

# Urban Dirt

Gardening Events and Information for Texans

## Corpse Flowers I Have Known and Loved

Article and photos by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

I went, I saw, I snapped a pic. Corpse flowers captivate me. In 2010 I saw my first one. An *Amorphophallus titanum* named Lois bloomed at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. Houstonians went nuts. The museum was open for 24 hours for a few days and crowds showed up. People lined up with their dollars for a chance to see and perhaps smell a bloom that reeked of death. Museum members got in for free and I was working second shift a short distance away in the medical center. I lined up around midnight with the others, including some Goth visitors, for three days to see Lois. Lois reached a height of 69 inches and had approximately 68,000 visitors in a short time. This was amazing since corpse flowers only bloom about three days. Zac Stayton was the horticulturist at that time and I chatted briefly with him. The museum did not expect that many visitors and for the first few days there were no baubles for the visitors to purchase. HMNS quickly ordered Lois t-shirts, buttons, etc. and according to Zac they sold over \$100,000 worth of Lois merchandise. A bit of that was my money.

The plants are called corpse flowers because the stench they release when blooming smells like carrion. This smell attracts insects that will pollinate the large flower. *Amorphophallus titanum*, also referred to as Titan arum, is found in Sumatran rainforests. It

likes warm, humid conditions and can reach a height of six to ten feet. It is becoming rare due to encroachment of its natural environment. In the wild, the corpse flower can bloom about every three years, but in a greenhouse the first bloom can take up to seven years to bloom. Its corm can weigh up to 100 pounds. A corm is different from a bulb. Bulbs are modified leaves and corms are distended stem bases that have scaly leaves. Corpse flowers have the largest corm in the world. They also have the largest unbranched inflorescence (flower) in the world. When it prepares to bloom, it can grow up to four inches a day and its temperature also rises. The bloom will only last about three days before it collapses.

*cont'd on pg. 3*

*Lois at the Houston Museum of Natrual Science*



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

# UPCOMING EVENTS - JULY 2023

## Educational Programs

**July 11**, First Tuesday 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Program: *TBA*. Meeting in-person at Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Road, Houston 77055

## Public Gardening Lectures

**July 12**, 11:30 a.m., *Container Gardening* by Lynetta Freeman, Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Rd., Cypress, TX 77433

## Houston Public Library Summer Lectures with the Master Gardeners

**July 5**, 5:00 p.m., *Fall Vegetable Gardening* by Teresa See, McCrane-Kashmere Gardens Library, 5411 Pardee St., Houston, TX 77026

**July 13**, 11:00 a.m., *Rainwater Harvesting* by Teresa See, Mancuso Neighborhood Library, 6767 Belfort, Houston, TX 77087

**July 18**, 11:00 a.m., *Container Gardening* by Teresa See, Jungman Neighborhood Library, 5830 Westheimer Rd., Houston, TX 77057

**July 20**, 6:00 p.m., *Organic Gardening* by Jean Fefer, Kendall Neighborhood Library, 609 N. Eldridge, Houston, TX 77079

## Green Thumb Gardening Series

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

### Fall Vegetable Gardening

**July 10**, 10 - 11:30 a.m. For the HCC program, register in advance to receive the link: [hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops](https://hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops)

**July 18**, 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://facebook.com/harriscountyp/live)

## Green Thumb Workshop

**July 22**, 9 - 11 a.m. *Starting Tomatoes From Seeds Workshop* by Bennie Matusek. Learn how to properly prepare your garden bed and practice planting tomato seeds! Each participant will go home with seeds and propagation soil. Register [HERE](#)

## Open Garden Day at Genoa Friendship Gardens

**July 17**, 8:30 - 11 a.m. If you missed our sales or just want one plant (or more!), 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

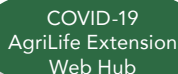
## Youth Events

**July 21**, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. "Summer Movie at Woodchase Park". Master Gardeners, Growing with Plants and Nature Committee will join other groups providing children's activities from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. The movie, "Minions: the Rise of Gru" will begin at 8:30 p.m. Everyone welcome to this fun, free event!

Please visit us at the social media pages below:

- [Harris County Extension Horticulture Facebook Page](#)
- [Harris County Master Gardeners Facebook Page](#)
- [Harris County Family and Community Health Facebook Page](#)

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



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

CEA – Horticulture  
 Brandi Keller - [Brandi.Keller@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:Brandi.Keller@ag.tamu.edu)  
 Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator  
 Stephanie Gray - [stephanie.gray@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:stephanie.gray@ag.tamu.edu)



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[UrbanDirt.harrishort@gmail.com](mailto:UrbanDirt.harrishort@gmail.com)

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*Corpse Flowers I Have Known and Loved, cont'd from pg. 1*

The spadix, or central spike, has male and female flowers. If it is fertilized by the carnivorous insects (dung beetles and flesh flies) it attracts, it will bear red-orange fruit at the base of its spadix. This fruit is poisonous. On occasion, the corpse flower bears so many fruits that the plant will die. Corpse flowers generally have a life span of 30-40 years.

