming generally from late spring through early fall.



Goldstrum Black-Eyed Susan

cont'd on pg. 10

Marjoram, cont'd from pg. 8

window boxes. The young leaves of marjoram can be harvested



Marjoram

throughout its growing season.

Marjoram is one of those herb co-stars that would be an excellent staple in any culinary herb garden, and its relatively low-maintenance along

with its delicate foliage, hue, and fragrance makes it a winsome winner for the garden. As always, if you have questions about details in an herb article, please feel free to email me directly at Karen-mcgowan@comcast.net. Here's to enjoying the outdoors in May 2023!

* Literally "garnished bouquet," a bouquet garni is a bundle of fresh herbs used to infuse flavor into braises and sauces, allowing you to easily remove the packet of aromatics once their flavor has dissipated.

Citations:

<https://www.britannica.com/plant/marjoram>

<https://www.epicgardening.com/mediterranean-herbs/#Marjoram>

<https://www.herbalgreece.com/myths-marjoram/>

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

Rudbeckia, cont'd from pg. 9**Similar sisters: Rudbeckia vs Echinacea**

Both easy-to-grow species are in the Aster plant family and produce long-stemmed flowers with daisy-like petals that surround a center shaped like a cone, hence the name each are often referred to as coneflowers.

Both are easily adaptable to a variety of growing conditions, in addition to being low maintenance and free from most pests and diseases, although slugs and snails may be a bother.

The most marked difference between the two plants is in the color and appearance of the flower. While *Rudbeckia* sports a vibrant yellow or orange with a yellow or black center, the *Echinacea* bloom is typically pink or purple with a black center and slightly larger, sometimes requiring support if the flower heads become too heavy. Also notable, petals of the *Rudbeckia* flower grow outward, while the petals of *Echinacea* tend to curve down and outward from the center of the flower. Both flowers grow on long green stems with alternate leaves and a thick root system.³

Sunny showstoppers

Often featured within mass plantings, *Rudbeckia* are a standout in naturalized areas or in the background of perennial

beds. The showy flowers attract pollinators, including bees and butterflies, and the seeds are a favorite for birds.

Beneficial Insects such as hover flies and minute pirate bugs, which are natural predators of garden pests, such as thrips, aphids, and whiteflies, are also drawn to the species.

Rudbeckia make excellent cut flowers for arrangements due to their bright color and strong stems. Their drought resistance and low maintenance make them an excellent addition to a water-wise landscape, rain garden or xeriscape.



Little Goldstar Rudbeckia

Good dirt reference credits:

¹ <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/rudbeckia-fulgida-var-sullivantii-goldsturm/>

² Clemson Co-operative Extension Home & Garden Information Center, Rudbeckia | [Home & Garden Information Center \(clemson.edu\)](https://homeandgarden.clemson.edu/), Andrew Jeffers, Spartanburg Cooperative Extension, Horticulture and Natural Resource Agent, Clemson University

³ Casandra Maier, <https://homeguides.sfgate.com/difference-between-echinacea-rudbeckia-79051.html>

Getting Down to Earth

Article and photos by Pam Longley, Master Gardener

News from Genoa Friendship Gardens

Robin Yates, in his happy sunflower apron, led a Wildflower Workshop for 10 participants at GFG on March 25, 2023. He opened with a “how-to” on the proper way to dry and store wildflower seeds for future propagation. I was on hand to just stand there and watch in awe, mostly. **Bennie Matussek** was our photographer. We went out to the new wildflower garden to plant wildflowers and natives propagated by Robin from his own stock. And, everyone got to take some plants home. A great big, huge thanks to Bennie for digging out a mess to implement this beautiful space! Robin’s next workshop was *Lawn Alternatives* scheduled on April 19th. His own yard was replanted in frog fruit after he got tired of the high maintenance St. Augustine grass.



Robin Yates discussing how to dry and store wildflower seeds.



