

Urban Dirt

Gardening Events and Information for Texans

The World of Abutilons

Article and photos by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

I received a beautiful plant recently at a plant swap. It's so striking I decided to research it and write about it. Abutilon plants are in the mallow family. The species is called *Abutilon theophrasti*. Common names for the plant include flowering maple, parlor maple, Indian mallow and Chinese lantern. There are at least 200 species and they range in size from 1.5 to 10 feet. Some varieties have lobed leaves. They come in a variety of colors ranging from yellow, orange, red or pink and some are multicolored, like mine. Resources say it prefers full sun, but it does need protection from our hot afternoon sun. Abutilons can also be grown indoors as well. Place it next to a sunny window. Whiteflies, thrips, mites, and aphids can cause problems so be on the lookout.

The one I traded for is called the Biltmore Ballgown abutilon. A bud opened on the second day I had it and I fell in love with it. The top of the flower looks like a green bustier with a flared out skirt of orange

and cream. It looks like a fairy dress. The flower on mine is about two inches and the plant height is supposed to be between two



Biltmore ballgown abutilon

Photo by Terri Simon

to four feet. Abutilons are not cold hardy but can perennialize here in our area. It is a woody evergreen grown in zones 7-10 but should be protected and taken indoors if possible during freezing weather. It requires good drainage, likes mulch and attracts butterflies and hummingbirds. The Ballgown abutilon is an heirloom from the Biltmore Estate in Ashville, North Carolina. It blooms throughout the summer.

Many years ago I had a friend named Marilyn and as a housewarming gift I bought her an abutilon called "Marilyn's Choice." I didn't see her for a few weeks and the plant bloomed. It had flowers with perfect orange petals and a red calyx and it looked gorgeous in the spot where I placed the pot. and you can guess what happened. Marilyn received a Home Depot gift

cont'd on pg. 3

Upcoming Events	2	Ask a Master Gardener Online	17
Native Plant of the Month.....	4	Ask a Master Gardener - In Person	18
Pollinator Workshop	5	Recipe of the Month	19
June Gardening Calendar	6	GFG Open Garden Days.....	20
Herb of the Month	7	Master Gardeners in the City	21
Plant of the Month	9	2023 Green Thumb Lecture Series	22
Getting Down to Earth	10	Master Gardener of the Month.....	23
Bug of the Month	14	GFG Garden Workdays	25
McGovern Centennial Gardens.....	15	Master Gardener Birthdays.....	26
Houston Public Library		Gardening Tools	27
Master Gardener Talks.....	16	MG In-Person Gardening Opportunities.	28



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

UPCOMING EVENTS - JUNE 2023

Educational Programs

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

June 27, *Healthy Lawns Healthy Waters* – open to the public and master gardeners with registration. <https://hlhw.tamu.edu/workshops/2023/june-27-spring-creek-watershed-houston/>

Speaker's Bureau

June 1, 10:30 a.m., *Raised Beds* by Jean Fefer, Steve Radack Community Center, 18650 Clay Rd., Houston, TX 77084

June 8, Time TBA, *Seed Saving* by Jean Fefer, Fonteno Senior Education Center, 6600 Bissonnet St, Houston, TX 77074

June 12, 6:00 p.m., *Container Gardening* by Stephanie McIntyre, Hennington-Alief Library, 11903 Bellaire Blvd., Houston, TX 77072

June 23, 11:00 a.m., *Summer Gardening* by Stephanie McIntyre, Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Rd., Cypress, TX 77433

June 28, 11:00 a.m., *Native Plants* by Robin Yates, Young Neighborhood Library, 5107 Griggs Rd., Houston, TX 77021

Green Thumb Gardening Series

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

Pollinator Gardening

June 12, 10 - 11:30 a.m. For the HCC program, register in advance to receive the link: hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops

June 20, 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. Simply visit the Harris County Public Library System. No reservation required. Watch on Facebook – facebook.com/harriscountypl/live

June 24, 9 - 11 a.m. *Pollinator Gardening Workshop* by Linda Pearson. Learn how to grow and care for pollinator plants that thrive in Houston! Register [HERE](#)

HCMGA Close-out plant sale!

The online HGMGA shop is open - <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/shop/> Plant order pickup days are Monday and Wednesday mornings 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 p.m. at the Genoa Friendship Gardens greenhouse 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston, TX 77034

Open Garden Day at Genoa Friendship Gardens

June 19, 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, 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:

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



2023 Board of Directors

President
Carolyn Boyd
Carolyn.Boyd@hc-mga.org

First Vice President
Alexa Haass
Alexa.Haass@hc-mga.org

Second Vice President
Kathryn McLeod
Kathryn.McLeod@hc-mga.org

Past President
Jonathan Correia
Jonathan.Correia@hc-mga.org

Secretary
Mary Stokman
Mary.Stokman@hc-mga.org

Treasurer
Danny Dunn
Danny.Dunn@hc-mga.org

Directors
Douglas McLeod
Lucia Hansen
Marsha VanHorn
Fatma Ozgel
Jarvis Taylor
Rick Castagno

Assistant Treasurers
Cindy Moore, Marsha VanHorn

**Genoa Friendship Gardens
Steering Committee Advisors**
Vacant

Urban Dirt Editor
Carolyn Boyd
UrbanDirt.harrishort@gmail.com
Assistant Urban Dirt Editor
Terri Simon

The World of Abutilons, cont'd from pg. 1

certificate instead. I kept it for several years and it was delightful. Then one year it froze and I replaced it with something else.