At the end of May, this year, the Museum of Natural Science announced it had another corpse flower that was about to bloom. Meg was about to give birth. This time the corpse flower was located inside

the museum in the Cockrell Butterfly Center. No free entry for me even though I still have membership. Non-members paid 12 dollars a pop for entry. Meg was about 7-8 years old and she wasn't as tall as Lois. She stood roughly 40 inches high. Her spadix was also a



HMNS' Meg corpse flower

different color than Lois'. Meg had a purple spadix while Lois' spadix was a pale yellow. With Lois, I smelled a slight odor of decay but there was none with Meg. I admired and loved her anyway. There were no gewgaws for sale either. I'm not sure how they will keep tally of the number of visitors. Since it was in the butterfly center everyone was spread out and Meg was in the lower part so some visitors may not have gone down that far.

Now for a step back in time. In 2010, after seeing Lois, I ordered a corpse flower for the Genoa Friendship Garden. Jan Kapner agreed to babysit it since she was at the garden most days. We named her Theresa Amor. Theresa did quite

well until winter. Corpse flowers are tropical plants and that winter the heating went out in our greenhouse. Theresa Amor died without

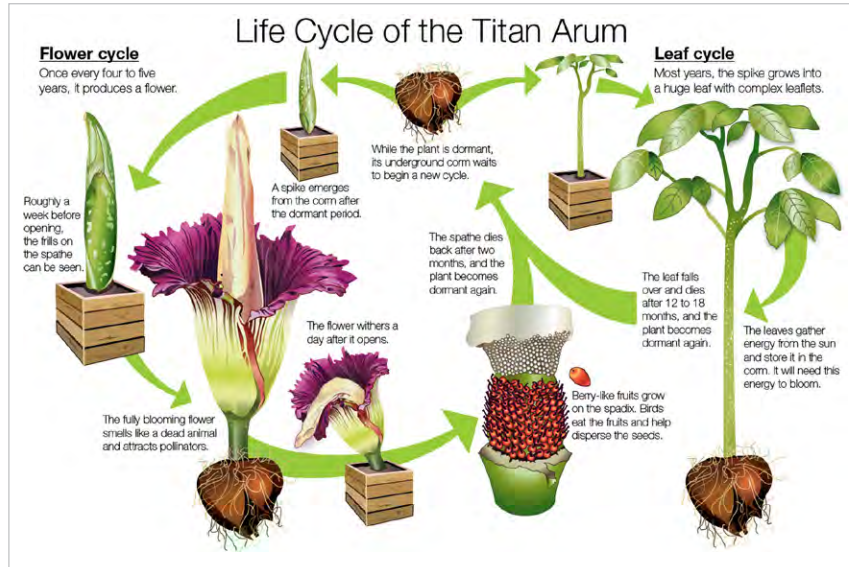
a whimper. Determined, I ordered another that spring. It did well until Jan and her husband went on vacation. She posted a sign that said "Do Not Water". Someone didn't listen and this time the corpse flower drowned. I gave up after that. Some things are not meant to be.

Fast forward to Wednesday, June 14th. While attending the bench dedication for Georgia Lau, I spotted another member of the *Amorpho-*

*phallus* family at the Genoa Friendship Garden! This one is named Morticia. *Amorphophallus paeoniifolius* is also called the elephant foot yam and since it is edible it is grown as a crop throughout Southeast Asia and the Pacific islands. The plant has a purple inflorescence and comes with a pungent smell. If pollinated, it will also bear red berries. There are many uses. In some Indian states the corm is mashed or fried.



*Amorphallus paeoniifolius* aka Morticia



Life-Cycle-of-the-Titan-Arum

Courtesy of Chicagobotanic.org



Theresa Amor, Genoa Friendship Gardens corpse flower

It might be added to curries. The stems and leaves are also cooked. The elephant foot grows under the same conditions as the corpse flower. It's a subtropical that prefers warm, humid growing conditions, The plant can reach a height of about two feet with corms that weigh up to 30 pounds. I'm wondering if the plant is being grown for the glory or if it will be harvested and cooked. I would try it. Wouldn't you?

## NATIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH

# American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*)

Article and photos by Robin Yates, Master Gardener

We each had our favorite subjects in school, usually those we excelled at. I found the opposite to be true as well. I hated the subjects I sucked at—music and art. I never could draw anything the teacher asked. My hands would never cooperate to replicate anything even faintly resembling the subject. It seemed that my brain wasn't made for doing anything except math and science... until I started growing native plants. Watching them through the seasons, as they change their color palette, has been educational and fulfilling, giving me confidence in an area I previously had not even thought I could feel comfortable.

The native plant I would like to introduce you to this month is one of my favorite shade tolerant understory plants, American Beautyberry, *Callicarpa americana*. Talk about being well named! The genus, *Callicarpa*, in Greek means 'beauty fruit.' This perennial shrub spans the color wheel from brown to green, white and pink, to purple, all in the span of a few months. It is like one of the kaleidoscopes we used to play with as kids!