Above left and right, Robin demonstrates propagation of native plants.



Workshop participants planting native and wildflower plants in the recently created wildflower garden.

cont'd on pg. 12

Getting Down to Earth - Genoa Friendship Gardens, cont'd from pg. 11

Seen at GFG:



Christa Kaiser, Pam Lemire and Evelyn Dravis on Rose Pruning Day



Robin's Native Garden in its Spring splendor

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

Hello again from Christ the Good Shepherd Garden in Spring, TX.

Given that we are primarily a vegetable garden, this is our season to represent. All things considered, this month is probably the most satisfying time of year for the garden and the gardeners alike. Let's go down the list of what's happening.

Onions, our biggest crop at the moment, are well along with their bulbing stage, and some early samples point to a great harvest this year. With more than 2500 plants, we will be able to fill a lot of food baskets at the pantries in our area.

Our carrot bed has been outstanding this year. The nice feature of carrots is that they don't all mature at the same time. Twice a week we harvest the nice fat ones, and the following week the smaller ones have filled in the gaps created when the previous ones went to market.

There were some quizzical looks when the garden decision makers chose to plant three full beds of Tuscan kale back early this year, but there are smiles all around now, because the crop turned out beautifully. Question was, will the food pantries



MG Jack Goodwin performs the very important tasks of mulching, pruning, and caging our tomatoes so we will have beautiful fruit in June.

welcome this in the door, given their primary focus on providing basic food staples to the needy? No problem. These handsome blue-green spears are so attractive that the concern disappears once they appear in the baskets.

And last but not least, everyone's early summer favorite, tomatoes. CGS decided to plant four tomato varieties this year for a total of seven beds and a total of 175 plants. We chose two determinate varieties, 4th of July and Roma, because we have had good experiences with them in both spring and fall growing seasons. For our indeterminates we chose Early Girl and Tropic. We are familiar with both of these, and most importantly, they have the shortest days to harvest. Any veteran South Texas gardener is all too familiar with the scenario of a hot July day, and the race between a crop of slow-to-ripen tomatoes and a rapidly expanding horde of leaf-footed bugs. That is an event one only needs to see once.



Tuscan kale glistening in the morning dew just prior to harvest.

cont'd on pg. 14

Getting Down to Earth - Christ the Good Shepherd Garden, cont'd from pg. 13

The recent-most things planted in our spring garden are yellow squash and zucchini. The intrepid squash stem borer moths have been concerned that we weren't providing them a place to lay their eggs this year, but no, we try to provide equal opportunity for all garden pest species. Game on.



MG Baxter Swenson and volunteer Wes Carr give a look at carrots just pulled from the raised bed.



MGs Jack Goodwin and Cheryl Gans, Team Lead Brenda Fabian, and volunteer Than Nhi Nguyen share harvesting and planting duties on a recent spring day.

'BUG' OF THE MONTH

May beetle / June bug

by Debra Caldwell, Advanced Master Gardener: Entomology

You may have noticed copper and brown beetles buzzing around your porch light this time of year. Named for the months in which adults appear, May Beetles and June Bugs are scarab beetles. According to the *Field Guide to Common Texas Insects*, there are more than one hundred species of scarab beetles in Texas that are considered to be May beetles and June bugs. The most common is *Phyllophaga crinita* which is frequently found in turfgrass, especially St. Augustine and Bermudagrass.

The chunky beetles range from about ½ to five-eighths of an inch in length, have clubbed antennae and chewing mouthparts. Like other beetles, the May beetles have two pairs of wings. The forewings or elytra are hardened protective covers. When the beetles fly, the elytra pop up and the membranous inner wings propel the insect. The combination of a heavy body and one functional set of rather spindly wings results in slow, straight forward flight. Not good at changing course, the beetles often smash into obstacles including people!