There are many more types of abutilon, but another interesting variety I found is Abutilon 'Savitzii'. This abutilon is eye catching because it has variegated foliage. The blooms are gorgeous. The flowers are peach and have pink veins running throughout the flower.

Try an abutilon in your garden. With a variety of colors and patterns, surely you have a perfect spot in your landscape.



Marilyn's Choice abutilon

Photo courtesy Lone Star Nursery



Variegated 'Savitzii' abutilon abutilon

Photo courtesy plantmaster.com

NATIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH

Inland Sea Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)

Article and photos by Robin Yates, Master Gardener

When I was introduced to native plants a few years ago, flowers were an easy sell. The trees and understory were natural for me to fall in love with as well. Native grasses were another story. Like most of us, when I hear the term grass, I immediately think short turfgrass, mowed and neatly trimmed. That doesn't fly here on the Texas Gulf Coast, as we have no native turfgrass. Some claim that St Augustine is native, but I don't know of any true native plant that requires the life support St. Augustine does. No, this area used to be coastal tallgrass prairie and marshes. The grasses are beautiful, you just have to look at them through different lenses than you are accustomed to.

Summer is not yet officially here, yet if you are like me, you have already been looking for shaded areas to do your gardening. For me, that often means beneath a tree, a pergola canopy, or the shadow of a building. Last month we discussed a native groundcover, Pigeonberry, *Rivina humilis*, that does well in the shade. This month, I would like to introduce you to a native grass, Inland Sea Oats, *Chasmanthium latifolium*, that is also very happy in the shade.



Spring sea oats

Inland Sea Oats is a perennial, clump forming grass, that grows 2-4 feet, in part shade to shade. It has medium water requirements and grows well in most soils. The only thing it doesn't enjoy is full sun. The leaves will turn yellow if it does not have enough shade. Give it several years and it will spread to fill in that area where your turfgrass just won't thrive. I recommend starting small and going slow. Take a small, shaded area that you are having difficulty



Fall sea oats

maintaining, and this native grass can be part of your solution. I have found Inland Sea Oats to be extremely easy to grow. It reseeds, and will fill an area in several seasons, if left to itself.

One aspect of native grasses that I have grown to appreciate is the changing color palette through the year. *C. latifolium* starts the growing season with new green shoots arising from the basal rosette. They grow over the next few months to graceful, 2-4 feet blue-green arching stems with oat-like seed heads. The stalks and seedheads turn golden-brown as fall arrives. The transition is beautiful to behold.

I never knew how important native grasses are to wildlife. Inland Sea Oats is a larval host plant for the Pepper & Salt Skipper, Bell's Roadside Skipper, and Bronzed Roadside Skipper butterflies. The seed is nourishing for birds and mammals. The stalks and leaves are nesting material for birds, so it is beneficial to use the 'chop & drop' mulching in place technique, for the benefit of the local wildlife. This is in addition to needing less fertilizer, weed suppression, and roots insulated from heat, drought and frost.

Please drop by the native plant landscaping bed at GFG, as I am featuring Inland Sea Oats in the shaded area next to the new bed I have installed. The area between the bed and the fence is being filled in with shade tolerant native understory and groundcover. I'd love to show it to you and discuss adding natives to your own landscape. You will find that there will usually be some for sale in the greenhouse, so come and check it out!

Resource: https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=CHLA5



GREEN THUMB POLLINATOR GARDENING WORKSHOP

June 24th

Learn how to grow and care for pollinator plants that thrive in Houston!

Each participant will go home with a pollinator plant!

Adults with children welcome to bring children free of charge.

	24 JUNE	LINDA PEARSON
	9am-10am	MASTER GARDENER

	Genoa Friendship Garden
	1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd.
	Houston, TX 77034

\$15 REGISTER HERE: [HTTPS://BIT.LY/3BTZK2N](https://bit.ly/3BTZK2N)

For questions email Susan.Hubert@ag.tamu.edu



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.



June Gardening Calendar

by Karen Shook, Master Gardener

Hurricane season starts June 1. Make sure trees are trimmed, no dead branches are waiting to fall.

Summer in south Texas exists to teach us the true meaning of heat tolerant. With rains in April and May, we are back to historic rainfall. Forecasts show June should be near typical five inches for June. Temperatures are likely to be higher than normal. Even if

Perennials and Ornamental Grasses

- If plants are growing vigorously, have a deep green color and plenty of blooms, celebrate. If not, it may be time for another application of fertilizer.
- Cutting back perennials helps promote new growth. Cut back salvias by 1/4 as blooms decline. Prune fall blooming perennials by 1/3.
- Consider adding foliage plants to your garden beds. Elephant ears, for example, love the heat. Ornamental grasses will do well in the heat as long as they have adequate moisture

Bulbs

- You can plant cannas and iris in June.
- Fertilize actively growing bulbs and provide support for tall growing bulbs.
- Watch for pests. Thrips may find your gladiolus tempting.
- Seedpods that may form after a summer bulb blooms are a waste of the plant's energy. As you walk through your garden, remove the pods and old flower spikes.