American Beautyberry grows best in part shade but will also thrive in full sun. It prefers moist soil, of just about any type. It is easy to grow and propagate. I will often find seeds from last year sprouting in the shade of the parent plant. It grows to 6 feet tall and wide. It dies back in the winter and can be trimmed or allowed to grow into a small tree over time.

The color cascade begins with the brown bark of last year's growth giving way to new growth with more of a reddish-brown bark. The leaves are a rich green with pink-to-white blooms arriving May to July. These blooms turn into clusters of green berries winding along the branches. In August the berries start to turn an iridescent purple starting closest to the trunk and gradually reaching the last berries on the branch. It is a sight to behold! You may find a white fruited *C. americana* var. *lactea*, in some nurseries. The berries will remain after the leaves fall and are a choice nourishment for many birds and other wildlife through the winter. My wife and I have gotten into canning this year, and we can't wait to try making jam from the berries this fall.



American Beautyberry, *Callicarpa americana*

American Beautyberry is not only an attractive plant to us. Pollinators enjoy nectar from the spring blooms. Many species of birds and mammals enjoy the seeds through the fall and winter. It is also a larval host plant for spring azure butterflies and snow-berry clearwing moths.

This is a popular plant!

Medicinal uses have been found for the leaves, branches and roots of American Beautyberry for malarial fever, dizziness, colic and rheumatism by indigenous peoples. The leaves have been used for mosquito and biting insect control since the early 20th century. Studies conducted by the Agricultural Research Service revealed two compounds—callicarpenal and intermedeol—which are responsible for this.



A bee enjoying nectar from this American Beautyberry

Pretty cool, but I'm sure glad I don't have to rub crushed leaves all over to keep the bugs away!

You will find *C. Americana* in the perennial and native plant beds at the Genoa Friendship Gardens. Come on out, and I'll show you around. We sold them at the perennial plant sale, and we may have some more for sale this fall. I am hoping to have a seed and plant swap in October. I have already been gathering seeds from this spring's floral display, in the hope that I can

both give them away and grow plants to share next spring and summer. Today, I was gathering clasping coneflower, purple coneflower, and lanceleaf coreopsis seeds from plants that have gone to seed. Propagating native plants is easy and enjoyable. Why don't you join me? You'll find me in the shade:) Stay cool!

#### References:

[https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=CAAM2](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=CAAM2)

<https://www.fnps.org/plant/callicarpa-mericana#:~:text=Insects%3A,Attracts%20various%20pollinators%2C%20especially%20bees.>

[https://plants.usda.gov/DocumentLibrary/factsheet/pdf/fs\\_caam2.pdf](https://plants.usda.gov/DocumentLibrary/factsheet/pdf/fs_caam2.pdf)



# GREEN THUMB STARTING TOMATOES FROM SEEDS WORKSHOP

## JULY 22ND

Learn how to properly prepare your garden bed and practice planting tomato seeds!

***Each participant will go home with seeds and propagation soil.***

Adults with children welcome to bring children free of charge.



22 JULY  
9am-10am

BENNIE MATUSEK  
MASTER GARDENER



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



**\$20 REGISTER HERE: <https://bit.ly/3PlcJ0w>**

**For questions email [stephanie.gray@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:stephanie.gray@ag.tamu.edu)**

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# July Gardening Calendar

by Karen Shook, Master Gardener

I am repeating myself, but my personal garden calendar in July says do what is required for maintenance (weed, water, mulch, deadhead, harvest) early in the day, then get back to the air conditioning. After spending the morning working outdoors, I question the data which says May and early June temperatures were lower than historic averages.

## Perennials and Ornamental Grasses

- There are some perennials that can provide midsummer blooms. For example, consider some of the salvias to provide summer color. Planting in July is possible if you take care to keep the root ball and surrounding soil moist. For existing plants, cut summer blooming stalks back to the first or second set of leaves, then fertilize and water to keep them blooming.
- Ornamental grasses will do well in the heat as long as they have adequate moisture. Many start to bloom in July.

## Annuals

- Some annuals (amaranths, cosmos, marigold, etc.) can be direct seeded in July and you can plant some summer color plants. Again, maintain moisture in the root ball and soil to help get roots established. Remember that even heat tolerant annuals may not bloom as well as you'd like in our heat.

## Bulbs

- My crinum bulbs, a gift from a friend, are providing beautiful, abundant blooms right now. A reminder that I need to cut them back annually in the spring, even when a freeze doesn't force me to do so.
- Seedpods that may form after summer bulbs bloom are a waste of the plant's energy. As you walk through your garden, remove the pods and old flower spikes
- When canna shoots have finished blooming, cut back to the soil line.

## 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](http://Weather.gov/wrh/climate)

We have had a relatively wet spring, but the hot summer months ahead call for vigilance. Watering guidelines typically have advice about depth of watering for specific plants (6 inches for the lawn, 12 inches for established trees). One test is to use a long handled, flathead screwdriver. It will push through wet soil easily, but become more difficult to push when you reach dry soil. Push down until you meet resistance, grab at the soil surface to pull out and check depth.