Adult *Phyllophaga* species

Photo by Debra Caldwell

Their life cycle takes about one year in South Texas. In summer, females tunnel a few inches down into the soil and lay their eggs. Larvae (grubs) hatch from eggs and go through three stages of larval development called instars.

The third larval stage stays in the soil from fall through spring. The grubs are cream colored, shaped like a 'C' and have a brown head capsule. The three body segments behind the head each has a pair of legs. After they go through a pupal stage of about three weeks, adults emerge.



Phyllophaga larvae

Photo from Clemson University

The genus name, *Phyllophaga*, literally means leaf (phyllo) eater (phaga). The adults do eat leaves, but the larvae eat roots of grasses, weeds, veggies, and ornamental plants. They can do severe damage to the grass as they eat the roots and deprive the plants of water. Other critters such as racoons peel back turfgrass to munch on the grubs and do major damage to lawns. The large third-instar larvae do the most turfgrass damage as the weather heats up during summer and fall.

A few grubs in your lawn will not do too much damage but if you find six or more grubs per square foot, it might be necessary to act. If you suspect that grubs may be damaging your lawn, take several samples that are 3-4 inches in diameter and four inches deep from different areas of the lawn.

Using the principles of Integrated Pest Management, you can begin with non-chemical control methods. The Texas AgriLife Extension publication, *White Grubs in Texas Turfgrass*, recommends beneficial nematodes that will attack the grubs. Dethatching the turfgrass can also help control the pests because heavy thatch layers promote pests and disease. Many pesticides bind to thatch and reduce their penetration into the soil.

cont'd on pg. 16

May Beetle / June Bug, *cont'd from pg. 15*

Insecticides such as imidacloprid and halofenozide can be used to kill the first two larval instars which are smaller in size. For larger third instar grubs, products containing trichlorfon or carbaryl are suggested with sufficient irrigation to ensure that the products reach the depth where the grubs are living. Carbaryl is highly toxic to pollinators that might be attracted to flowering weeds in a lawn. When using any insecticide, it is important to read and follow label instructions precisely. Store and dispose of pesticides according to label directions. Also be aware that some

insecticides may be toxic to non-target organisms like beneficial insects and birds.

Remember that a few May beetles are not a cause for alarm. They are part of our ecosystem and provide food for many animals. Your best line of defense is to care for your lawn by aerating the soil, dethatching, mowing at the correct height, applying the correct amount of fertilizer, and irrigating properly. Then your biggest worry will be avoiding the single-minded bug as it heads for your porch light!

References

http://publications.tamu.edu/TURF_LANDSCAPE/PUB_turf_Maintaining%20St.%20Augustine%20Grass%20Lawns.pdf

http://publications.tamu.edu/TURF_LANDSCAPE/PUB_turf_Maintaining%20Bermudagrass%20Lawns.pdf

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!

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.



As we finished the April Westside and GFG plants sales and the Towne Lake Farmer's Market, our major focus became preparing for a four day summer camp at the Houston Community College, Katy Campus from June 6—9. We are working with the 4-H staff from AgriLife Extension Services. Our broad topics include: 1. Propagation, 2. Where in the World Did Your Veggies Come From, 3. Recycling and 4. Bugs, Good and Bad. We plan to develop a lesson, craft and plant activities for each topic.



Also, in April, we finished our last after school sessions for this academic year at Friends of Northside with programs on bulbs and bees.

A new outreach experience for us was a program with Interfaith Ministries. We provided some activities for the children of refugee women from Afghanistan while their mothers attend a gardening education program.



For an Earth Day event we worked along side AAMG at the Terry Hershey Park, offering a planting activity for the children coming with their parents.





Ask A Master Gardener Online

by the AAMGO Committee

Q: The May Pride peach tree that I bought from y'all a couple of years ago is full of small fruit, but in the past couple of days I've seen many on the ground, and I just now saw a squirrel running along the fence with a peach in its mouth. How can I keep these bushy-tailed tree rats off our peaches?