Roses

- Continue to spray for blackspot, powdery mildew, aphids, etc., every 7 to 10 days through November. Decreased foliage from blackspot or powdery mildew reduces bloom potential. Keep the beds cleaned of any leaves that yellow and drop.
- Fertilize every 4 to 8 weeks depending on health of the rose.

rainfall provides the extra water plants need in the heat, remember to keep the gardener hydrated and protected from the sun.

As always, be alert for pests. They are getting more active in June. Spider mites really like hot weather! A pest free garden is not possible, but be observant to keep damage to a minimum.

Shrubs/Trees

- Complete any needed pruning to spring flowering shrubs, trees, vines.

Lawns

- Lawns that were fertilized in April may need to be fertilized again.
- New sod needs water 15 minutes/day for a week (rain counts). Keep it moist.
- Frequent mowing (to make sure you only remove 1/3 of height each mowing) at proper height for your type of lawn is good way to increase lawn density which helps choke out weeds.
- Check the label if you are tempted to apply weed killer. Many can damage the lawn if temperatures are high.

Groundcovers and Vines

- Tough ground covers like Asian jasmine should be okay if planted in June..

Edibles (vegetables, herbs, berries, fruits)

- See the following link for recommended planting times: [Harris County Vegetable Planting Guide](#)
- You can still plant heat tolerant okra, southern peas, sweet potatoes. Soak the area before planting.

Trees

- Plant palms in summer's warm and wet months.
- I have cypress trees which I love, but the cypress knees are a problem. You can use a saw to remove cypress knees just below soil surface without hurting the tree..

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

HERB OF THE MONTH

Sage (*Salvia officianalis*)

by Karen McGowan, Master Gardener

Welcome to month one of summer 2023, and the next installment in our Mediterranean drought-tolerant herb series. There are literally hundreds of species of sage; for the June herb focus we are referring to culinary sage, *Salvia officianalis*. In the United States, sage is most commonly used in food preparation as an herb for winter dishes such as Thanksgiving dressing or stuffing, or as a flavoring component for sausages, but its sweet, pine-like aroma and flavor can insert itself into creative culinary processes to produce any number of uses. For example, in recent years, one



Salvia

of these that has emerged is the practice of frying the whole leaves and scattering them atop a dish for a savory, textural taste spike.

Native to the Mediterranean, the origin of the name “salvia” points to this herb’s ancient perceived medicinal value; from the Latin salvus “to save” and salvere, “to heal”. Sage is packed with antioxidants which, according to significant bodies of scientific research, help reduce the risk of serious health conditions. It’s also rich in vitamin K, aiding the body in effectively clotting blood. A member of the mint (Lamiaceae) family, the essential oil content of sage carries the principal components of *thujone and **borneol. Sage is considered slightly stimulating, and tea brewed from its leaves has been used as a tonic for centuries. In medieval Europe sage was regarded as a memory strengthener, with an inherent quality promoting wisdom; the latter attribute’s root dating back to the Seven Sages of Ancient Greece, Thales, Solon, Periander, Cleobulus, Chilon, Bias, and Pittacus, who were known for practical wisdom. The idea of a virtue being an innate quality in plants, with an ability to impart this to humans, is an ancient one and worthy of an exploratory article series, in and of itself.

Sage is a perennial plant in zones 4-11, and appreciates being planted in full sun except for the warmest of those zones, where in

the afternoon sage prefers some shade. For zones 4-8, sage requires some protection from extended cold stretches below freezing; however, if well-mulched and in a sheltered location, the plant may survive. Freezing damage can cause sage’s leaves to wilt and brown, and does significantly impact younger plant shoots. Ensuring that

sage has full sun during the winter will add another layer of protective warmth in zones 4-8.

Propagating sage can be done by any of three methods. If you’re starting from seeds, plant indoors to have young plants early in the year. You can direct-sow after all danger of frost has passed. The soil will need to be between 60-70 degrees for the best germination chances. Taking cuttings from an already growing sage plant is another option. Find healthy, vigorous



Salvia leaves

stems and remove a 3-4” length from the tip. Dip the cut end into water, then a powdered rooting hormone, and plant in prepared potting mix. Keep the cutting moist and it should produce

roots within six weeks. Sage also responds well to propagation via air layering. To execute this method, choose a long and leggy sage stem and use a couple of ground pins to secure part of the stem to the soil, adding a little extra soil to cover that portion of the stem. It will form roots from the stem within about six weeks. Once the roots have taken hold securely, you can clip that plant free from its parent and move it if desired.

There are some particulars about growing and caring for sage that are helpful toward establishing a hardy and prolific plant. A key one is the discipline of patience: Sage’s young leaves in its first year are very flavorful, but the plant needs time to set down deep roots in order to be firmly established. During the inaugural planting year, pinching off a leaf or two occasionally won’t hurt;

cont’d on pg. 8

Sage, cont'd from pg. 7

otherwise, pocket your trusty shears and hone your patience. Subsequent years enable you to do a much more thorough harvest of sage leaves. In the early spring of each year, beginning with the plant's second spring, trim back any damaged foliage and neaten up the plant's footprint. As it grows throughout the year, harvest by clipping just above a joint where two leaves meet. The pair of leaves can form new offshoot growth at those points, allowing the plant to become bushier. Try to harvest before the plants form sage flowers unless you're specifically planning on using the flowers, too (which adds beautiful, edible color to salads and other dishes). The sage leaves temporarily have a different flavor while the plant is in flower, and many prefer the flavor of the leaves when they're not flowering. If you just need to harvest for a couple of leaves, the preferred method is to simply pinch off a leaf close to the stem. Try to take leaves from different stems. Whatever the method, never harvest more than half of the plant.