## 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.
- Continue to cut some roses (to first leaf with 5 leaflets) to enjoy indoors and promote more blooms. The roses probably won't like the heat, so blooms may be smaller.

## Shrubs

- Watch those shallow-rooted azaleas, they are drought vulnerable and are setting buds for spring bloom.
- Fertilize young shrubs and trees if you haven't done so in the past 6 to 8 weeks.

## Lawns

- If your lawn has too much shade, prune out some lower and inner branches of trees. Now is a good time to consider replacing lawn in those too shady, too sunny areas with groundcovers.
- It is chinch bug season. If you see irregular patches of dead or stunted grass, check for chinch bugs.

## Edibles (vegetables, herbs, berries, fruits)

- Check the attached link for the guide to this month's seed and transplant options. There are a few options with ideal planting times in July and August, but July is generally a quiet time in the vegetable garden, a good time to start preparing the soil and planning your fall garden.  
[\*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.
- Snip off spent blooms on crape myrtle before they set seed. Fertilize.

## HERB OF THE MONTH

# Cilantro (*Coriandrum sativum*)

by Karen McGowan, Master Gardener

In the midst of summer 2023, next up in our drought-tolerant Mediterranean herb series is one with a flavor probably one of the most polarizing in the herb world: Cilantro, which is also sometimes referred to as “coriander.” The herb cilantro and the spice coriander are actually from two different parts of the same plant (*Coriandrum sativum*); cilantro is its leaves, and coriander is its seeds. While the two are often considered exclusive to Mexican and Thai cuisines, cilantro was and continues to be a staple in Mediterranean gardens and kitchens.

Just a glimpse at cilantro is enough to tell that it’s in the same Apiaceae family as carrots and parsley, along with many others, including dill, cumin, chervil, and Queen Anne’s lace. The long, thin stems of cilantro emerge in clumps from one taproot and frequently sprawl out over time. Perched atop each stem are the feathery, fern-like leaves we (some of us) love to munch and mix into any number of delicious dishes, including chopped with onions, tomatoes, and jalapenos for Texans’ beloved pico de gallo. The

lower leaves of the plant are a little more rounded out than the top ones and closely resemble parsley. A lightning-fast grower, cilantro reaches up to 2 feet tall and wide.

Native to the Mediterranean and southern Europe, cilantro has long been grown globally. Today, it is

produced in almost every country in the world, with Mexico the leader in national production, and California, in states within the U.S. Because cilantro bolts in high heat, it has a very short life span, but this short life can be prolonged by choosing a variety that handles higher temperatures without sacrificing flavor. Some favorites include Calypso, Marino, and Santo varieties. On the other hand, some varieties, like Festival cilantro, can handle colder temperatures, ideal for winter growing in zones 8-9.

Cilantro’s entire planting process is mostly based around prolonging the plant’s life before bolting; the herb only takes about a month of growth before harvesting can begin, so you’ll get the most of your plants by planting just after the last frost of spring. In entirely frost-free areas, you may even be able to grow cilantro during the winter! For a continuous harvest, it’s recommended to plant more cilantro every other week (like corn).



Cilantro



Cooking with cilantro



Hydroponically grown cilantro

Cilantro’s taproot doesn’t allow for easy transplanting, so plan for your cilantro’s first home to be its only home. Sow the

cont’d on pg. 8

*Cilantro*, cont'd from pg. 7

seeds directly in the ground or in a medium-sized container. Sow seeds ¼-½ inches deep and 3-4 inches apart. When planting in-ground, don't be afraid to place them close together. When they grow, the compacted foliage will shade the ground well, keeping the roots happily cool. If you're late to the planting game or need a more convenient method, many nurseries sell coriander starts (usually very inexpensive). Simply plant cilantro straight into its new home, taking care not to damage the taproot. While the plant typically prefers full sun, in the afternoon in south Texas summers, some shielding from the sun will create



*Coriander seeds*

a happier cilantro environment. Water regularly; however, recall that this is a drought-tolerant herb, preferring a drier habitat.

Referring back to the opening comment about cilantro being a polarizing herb: If by chance, the thought of cilantro makes you cringe – you're not alone. Up to 14% of the population actually has a genetic variation that causes a soapy aftertaste when eating cilantro. However, those with the "soapy" gene can become acclimated to the taste – especially if they grew up eating it as part of their culture's cuisine. If you just can't stand it though, there are some pretty good cilantro substitutes, including Vietnamese cilantro and papalo.

A personal confession: I was part of that "up to 14% of the population," and when I first tried cilantro, it was definitely reminiscent of the taste sensation of a missed soapy section of your hand that made contact with your mouth – not amazing. For whatever reason, though, I powered through and eventually acclimated to the taste; now cilantro is one of my absolute go-to herbs (I frequently have some in a water vase in my fridge). Through experience in using it I did discover that, whenever cooking with cilantro, it should be added in the last 1-2 minutes, because any extended cooking period accents the soapy taste. This is definitely a fresh herb that should be used as a garnish or cooked very lightly (whether in heat or with acid, such as with tomatoes or vinegar). Coriander seeds are particularly wonderful, however, when well-toasted.