A: Thanks so much for sending in your question and for the great visual image of the squirrel running away with the peach! While it's aggravating, it sure is easy to picture from your description.

It is going to be challenging to keep them away from your peaches. I had a squirrel take all the lemons from my Meyer lemon tree last year, so I know where you are coming from.

Options to keep them away include chemical deterrents and physical barriers. If your tree is not too large, then it may be best to cover it with bird netting until the harvest. When using bird netting, please check it frequently to make sure that no small birds have become trapped. Another alternative that some people have had success with is purchasing small organza bags with ties on them to cover the fruit. These are the type of bags used for gifts and they can be purchased online and at various craft shops. It may not be possible to save all of your fruit with this method, so you may have to choose some for yourself and some for the squirrels.

This article from the University of Florida Extension, [*How to Use Deterrents to Stop Damage Cause by Nuisance Wildlife in Your Yard*](#), is a very good guide to preventing squirrel damage in your yard. While nothing is completely effective, there are some good tips that I hope will be helpful. Good luck with your squirrels and your May Pride peaches!

Q: I did a DMOR9 mulberry graft on to Bryce's World's Best Mulberry recently.

I am kind of in puzzle on what is going on with my graft. It looks like back side of the graft is dried and dead, but front side seems like it took and seems to be moving nutrients because all the green growth seen in the picture is after grafting.

Will this make it? Are there any steps I can take right now to increase my chances?



A: Thank you for the question about your graft. To understand how grafting works, we need to review the structure of plants. As you know, plants have a shoot system that consists of the stem, leaves and sometimes flowers and the roots form the root system. Both shoots and roots have meristematic tissue with small, rapidly dividing cells.

Apical meristems near the tips of roots and shoots cause primary growth which is elongation of roots and shoots. Lateral meristems are in both vascular cambium that produces vascular tissue to carry nutrients, water, and sugar and in cork cambium which protects underlying tissue and forms bark.

Grafting requires precision. The cambiums of both the scion and stock must be in contact so vascular connections can be reestablished for the graft to succeed. Vascular cambium cells form more xylem which carries nutrients and water up through the plant and phloem which transports sugar down through the plant.

cont'd on pg. 19

If you are a Harris County MG, interested in volunteering for AAMG Online and want to be trained, please contact coordinator.harrishort@gmail.com.

Ask a Master Gardener – In-Person Activities

by Margie DiGiacomo, 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 Margie DiGiacomo 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/group/7369887112200440118>

The full AAMG schedule for May

- Sat., May 6** **Mercer Botanic Gardens**, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338 – 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Urban Harvest, 2752 Buffalo Speedway, Houston 77027 – 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- Sat., May 13** **Tomball Farmers Market**, 205 West Main St., Tomball, 77375 – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. .
- Mon., May 15** **GFG Open Garden Day**, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston 77034 – 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.
- Thurs., May 18** **Westchase Farmer's Market**, 10503 Westheimer Rd., Houston, 77042 – 3 to 7 p.m.
- Sat., May 20** **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., May 27** **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. 18*

When you did your graft, the scion and stock may have been slightly misaligned. Applying enough pressure by wrapping the graft with tape, bands, or raffia to hold them together can help nudge the vascular cells into alignment.

There is good growth in the scion so hopefully the plant will survive. However, there is the possibility that the graft may fail at

some point and the scion will begin to suffer and die as the plant grows. Time will tell. At this point there probably isn't much you can do. Two publications with more information are [*Plant grafting: insights into tissue regeneration*](#) and [*Grafting and Budding Nursery Crop Plants*](#). Please contact us again if you have additional questions.