Mature culinary sage's height caps at about two feet. The silvery grey foliage and blue-purple flowers make it an excellent herb to incorporate among ornamentals. No pest issues plague this plant, and the only diseases known to occasionally trouble it are mint rust and root rot, which can be easily avoided by not over-watering and applying water only to the base of the plant. Sage is the mainstay of the midsummer garden, providing long-blooming, aromatic flowers that are beloved by bees and butterflies, alike. It's practically a fail-safe perennial that is considered resistant to both deer and rabbits.

Citations:

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

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

<https://www.britannica.com/plant/sage-plant>

<https://www.etymonline.com/word/sage>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC18101/>

<https://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/compound/Borneol>



Ladybug on salvia leaves

Month by month we are building a drought-tolerant herb garden; whether for your Hill Country ranch garden that doesn't see you as many get-away-from-the-city-weekends as you might like, the apartment balcony herb garden that you'd like to plant and not make too much of a fuss over, or something in between. Happy summer 2023!

* "Thujone is the toxic agent in absinthe, a liqueur popular in the 19th and early 20th centuries that has adverse health effects."

** "Borneol is an alcohol. Flammable and/or toxic gases are generated by the combination of alcohols with alkali metals, nitrides, and strong reducing agents."

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Paint the town “sky flower” blue with *Plumbago auriculata*

by Becky Lowicki, Master Gardener

Native to South Africa, this heat-loving beauty, *Plumbago auriculata*, also known as Cape plumbago or sky flower, packs a showstopper bluebird hue of a color punch in the residential landscape.

Comprised of sprawling shrubs with freeform vine-like branches, it is prized for its profusion of blue phlox-like flowers that provide nonstop color in the midst of the summer heat. A top go-to choice in the Houston region, it is frequently featured as a border accent or foundation planting, creating an eye-popper wow moment amidst a green garden backdrop.

While few “true blue” plants exist naturally in the landscape, the ethereal quality of its color provides a calming sense of visual peace as well. Attractive to pollinators, it is the host plant for the larvae of the Cassius blue butterfly (*Leptotes cassius*), which lays eggs on the bloom buds and spikes. The small green larvae resemble the buds and are well camouflaged.

A bounty of blooms

A perennial shrub which blooms continuously from summer until first frost, it seems to have minimal diseases or pests. While it thrives in full sun, even in considerable shade it will still have an abundance of blooms.

While it prefers fertile, well-drained soil, it isn't fussy, adapting well to slightly acidic, slightly alkaline, clay, sand or loam. As the



Plumbago auriculata

shrub tends to become leggy, prune sparingly, otherwise you'll sacrifice the bloom if you trim too often or too much.

Easy peasy

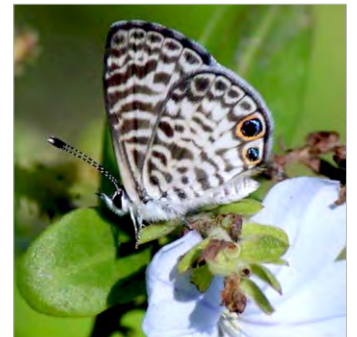
An easy

to care for selection, plumbago is also known for being deer resistant and drought tolerant, once established. Plumbago may be damaged by an extended freeze, but will quickly recover with new green growth.

Water it regularly and fertilize it each spring, while allowing enough spacing for growth of up to two to three feet tall with a four-foot spread.



Plumbago auriculata container planting



Cassius blue butterfly



Giant swallowtail finds an oasis in blue.

References: butterfliesandmoths.org; <https://aggie-hort.tamu.edu/county/smith/tips/flowers/capeplumbago.html>

Photo credits: butterfliesandmoths.org; <https://aggie-hort.tamu.edu/plantanswers/butterflies/butterfly-gallery/pages/Plumbago-GiantSwallowtail2.html>

Getting Down to Earth

Article and photos by Pam Longley, Master Gardener

News from Genoa Friendship Gardens

Our **Robin Yates** has been very active with the HCMGA Speaker's Bureau! He teamed up with **Lili Bauerlein**, our former HCMGA Coordinator, to talk to a group of Afghan refugee women about container gardening at the Trotter YMCA on April 25. Lili is now the Director of Refugee Services for Interfaith Ministries of Houston. I came along to take photos. Linda Perse and other members of Growing with Plants and Nature brought crafts to keep the children busy while their moms listened to Robin's talk, which was translated. I learned that there are two predominant languages spoken in Afghanistan, Dari and Pashto. The refugees are split up based on which language they speak for the programs that Interfaith Ministries (IM) offers. One of the "IM" employees told me that 95% of the women attending the class could not read or write their own language.



Robin Yates and translator at Container Gardening class



Growing with Plants and Nature had craft tables. Note: we were asked not to take photos of the Afghan women and children.

Robin brought 83 native plants and heirloom tomatoes to give away. The ladies were all smiles as he handed them off from the bed of his truck. Robin told me that what gives him the most joy is preparing seeds, propagating, and growing native plants to give as "rescues" to others who will give them a good home. He says that to be able to share what has been a blessing to him with others who have gone through so much is meaningful beyond words.