Here's to adventures in your palate and your garden!

*Citations:*

<https://www.epicgardening.com/mediterranean-herbs/#Cilantro>  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/list-of-plants-in-the-family-Apiaceae-2038061>



## PLANT OF THE MONTH

# Geraniums are gardener's favorite for a colorful Fourth of July!

by Becky Lowicki, Master Gardener

Sis, boom bah! What better way to celebrate our nation's Independence Day than with the majestic color of heat-hardy garden geraniums adorned on every patio, balcony or landscape.

*Pelargonium* × *hortorum*, commonly called zonal or garden geranium, was created by American botanist Liberty Hyde Bailey who attributed the large number of forms of the common geranium as the probable crossing of *Pelargonium zonale* and *Pelargonium inquinans*. The term *hortorum* is of the Latin *hortus*, or garden.

A renowned scholar, Bailey dominated the field of horticultural literature, writing more than 65 books, including both scientific works and articles to explain botany to laypeople, as well as publications of pure taxonomy, where he also coined the words “cultivar,” “cultigen” and “indigen.” His most significant and lasting contributions were in the botanical study of cultivated plants.

### Garden geraniums

Garden geraniums are of the group of *Pelargonium* cultivars with leaves marked with a brown annular zone and cluster of flowers on a single stem in the form of large balls of tight miniature hydrangea-like flowers.

Available in a color palette featuring shades of summer orange, hot pink, majestic purple, regal red and snow white, as well as bi-colored and double-petalled, a vibrant selection of varieties can be sourced locally from local garden centers and florists for container plantings or flowerbeds.

Distinct leaf markings include selections with tri-colored leaves, silver leaves, leaves with white markings and fancy-leafed geraniums.



Geraniums in the garden

### Deadheaders' delight

While garden geraniums do not require pruning, you'll help enhance further growth by deadheading spent blooms at the base of the accompanying



Geranium planted in a container

stem. During the blooming season there will be profuse turnover of blooms, so the more you deadhead, the more new growth and blooms you'll encourage. You'll also want to trim any unhealthy brown stems or leaves.

### Caring for your geranium

In general, geraniums don't like wet feet. Choose an area with well-draining soil if planting in the landscape. For container plantings, be sure to choose a container that has adequate drainage holes. Position the plant so the top of the root ball is level with the soil line.

Incorporate compost, peat or perlite if the soil is heavily compacted. For container plantings, use a little peat moss for the best drainage. Heights range from one to three feet tall and equally wide, depending on the variety.

Geraniums thrive in the heat, so choose a sunny location and enjoy the spectacular fireworks of color all summer long.



Pink geranium on a patio

# Getting Down to Earth

Article and photos by Pam Longley, Master Gardener

## News from Genoa Friendship Gardens

GFG has seen a lot of events this month! On June 5, we hosted eight residents and two staff from Angela House, a residential facility for women who have previously been incarcerated to help them find a path back into society.

**Robin Yates** talked about the native gardens. **Linda Pearson** was on hand to tell them about pollinators and what flowers they are drawn to. **Doug McCleod** told one of his stories about being on protective duty for former President George H. W. Bush and a little about how tomatoes ripen from the bottom up. Then the women had a great time harvesting tomatoes, okra, peppers, and herbs. One of the women was so excited about having fresh okra and knew just how she was going to prepare it. I was told they

went back and made marinara and meat sauce. They all take turns in the kitchen as part of their chores. Angela House picks up produce weekly from us.

On June 12, we had a potluck lunch in the Education Building to give a proper send-off to **Rick and Cheryl Castagno**, who have been a beloved part of our team. Rick has been the Vegetable Garden Lead for over two years. He started a system to keep track of produce planted by name and date as well as assessment data for trials of certain vegetables requested by the county agent. He told me that what he wanted to do in retirement is feed hungry people.

*cont'd on pg. 11*



Robin Yates with Angela House residents



Potluck lunch for the Castagnos



Doug McCleod speaking to the Angela House guests



Angela House residents explore the Butterfly Garden with Linda Pearson

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

On June 14, we hosted over 60 friends and family members of **Georgia Lau** to dedicate a beautiful bench donated by her husband, **Clayton**, for our shade area. Nearby is a plaque and a Black Cherry Tree planted in her honor. Georgia was a Master Gardener from 2003 until her death in 2022. I remember her attending our Steering Committee meetings via Zoom until just a couple of weeks before she passed. I gathered some remembrances from fellow Master Gardeners who knew her well:

*“Georgia was a tireless worker and a wonderful organizer.” – Dianne Lawrence*

*“Georgia took on the GFG Coordinator job when that part of the organization was in turmoil. She was an excellent leader, diplomatic, and skilled at getting people to work together.” – Janice Muhm*