Recipe of the Month

Asparagus Gruyere Tart

by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener (and foodie)

This month's recipe features a vegetable that, to me at least, is a harbinger of spring – asparagus. I grew up only knowing asparagus from a can. Even still, it was somewhat of a delicacy because of the higher cost. No offense to my mother's cooking skills, but I don't think we saw much fresh asparagus in the stores in south Texas when I was growing up. I remember the canned version being pretty mushy, but I liked its unique taste and then I discovered fresh asparagus. The texture of fresh is a huge improvement over canned asparagus, which can (pun alert!) be said for most veggies, but pickled asparagus seems to retain more of the texture than canned.

According to NYT Cooking (a subscription service of The New York Times), "Asparagus is amazingly versatile: it can be steamed, simmered, roasted, battered, grilled, sautéed or wok-fried. Thinly sliced, it's even wonderful raw in a salad."¹

I found more complicated recipes, but this simple recipe is from Martha Stewart and calls for Gruyere cheese. If you search

Asparagus Gruyere Tart²

By Martha Stewart Editors³

Prep Time: 15 mins

Total Time: 45 mins

Ingredients

- Flour, for work surface
- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry
- 5 ½ ounces (2 cups) Gruyere cheese, shredded
- 1 ½ pounds medium or thick asparagus
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. On a floured surface, roll the puff pastry into a 16-by-10-inch rectangle. Trim uneven edges. Place pastry on a baking sheet. With a sharp knife, lightly score pastry dough 1 inch in from the edges to mark a rectangle. Using a fork, pierce dough inside the markings at 1/2-inch intervals. Bake until golden, about 15 minutes.
2. Remove pastry shell from oven, and sprinkle with Gruyere. Trim the bottoms of the asparagus spears to fit crosswise inside the tart shell; arrange in a single layer over Gruyere, alternating ends and tips. Brush with oil, and season with salt and pepper. Bake until spears are tender, 20 to 25 minutes.

the website, you will also find versions with parmesan, and even one with a custardy type of filling for brunch. When shopping for the ingredients, I only found a block of smoked gruyere and chose not to use that because I thought the taste might be too strong. So, I substituted a block of Fontina cheese that we shredded and mixed with a package of pre-grated mixed Swiss and Gruyere. These cheeses worked spectacularly together, but don't be afraid to experiment with different combinations or single cheeses. Jarlsberg is also a good substitute for Gruyere.

Our version wasn't the perfect dimensions, but no one in our cooking group seemed to care. The tart was scarfed down before I could get a photo of it, and several friends remarked that they



I'm glad a friend took this photo because it was gone in a flash!

are definitely making this appetizer for their families and guests. So, that makes it a hit in my opinion. I hope you like it, too.

Cook's Notes

Store-bought puff pastry works well in this savory tart; thaw it according to package instructions. Emmentaler or Fontina cheese can be substituted for the Gruyere.

Jo Ann's Notes

My version was baked on parchment paper, which made it very easy to remove from the pan and slice on a cutting board for serving. We cut it into 8 large pieces, but it could easily be cut into 12 smaller servings.

Asparagus can be grown successfully in our area of Texas⁴. Plant dormant crowns in January-February and be very patient. It will grow more ferns than edible spears during the first few years. I wish I could say we used our own asparagus for this dish, but we've only harvested 1-2 pounds in the 3 years we've been growing it. I can't wait for more!

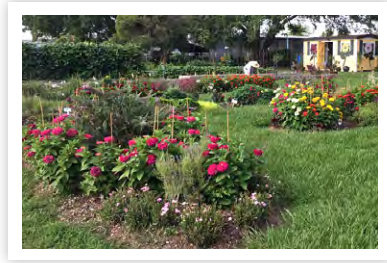
¹ <https://cooking.nytimes.com/guides/22-how-to-cook-asparagus>

² The recipe was updated on August 1, 2017 and is at this link with a video instruction: <https://www.marthastewart.com/318340/asparagus-gruyere-tart>

³ <https://www.marthastewart.com/author/martha-stewart-editors>

⁴ For more info on growing your own asparagus, here are some helpful resources: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2021/03/EHT-066.pdf> and <https://aggie-hort.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/vegetables/asparagu.html>

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.