Sadly for all of us at GFG, **Rick** and **Cheryl Castagno** are moving away. They sold their home in the Heights very quickly and bought a home on an acre just outside of New Braunfels. Rick has been the Lead for our vegetable production garden and an asset to GFG for his know-how, can-do nature, his reliability, his upbeat personality, and his investment in our special place. He plans to get involved with the Comal County Master Gardeners, who meet just minutes from his new house.

We have been harvesting lots of chard and donating it to Angela House. Our tomatoes are starting to ripen, to the notice of some night critters, who took big hunks out of the first ones! The whole bed of onions we planted was a bust. The tops looked ready, but when we started pulling them, there were no onion tubers underneath!

Seen at GFG



Linda Pearson in the Butterfly garden

cont'd on pg. 11

Getting Down to Earth - Genoa Friendship Gardens, cont'd from pg. 10

Seen at GFG:



Wildflower Garden ablaze with orange and yellow coreopsis predominant



Swallowtail butterfly larvae

cont'd on pg. 12

Getting Down to Earth, cont'd from pg. 11

Article and photos by Dale Hudson, Master Gardener

Christ the Good Shepherd Garden - Spring, TX

For those vegetable gardeners that equate poundage with performance this month is your time to shine. May is the month when our nine beds of onions come out of the ground and go on the drying racks. Conditions have been very favorable this spring, and our crop appears to equal or exceed our best year ever. It is not unusual to see a white 1015Y Super Sweet tip the scale at a pound or more, but it is unusual to see a Southern Belle Red come in at almost that same size.



It's a good year for onions when our back-up crop of Southern Belle Red produces like this.



If it is true that marigolds repel many garden pests, then our tomato beds at CGS should be impenetrable.

Coming along just behind the onions are our tomatoes. Regular readers may recall that we focused on varieties this year that have the shortest days-to-harvest. This approach is paying off already, with first picking at the start of May. With 175 plants in 7 beds, all trying to be first to finish, we will be ringing up triple digit pounds every week if we can keep the vines healthy. We are seeing some evidence of Fusarium wilt or Verticillium wilt (it's hard to tell which without expert analysis) but so far it hasn't impacted the quality of the fruit. Fingers crossed that our varieties will fight the good fight and live until the summer heat shuts them down.

Our zucchini and yellow squash are happily growing under frost cloth tunnels right now to frustrate the stem borer moth for a couple more weeks at least, until they start flowering.

Our cucumber beds are filling in nicely. We seem to have better luck (i.e. poundage) keeping vines on the ground versus climbing a trellis. The pickers would disagree, because on the ground the cukes are clever at hiding from view until they grow to an enormous size.

Our okra seed went in the ground mid-May. We like red Carmine Splendor for early production and green Clemson Spineless for a little more staying power on the hottest days of summer.

cont'd on pg. 13

Getting Down to Earth - Christ the Good Shepherd Garden, cont'd from pg. 12

And finally, there are peppers. Unlike past years when pepper trials were the focus of our attention, this year we cut them some slack and just ask that they baseload our baskets every week going to the pantries. There is little doubt that they will do that.

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.



There comes a day in every gardener's life when the best thing to do is just go pull weeds.



Until they start flowering our zucchini and yellow squash are safely protected from the squash stem borer moths.

‘BUG’ OF THE MONTH

North American Wheel Bug

by Debra Caldwell, Advanced Master Gardener: Entomology

The North American Wheel Bug, *Arilus cristatus*, also known as an assassin bug, is a ‘true’ bug in the order Hemiptera, family Reduviidae. These large, (1.5 inch) beneficial bugs are formidable predators that feed on stink bugs, caterpillars, and beetles. They use their front legs to grip their hapless prey then plunge their claw like beak into the body of the victim and inject it with a toxic, paralytic substance. Enzymes in the venom digest the prey from the inside then the wheel bug drains the liquids like a toddler draining a juice box.

Hemipterans get their name (half-wing) because the front half of the forewings are leathery while the back half is membranous. A distinctive feature of adult wheel bugs is the ridged crest on top of their thorax. The function of the ‘wheel’ isn’t known although it may help with species recognition or make them less appetizing to potential predators.

Wheel bugs can fly but you will usually find them slowly walking on the ground or other surface. Normally, they don’t bother people but it’s better to observe from a distance. Their bite is described as extremely painful, like an electric shock. Some say it is worse than a wasp or hornet sting. The wound may remain painful for several days, followed by numbness, and take up to two weeks to heal. They are aggressive towards each other—sometimes cannibalistic and researchers have reported



North American Wheel Bug Adult (photo 1)

Photo by Debra Caldwell

that females may eat males after mating.

Wheel bugs have one generation per year. In photo 1, a female wheel bug laid a raft of eggs on December 26, 2022. Photo 2, taken on April 6, 2023, shows an older nymph, possibly one of the offspring of Mama Wheel Bug. By mid-summer, the nymph will mature.

Wheel bugs are sometimes confused with Leaf Footed Bugs which feed on plants. Before you reach for the insecticide,

determine which insect is on your plants. Both types of nymphs are small red insects with long legs.