*“She was very reliable and always there to help when needed.” – Linda Pearson*

*“Georgia was the glue that kept us all together and never let us stray from what our purpose was and what was best for the group. She was not only our GFG Coordinator for two terms, and was also on the HCMGA Board. She started the Master Gardener Store as well as a monthly email with upcoming activities, birthdays, and nature-related verses. Above all, she was our friend.”*

– Mimi Chapman

*“She was a work horse in the garden and she also coordinated our garden sales. Georgia Lau was my fellow gardener and my friend as well. We both loved science and had both been teachers. Georgia taught chemistry at the high school level and I taught medical technology courses at the local junior college. She finished her career as the head of the science department at Channelview High School. Georgia would work at the plant sales and her husband Clayton would also be there with his camera around his neck. Clayton loves photography and his photos*

*were top notch. It is so typical of Georgia to donate a beautiful bench for weary gardeners at the Genoa Friendship Garden. Clayton has been busy following up on Georgia’s final wishes. Not only has she donated the bench and a tree to our garden, but Clayton is setting up a scholarship fund at Georgia’s request.” – Terri C. Simon*

*cont'd on pg. 12*



*At right, Mimi Chapman and Clayton Lau at Georgia Lau's bench dedication*



*Friends of Georgia with new bench*



*Back row left to right; Meredith McKinnie, Lauren Vogel, Lance Vogel, Caroline McKinnie, Front row left to right; Luke Lau, Clayton Lau, Gretchen (Lau) Vogel, Melissa (Lau) Vogel. Three grandchildren not pictured, Mason Vogel, Charlotte Lau, Thomas Lau*

## *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 a gardener, it's all about seasons. When I look around this month I'm staring at the Summer solstice, and we vegetable gardeners in South Texas know that this signals the beginning of the end of our primary growing season. That may not be true for those of us more interested in perennials, shrubs, vines, fruits and nuts, but I can name on one hand the roster of vegetables that thrive between now and the Fall. So let's tally up and see what kind of Spring season we have had at the CGS Garden this year.



*CGS Garden Coordinator Ann Zdansky shows off a portion of the harvest from June 12th.*



*Beds of summer squash(l) and zucchini are at their peak production on June 10th.*

Who can forget the Christmas freeze that reminded us that Mother Nature calls the shots that matter most. Nonetheless CGS did produce some cabbage, cauliflower, and broccoli from the multi-county trial, just to show our can-do spirit if nothing else. We planted one bed of carrots, in sort of an impulse move, and were delighted when they did great and yielded more than 100 pounds of beautiful roots for the pantries. In previous articles I've mentioned our surprising good fortune with three beds of Tuscan kale. The pantries loved it.

From the standpoint of volume and weight, onions are the big winner for early Spring harvest. We harvested over 700 pounds of Southern Belle Red and more than twice that amount of 1015Y Super Sweet white onions, and found a good home for all of them among the four pantries that we routinely donate to.

*cont'd on pg. 13*

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

The last verse of our shout-out this month is about our tomato patch. Last month we were just starting to get early production from our 175 plants in seven beds, but were concerned about some indications of Fusarium or Verticillium wilt moving in. We lost a few plants, but with careful watering and pruning we got it under control. As of this writing, we have harvested 750 pounds

of tomatoes and can project to go easily over 1000 pounds before the high temps shut us down.

Now comes summer and 100° temps. We'll stay active harvesting okra and peppers and cucumbers, and nurturing our 8 beds of sweet potatoes until we can again wake up to the cool chill of Fall and the opportunity to do it all over again.



*MG Intern Diane Hosmer(l) and CGS volunteer Alicia Rodenberger harvest peppers on June 12th.*

# 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.



In the past weeks, the Growing with Plants and Nature team has contributed to several community events.

- > Taught simple propagation methods to children in a special education class.
- > Continued our regular children's activity table each month at Towne Lake Farmer's Market.



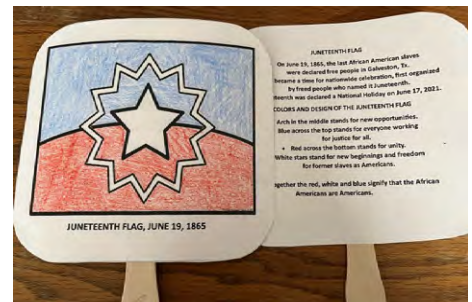
- > Worked jointly with the AgriLife Extension 4-H program at a 4-day summer camp offered by the Houston Community College, Katy Branch. Topics included: Propagation; Where in the World Did Your Food Come From?; Bugs: Good and Bad; and Reuse, Recycle, Reduce and Compost.

- > Participated in a Juneteenth event with the children coloring and learning about the Juneteenth flag.



We want to recognize the Master Gardeners who contributed to 1 or more of these events: Diane Walker, Julee Jackson, Regina Gardner, Liz Pozzi, Karen Kabacinski, George Kabacinski, Linda Persse, Lois Pierce, Pam Jackson, Vanessa Maciel, Connie Bihner, Susan Vinsinsky-Bracken, Pat Whipple, Rita Whipple, Bunthath Pek, Ana Jaramillo, Aida Pita, Jeanie Dunnihoo, Olina Raney, Bea Bomba, and Deborah Maly.