*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> |



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The Live Oak Tree

by Olina G. Raney PhD, Master Gardener Intern

The majestic Live Oak tree prevalent in Harris County is a species of a North American tree belonging to the red oak group of the genus *Quercus*. The name Live Oak is derived due to their evergreen nature and due to lumbered or injured trees sending out many sprouts.

In Harris County, Live Oak trees specifically refer to the Southern Live Oak, *Quercus virginiana*, which grows to a gigantic evergreen tree at maturity. This massive tree is native to Cuba as well as the Atlantic and Gulf Coast plains thriving in Hardiness zones 7 to 10 in the United States. Southern Live Oak trees are an impressive sight to see in large green areas.

Description

The Southern Live Oak tree can grow to heights of 60 to 80 feet. At maturity, the trunk of the tree can reach a circumference of over 220 inches equivalent to a diameter of almost six feet! Near the ground, the tree trunk typically has several tree limbs which grow horizontally as much as three times the height of the tree giving this tree a spread of 60 to 120 feet. The Southern Live Oak tree roots are typically surface roots, 80% of which are found in the upper 2 feet of soil, and the tree roots can span over 100 feet growing where oxygen, water and nutrients are available. These facts may be of interest to homeowners especially in suburban areas with small lots. Some live oak tree roots have been known to penetrate home foundations surfacing under toilets and showers of homes located within the root span resulting in expensive foundation repairs!



Live Oak tree in west Harris County

Biology

The Southern Live Oak tree has elliptically shaped leaves which are dark green and glossy on the top and light and hairy on the underside.

Oaks are hermaphroditic, that is, these trees produce both male and female flowers on the same tree. Pollination of these flowers occurs by wind. The tree flowers in early spring. Flower colors are the yellow-green catkins of the male flowers while the female

flowers are green to reddish spikes that emerge from the leaf axils. The female flowers will only open once when the male flowers on the same tree have dispersed all their pollen. This action promotes cross breeding preventing self-pollination which provides a partial explanation of why oaks hybridize easily.

The fruit of the tree, the acorns, are typically one inch long and can take one to two years to reach maturity depending on the type of tree.

Uses

Used in earlier times for its timber, the Southern Live Oak is also planted as a shade tree and avenue tree in the southern United States. This tree grows quickly in good soil with an abundant source of water. The oldest known live oak tree specimens range in age from 200 to 300 years to more than a thousand years old.

The heavy, strong Oak wood found use in earlier times in shipbuilding. The naval vessel U.S.S. Constitution was nicknamed “Old Ironsides” after her live oak hull survived repeated cannon fire during the War of 1812.

cont'd on pg. 25

The Live Oak Tree, cont'd from pg. 24

The oil rich acorns are a staple in the diet of many wild animals including squirrels and birds. Early Native Americans liked the acorns as well. They were known to extract an oil from the sweet acorns similar to modern day olive oil.

Types of Oak trees

There are approximately 600 species of Oak trees across the world, 56 of which are native to North America. A wide variety of Oak trees grow in the Harris County area as indicated by the Tree Registry of the Houston Area Forestry Council. This registry also lists the sizes of notable oak trees as well as their locations.

Oak trees found in the Harris County area include:

- Bur Oak
- Cherrybark Oak
- Chinkapin Oak
- Compton Oak
- Live Oak
- Nuttall Oak
- Overcup Oak
- Post Oak
- Shumard Oak
- Southern Red Oak
- Swamp Chestnut Oak
- Water Oak
- White Oak
- Willow Oak

Most Harris County residents are likely familiar with the Southern Live Oak tree. This is due to homebuilders and owners planting these trees in front yards due to the initial low cost of this evergreen tree which adds to their curb appeal.