Leaf-footed bug nymphs have bodies that are entirely red while wheel bug nymphs have red abdomens and a black head and thorax. Adult leaf footed bugs usually have a distinctive leaf-shaped area on their back



North American Wheel Bug Nymph (photo 2)

Photo by Debra Caldwell

legs. Wheel bugs have more of a ‘neck’, a narrow constriction at the base of the head.



If you encounter a wheel bug, look but don’t touch! Although they may munch on the occasional bee or lady beetle, these insects are good guys and will help control pests in your gardens.

Adult Leaf Footed Bug

Photo by Brett Hondow

References

<https://texasinsects.tamu.edu/wheel-bug/>

<https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/assassin-bugs-and-ambush-bugs-reduviidae/>

McGovern Centennial Gardens

Article and photos by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener

We are blessed to have a number of beautiful gardens available to visit in Harris County and the surrounding area. This bi-monthly article will focus on these gardens, with the hope of inspiring you to go and visit them yourself.

The first article is about McGovern Centennial Gardens. This garden is in the heart of the museum district, at 1500 Hermann Drive (77004), nestled between the Houston Zoo, Hermann Park Golf Course, Miller Outdoor Theatre and the Houston Museum of Natural Science.

McGovern Centennial Gardens is on the site of the former Houston Garden Center, which displayed a wide variety of roses since the late 1930's. [Side note: we seriously considered the rose garden for our



Cestrum and salvia

wedding location, and I'm sure there were many weddings there.] Thankfully, the rose garden was redesigned into the larger garden as the J.M. Stroud Rose Garden. The Friendship Pavilion, a gift from Houston's sister city Taipei in 1976, was also relocated from its original site in Hermann Park, and the full statues of Confucius, Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King, Jr. are displayed prominently nearby.

McGovern Centennial Gardens were developed to commemorate Hermann Park's centennial in 2014. In addition to the rose garden, there are "themed garden rooms", namely the Arid Garden, Celebration Garden, Woodland Garden, Pergola Walk (along both sides of Centennial Green), Tudor Family Pine Hill Walk, and Hawkins Sculpture Walk. Each space has its own separate aura and shows off seasonal color to visitors.

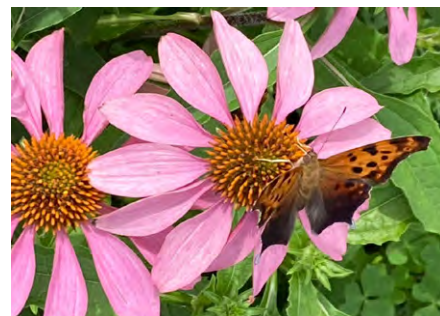


Artichoke

According to the website,

the 8-acre site contains "490 new trees of over 50 species, 760 hedge shrubs, 55,000 perennial bulbs, 650 azaleas and 4.5 acres of grass".¹

Dear to our hearts is the educational Family Garden, which produces seasonal vegetables, herbs and fruit trees, and is maintained by Hermann Park Conservancy in partnership with the Harris County Master



Butterfly on coneflower

Gardeners. Current crops include okra, radish, eggplant, artichoke, corn, watermelon, tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, lima beans, cucumbers, herbs and more, which are donated to local food banks.



Asian cucumbers

McGovern Centennial Gardens has been honored with the Landmark Award from Keep Houston Beautiful. Admission and parking are free. Walk up to the top of The Mount to enjoy a 360-degree

view of the whole garden from 30 feet above, or bring a picnic lunch and relax on the green or under the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion (designed by Peter Bohlin, architect of Apple stores worldwide).

Click [here](https://www.hermannpark.org/visit/mcgovern-centennial-gardens/) for a map of the Gardens.



Iris

¹<https://www.hermannpark.org/visit/mcgovern-centennial-gardens/>

Master Gardeners



Join us for a lecture series from the Harris County Master Gardeners, your local county gardening experts.

Topics, Dates and Locations

Native Plants	Wednesday, June 28 11 AM - 12 PM Young Neighborhood Library
Fall Vegetable Gardening	Wednesday, July 5 5 PM - 6 PM McCrane-Kashmere Gardens Neighborhood Library
Composting	Friday, July 7 2 PM - 3 PM Collier Regional Library
Rainwater Harvesting	Thursday, July 13 11 AM - 12 PM Mancuso Neighborhood Library
Container Gardening	Tuesday, July 18 11 AM - 12 PM Jungman Neighborhood Library
Organic Gardening	Thursday, July 20 6 PM - 7 PM Kendall Neighborhood Library

Let us know you're coming!
Register or find out more by visiting
www.houstonlibrary.com/events
or scan the QR code below.



**John P. McGovern Adult
Summer Reading Program**
AT HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



Linking YOU to the World
www.houstonlibrary.org



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



Ask A Master Gardener Online

by the AAMGO Committee

Q: This prickly little weed has invaded my lawn this spring and I'm looking for advice on how to slow it down. My grandkids often run barefoot on the lawn but this weed slows them down as it has some pricklers below the leaves. Do you know what it is and how I can slow down the spreading? Thank you.



A: Thank you for your email. We always love a good plant ID question! The plant in your picture is burweed - it's sometimes called lawn burweed or carpet burweed, and the scientific name is *Soliva sessilis*. It's a cool season annual, and should be fading soon, but it unfortunately leaves behind the sticker-type seeds that can spread the weed further next winter.