**A Big Thank You to You All!**



cont'd on pg. 15

Growing with Plants and Nature, con'td from pg. 14

## AgriLife Extension 4-H program, summer camp offered by the Houston Community College, Katy Branch



## 'BUG' OF THE MONTH

# Squash Vine Borer

by Debra Caldwell, Advanced Master Gardener: Entomology

Your beautiful squash plant that was thriving the day before is now wilted and dying! What happened? The culprit could be the dreaded squash vine borer (SVB). In Texas, there are at least two species of squash vine borers, the southwestern squash vine borer, *Melittia calabaza* and the squash vine borer, *Melittia cucurbitae*. Vine borer adults are moths in the Order Lepidoptera. The adults look similar to wasps because they fly quickly, have black and orange coloration, and make a buzzing sound. They are about an inch to 1½ inches long, have a dark thorax and bright orange abdomen and legs. The forewings are dark and hind wings are clear.

Female moths lay reddish-brown eggs on stems and leaves near the base of squash plants and other members of the Cucurbit family such as cucumbers and melons. Larvae hatch from the eggs and burrow into the stems. The caterpillars feed on the tissue inside the stem, disrupting the flow of water and nutrients.



Squash vine borer adult.

Photo by Ilona L, Flickr

You will know you have a problem when you see wilting and dying plants. You may also see sawdust like frass (caterpillar waste) around holes in the stem. As they mature, larvae crawl out of the plants, burrow down into soil and form cocoons to pupate. In our area, we usually have two generations a year. The adults emerge from April to May and begin to lay eggs. Activity continues until late fall in November to December.

Once the caterpillars are in the stems it becomes very difficult to prevent the loss of squash plants. Controlling squash vine borers involves the implementation of several Integrated Pest Management (IPM) methods beginning with plant protection and prevention strategies.



Squash vine borer larva.

Photo by Jeff Hahn

**Prevention and Monitoring.** Good sanitation is important to prevent SVB in the next crop. Pull all infested plants and immediately discard them. Don't put them in the compost pile. Crop rotation is key because larvae overwinter in soil. As they mature into adults, they will quickly infest the new squash. If you don't have space to plant squash in a new area, you can achieve the same effect by skipping a year or two.

**Physical Methods.** If you are planting in a new area or have waited for a couple of years to plant squash, you can use floating row covers to keep the adult moths from laying eggs. You will have to pollinate the flowers by hand or remove the row covers to allow pollinators to reach the flowers. This method does not work if the soil already has been infested by the SVBs.

Some gardeners wrap aluminum foil or nylon stockings around lower stems to act as a physical barrier. Slitting open an infested stem and cutting out the caterpillar is another method that may work. Some gardeners thread a wire through an infested stem to skewer the caterpillars.

**Cultural Methods.** Tilling the soil may cut up some of the pupae or bring them up to the surface where they can be picked by hand or eaten by birds. Staggering planting of squash throughout the season is a strategy some gardeners use. The older plants can be used as trap plants to protect younger plants. As older plants succumb, new plants will be ready to start producing before they also wilt and die.

cont'd on pg. 17



## *Squash Vine Borer*, cont'd from pg. 16

**Biological Methods.** Plant varieties that are more resistant to SVBs. According to the University of Maryland “butternut, Tromboncino, and cushaw are resistant and yellow crookneck is less susceptible than zucchini”. Others recommend ‘Tatume’ aka ‘Calabacita’ squash which produces 10- to 12-foot-long vines and round fruit.

The bacteria, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, can be applied as a foliar spray or injected into infested squash stems. Bt bacteria produce proteins that destroy the digestive tracts of caterpillars and kill them within three days. It is usually effective for a week or less after spraying because it is degraded by sunlight and can be washed away by rain or irrigation water.

Beneficial nematodes *Stinernema carpocapsae* mixed with water are sometimes sprayed onto the soil to kill larvae. If the stems are already infested, the nematode mixture can be injected into stems to kill the caterpillars.

**Chemical Methods.** Chemical control may be necessary to manage squash vine borers, but it should be done in conjunction with monitoring for adults and caterpillars to determine which insecticide is appropriate. Pay particular attention to the life cycle of the insect because sprays aren’t effective after the caterpillars burrow into stems.

Spinosad that is applied when adult moths are active, has been shown to be effective in reducing the numbers of borers. To offer some protection to pollinating insects, apply insecticides early in the morning or in the evening when pollinators are less active.

Pyrethroids are the most common types of insecticides used to control squash vine borer. The best time to spray is when moths are actively laying eggs and before the larvae hatch and burrow into the plants. Be sure to carefully read and follow directions on the label when using any insecticide.

Whew! You may wonder if a few zucchinis are worth all the effort. Monitoring and prevention are your best weapons against the SVBs. This is one of the times when the old adage, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”, rings true.