Harris County residents are encouraged to plant a diversity of tree species in the landscape, including oak. Adding trees such as maples, elms, and magnolias will help reduce the impact of disease and insect issues such as oak wilt and emerald ash borer.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to Dr. Hans M. Williams, Dean and Professor of Forestry, Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, Stephen F. Austin University, for reviewing and contributing to this article on the live oak tree. The manuscript review by Mr. Matthew Weaver, Regional Urban Forester, Texas A&M Forest Service and by Mr. Garret Lindsey, Certified Arborist, Bartlett Tree Experts is also appreciated.

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- [Oaks of Missouri | Missouri's Natural Heritage | Washington University in St. Louis \(wustl.edu\)](https://www.wustl.edu/)
- [ENH-722/ST564: Quercus virginiana: Southern Live Oak \(ufl.edu\)](https://www.ufl.edu/)
- [How USS Constitution Became 'Old Ironsides' - HISTORY](https://www.history.com/stories/old-ironsides)
- [Southern Live Oak | National Wildlife Federation \(nwf.org\)](https://www.nwf.org/)
- <https://www.arborday.org/trees/treeguide/TreeDetail.cfm?ItemID=876>
- <https://www.click2houston.com/news/2017/02/10/missouri-citys-freedom-tree-symbolizes-important-part-of-texas-history/>



The Freedom Tree in Missouri City with Garret Lindsey, Certified Arborist at Bartlett Tree Experts.

Photo courtesy Bartlett Tree Services

For Harris County Master Gardeners Only!



GFG Workdays

Monday & Wednesdays

8:45 a.m. – Noon

1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Houston TX

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.

Please join us at our GFG Garden Workdays!



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 **May** include the following. Wish them **HAPPY BIRTHDAY** when you see them!

Michelle Bixby, Rick Castagno, Mimi Chapman, Alicia Collins, Jonathan Correia, Blanca Elder, Jean Fefer, Regina Gardner, Lynn Rodriguez, Deb Stutsman, Jean Trippie and Patrick Whipple

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)									Transplants				
Beans - Snap & Lima (Butterbean)			Snap&Lima					Snap					
Beets									Transplants				
Broccoli (transplants)									Transplants				
Brussels Sprouts (transplants)									Transplants				
Cabbage (transplants)									Transplants				
Cabbage - Chinese (transplants)									Transplants				
Carrots									Transplants				
Cauliflower (transplants)									Transplants				
Chard, Swiss									Transplants				
Collards (transplants)									Transplants				
Corn									Transplants				
Cucumbers									Transplants				
Eggplant (transplants)									Transplants				
Garlic									Transplants				
Kale (transplants)									Transplants				
Kohlrabi (transplants)									Transplants				
Leeks	Transplants							Seeds					
Lettuce - also Arugula, Mache, Sorrel								Seeds					
Melon - Cantaloupe, Honeydew								Seeds					
Mustard								Seeds					
Okra								Seeds					
Onion - bulbing	Transplants							Seeds					
Onion - multiplying/bunching								Seeds					
Peas - English & Snap								Seeds					
Peas - Southern								Seeds					
Pepper (transplants)								Seeds					
Potato - Irish (cut pieces)								Seeds					
Potato - Sweet (slips)								Seeds					
Pumpkin								Seeds					
Radish								Seeds					
Spinach								Seeds					
Squash - Summer								Seeds					
Squash - Winter								Seeds					
Tomato								Seeds					
Turnips								Seeds					
Summer Greens - Malabar, Amaranth								Seeds					
Watermelon								Seeds					

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
Mandarin

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE
EXTENSION SERVICE
13105 NORTHWEST FREEWAY, SUITE 1000
HOUSTON, TX 77040
713-274-0950
harris.agrilife.org/program-areas/hort/
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 work in a variety of gardens. They include a large vegetable production garden, Texas AgriLife research plant trial beds, wildflower area, native plant landscape, Perennial and EarthKind gardens and the greenhouse. Feel free to drop in to earn service hours!

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