You didn't mention what type of lawn you have, but the best way to discourage weeds is to have a healthy thick lawn—proper watering, fertilizing, mowing height, and weed control will help. If your lawn is St. Augustine, here is our publication called *Maintaining St. Augustine Grass Lawns*. It will walk you through proper care of your lawn for every season. We also recommend our free online application, WaterMyYard.org, which will help you determine how much water to apply to your lawn every week. And, this article, [Apply fall preemergence herbicide to avoid spring weeds](#) is an article about applying fall pre-emergent herbicides which will tell you how to control burweed and other cool season annual weeds as you improve your lawn's health.

I hope this is helpful, and please contact us again if we can help you in the future.

Q: My vegetables are being eaten hard by slugs, especially the leafy greens like swiss chard and basil. What is the best treatment to get rid of the slugs?

A: Hello, I am sorry to hear that you are having issues with slugs in your vegetable garden. These pests particularly enjoy the soft, leafy stems and greens of plants such as Basil and Swiss Chard.

This fact sheet, [Snails and Slugs](#) from the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service - Entomology is a thorough explanation on slugs in the garden and how to potentially manage them.

Snails and/or slugs are active at night and on cloudy or foggy days. Carefully inspect the plant including both sides of the leaves and in the mulch surrounding the plant. Also look for evidence of slime trails on the ground around the plant or on the leaves. A flashlight will be helpful in looking in all the nooks and crannies a snail can hide and spotting evidence of slime. If you start finding a lot of slugs, you can pick them off with a gloved hand and dispose of them which is, by far, the safest method. You should inspect your plant regularly for signs of snails and/or slugs. Don't wait for the leaves to be

cont'd on pg. 18

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 June

- Sat., June 3** 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., June 10** Tomball Farmers Market, 205 West Main St., Tomball, 77375 – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Thurs., June 15** Westchase Farmer's Market, 10503 Westheimer Rd., Houston, 77042 – 3 to 7 p.m.
- Sat., June 17** 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.
- Mon., June 19** FFG Open Garden Day, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston 77034 – 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.
- Sat., June 24** 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*

completely chewed up before you decide to act. The article also explains some actions you can take to deter future infestations.

Because Houston gardens are seldom without pests, you may want to familiarize yourself with the concept of Integrated Pest Management. This is a strategy that we encourage to manage pests through economically and environmentally sustainable practices. <https://ipm.tamu.edu/> is a link to our IPM program with more

links to a variety of IPM topics. Also, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JK0U87ASd0o> is a link to an excellent video from one of our expert Master Gardeners on the subject of Integrated Pest Management.

I hope that these suggestions are helpful, and that you are still able to harvest some of those vegetables and herbs.

Recipe of the Month

Feast Summer Salad

by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener (and foodie)

On a recent visit to A Moveable Feast¹ restaurant in the Memorial Villages area, my husband Stan and I discovered a new lunch treat – Feast Summer Salad. Never mind that we were there to beg for the recipe for their dreamy Creamy Herb salad dressing we had tasted on a previous visit (more on that later).

This delicious salad was one of the features of the day, with a tempting sample displayed on the counter as we perused the menu for about, oh, 10 seconds and decided that the salad it would be. Owner Lisa Eck was happy to share her recipe with our readers.

This salad is a base of mixed baby greens (preferably organic) and topped with sliced strawberries, halved red grapes, shredded feta cheese, candied walnuts and homemade balsamic dressing. One serving was enough for the two of us, especially with a scoop of their popular chicken salad on top – did I mention we shared a yummy pecan pie square afterward, too?

I particularly loved the subtleness of the feta. It was in tiny pieces so you could get the flavor without the chunks you often have in other dishes. The balsamic dressing balanced the flavors perfectly. You can be sure this delicious summer salad is on our “must make” list.

You could certainly add grilled chicken or shrimp when you make this at home, but it is a very satisfying meal without meat. Take advantage of in season berries to add or substitute to your liking. At the time I was writing this article, strawberries and blueberries were still available and blackberries were just coming out at the farmers markets and pick-your-own farms.

As for the creamy herb dressing, we hope to receive that recipe for a future edition when cooler season herbs parsley and cilantro are in abundance at the markets and in our gardens. Stay tuned!

Feast Summer Salad

2 servings

Dressing:

2 tablespoons local honey (we love HIVE)
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
1/2 teaspoon fresh ground pepper
1/2 teaspoon finely chopped garlic
1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
3/4 cup good quality olive oil

Toasted Walnuts:

1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1 tablespoon butter
1 tablespoon turbinado sugar

Salad:

5 cups baby greens mix
1 cup sliced strawberries
1 cup sliced red grapes
1/4 cup shredded feta cheese

Over a low heat, melt the butter in a small skillet, then add sugar. Dissolve the sugar, then add the walnuts. Toss around for a few minutes, until just slightly toasted. Place nuts on a plate to cool.

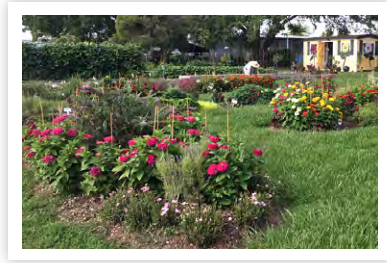
Just toss everything together with desired amount of dressing and enjoy!



Photo by Lisa Eck (Lisa's photo was much better than mine 😊)

¹ Family owned A Moveable Feast Restaurant & Health Food Store (9341 Katy Freeway in the Kroger Center, 77024) has been serving the Houston area since 1971. In addition to salads, they have a large selection of sandwiches, burgers, seafood, soups, juices, gluten free, vegetarian and vegan dishes, and desserts. Pop in and thank Lisa for sharing her recipe. Dine on the patio and enjoy her beautiful pollinator-friendly flower garden filled with Texas Bluebells, lantana, sunflowers, porterweed, cosmos, coreopsis, herbs and more.

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 the HCMGA, Program Coordinator at coordinator.harrishort@gmail.com

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> |



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 - *Bennie Matusek*

by Karen Breneman, Master Gardener

Congratulations! Bennie Matusek became a Harris County Master Gardener in 2020, but has been a life-long gardener.



Bennie Matusek

Bennie was born in Houston and grew up in Deer Park. While still a small child, his mother assigned him a section of her backyard garden to be used for planting. He was especially interested in using his Tonka trucks to dig up the plants, repeatedly move them around, and create irrigation trenches to water the plants

automatically. Bennie also propagated plants in discarded 4” pots, loaded them into his wagon, and sold them door to door to his very patient and polite neighbors.

After graduating from Deer Park High School, Bennie attended Texas A&M (where he met his wife Lucy) and the University of Houston where he earned degrees in Math and Computer Science. However, gardening was always his primary passion. Bennie has been especially interested in why American houses have so much grass (which you can’t eat) in the front and back yards. After buying his own home, Bennie applied himself to seeing just how much food one yard could produce without alerting the local HOA. This has led his interests from traditional gardening to hydroponics to aquaponics and now permaculture, much to the benefit of the local food bank.

“While my main objective was to develop my gardening knowledge, I had no idea how much fun I would have getting to know other Master Gardeners through volunteering and getting involved in HCMGA events.”

With the Master Gardeners, Bennie worked with Pat Daniel to help maintain the pond at the Genoa Friendship Gardens, do repairs as needed, and generally spew ideas which we may or may not be able to afford. More recently, Bennie repurposed

an unused garden bed at GFG to create a new Texas wildflower area. The plants were donated by MG Robin Kendrick-Yates and the windmill was donated by MG Jonathan Correia. This past year he started speaking with the HCMGA Speakers Bureau and somehow manages to twist all topics into creating edible landscapes. In addition, Bennie is currently serving on the Genoa Friendship Gardens Steering Committee. Bennie hopes to continue working with the Genoa Friendship Gardens to update parts of the garden, teach hands-on Green Thumb workshops, and generally draw more visitors to GFG to see all the wonderful work our volunteers do.

Bennie currently lives in Pearland with his wife Lucy, dog Dolly, and 25 catfish that are just about ready to konk on the head and invite into the kitchen for dinner. When not gardening, Bennie works at Sysco as a Supply Chain Project Manager.



Texas wildflower garden at Genoa Friendship Gardens

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.



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!



Hurricane Season is here!

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

For Harris County Master Gardeners Only!



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

Bea Bomba, Les Bujko, Suzanne Cobarruvias, Regina Flaherty, Cheryl Gans, Sue Gortemiller, Amanda Mendoza, Douglas Paluska, Jeff Pratt, Lisa Rawl and Jarvis Taylor

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.

Planting times are for seeds unless otherwise noted	Vegetable Garden Planting Dates for Harris County											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Artichoke	Dormant Crowns								Transplants			
Asparagus (dormant crowns)									Transplants			
Beans - Snap & Lima (Butterbean)			Snap&Lima					Snap				
Beets												
Broccoli (transplants)												
Brussels Sprouts (transplants)												
Cabbage (transplants)												
Cabbage - Chinese (transplants)												
Carrots												
Cauliflower (transplants)												
Chard, Swiss												
Collards (transplants)												
Corn												
Cucumbers												
Eggplant (transplants)												
Garlic												
Kale (transplants)												
Kohlrabi (transplants)												
Leeks	Transplants								Seeds			
Lettuce - also Arugula, Mache, Sorrel												
Melon - Cantaloupe, Honeydew												
Mustard												
Okra												
Onion - bulbing	Transplants									Seeds		
Onion - multiplying/bunching												
Peas - English & Snap												
Peas - Southern												
Pepper (transplants)												
Potato - Irish (cut pieces)												
Potato - Sweet (slips)												
Pumpkin												
Radish												
Spinach												
Squash - Summer												
Squash - Winter												
Tomato												
Turnips												
Summer Greens - Malabar, Amaranth												
Watermelon												

Average Last Freeze Dates (Hobby 2/8, Bush 3/1) Average First Freeze Dates (Bush 11/30, Hobby 12/20)

Plants grown over winter may require protection during freezing weather. Seeds and transplants started in the heat of summer will benefit from shading during establishment.



TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE

EXTENSION SERVICE

13105 NORTHWEST FREEWAY, SUITE 1000

HOUSTON, TX 77040

713-274-0950

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

hcmga.tamu.edu

Follow Us On Facebook, Twitter & Instagram

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



www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners

www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyHorticulture



<https://twitter.com/pharrishort>



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



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

MG In-person Volunteer Gardening Opportunities

Learning Tuesdays at Centennial Gardens

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

Genoa Friendship Garden

1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Houston 77034

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

Every Monday and Wednesday we 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