### References

- <https://texasinsects.tamu.edu/southwestern-squash-vine-borer/>
- <https://agrilife.org/urban-ipm/2015/06/26/161/>
- <https://citybugs.tamu.edu/2018/08/13/living-with-squash-vine-borer/>
- <https://citybugs.tamu.edu/files/2018/08/Middleton-2018-Squash-vine-borer-biology-mgt.pdf>
- <https://extension.umd.edu/resource/squash-vine-borer-vegetables>

# MGs on Tour

Article and photos by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener

On June 17, a dozen Master Gardeners and interns toured the gardens at The Branch School. The tour was led by Jean Fefer, affectionately known to the students as “Dr. Jean”. Jean showed us the gardens planted by the students and the low water methods that are used successfully to grow food and other plants.

The Branch School is a private school for Pre-K through grade 8, with an emphasis on hands-on, project-based learning with a Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Math (STEAM) focus. The school is located in the Spring Branch area. Jean Fefer co-teaches the Outdoor Classroom (OC) curriculum with Ann Hightower, a retired Harris County Master Gardener. Students in grades 5-8 have the option to sign up for two 45-minute OC classes per week (as an elective). In Pre-K through 4th grade, the whole class attends 30 minutes per week.

We saw the original garden beds, which are galvanized livestock water troughs (now extremely popular with gardeners). These beds are the perfect height for the Pre-K and Kindergarten students and are watered with the Olla method (two ½-gallon clay pots



Example of how roots grow near/ around Olla

in each bed). The second iteration of garden beds are constructed from cinder blocks. There are three of these, used by 1st-4th grade students and are watered with drip irrigation. There were still some tomatoes, peppers, sweet potatoes and a cover crop of clover in these beds.

Due to construction of a new Middle School building on the expanded property, ten new garden beds were built last year; these were constructed with wood. These beds were the main focus of our tour, and where we learned how the Olla method works. The ten new beds are 3 ft x 8 ft, contain two 1-gallon Ollas each, and are tended by the 1st-8th grade students. Rainwater in the 40,000 gallon cistern is collected from the roof of the new Middle School building and is used to fill the Ollas in the 10 new beds. The overflow water is fed by drains and pipes underground to a large swale area at the edge of the property where wildflowers are abundant.

Jean showed us examples of how the Olla pots are constructed with a terra cotta pot glued to its saucer, turned over, buried in the soil and



Jean Fefer with an Olla pot

cont'd on pg. 19



View of the 10 new raised beds

*MGs on Tour, cont'd from pg. 18*

fitted with a rubber stopper to contain water and keep mosquitos and frogs out of the pots. The Ollas are filled with water every other day in hot weather, and require less attention in cooler weather. Water seeps naturally through the terra cotta into the surrounding soil to water the plants. The clay pot method uses less than one-tenth of the water used in the typical drip irrigation set-up and, more importantly, delivers the water to the root zone where it is needed by the plant.

The students planted vegetables and other plants in the central beds, and the four corner beds are planted with pollinator attractors, which will hopefully reseed for the next season. We saw tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, cotton, roselle, buckwheat, and the “three sisters” combination of corn, squash and beans. Cotton, you ask? Yes, cotton is grown

to teach the students how to spin it into fiber and how to crochet with the threads. Last fall cabbage was so abundant that Jean made sauerkraut and coleslaw for the students to taste. One main takeaway from

the tour is the importance of compost in your garden bed. It is crucial for absorbing water and making it available to the plant roots to grow healthy plants.



*Tour group led by Jean Fefer*



*Cotton plant*

Another improvement with the new building is an indoor office for the OC teachers. This gives Jean and Ann a space for seed starting and propagation, a small refrigerator for storing seeds, and some air conditioned space for the two volunteers. This tour was a great opportunity to learn how to garden with less water and see how the Olla method has been successfully implemented. I was especially happy to see the majority of the group were interns who wanted to see the gardens and learn about water conservation – they will have something interesting to discuss during their upcoming MG class on that topic.

Special thanks to Jean Fefer for leading the tour and teaching us about clay pot irrigation. You can learn more about it by watching her recent Green Thumb presentation at <https://www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners/videos/644638624190811>, reading her article in the July/August 2022 Texas Gardener magazine or watching her on video <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3873898459397272>.

# Spring Semester Learning and Fun at the Spring Branch Elementary Garden

Article and photos by Deb Stutsman, Master Gardener

We had a busy and productive spring semester at the Spring Branch Elementary Garden!

Garden volunteers worked with the PTA to sponsor a school-wide fundraiser for the garden. It was called "Pennies for Plants", and students and staff collected coins and dollars for three weeks



Learning about our veggies and butterflies

to donate to the garden fund. It created a lot of excitement about the garden and was very successful! As a thank you to students and staff for their amazing support, the garden volunteers organized a Ladybug Release Day. Everyone

received a live ladybug at recess to release anywhere in our garden. Lots of ladybugs-- and fun!

We had bumper crops of all veggies that students planted and harvested this spring-- except the 2nd grade onions. We normally have lots of extra big onions to give away, but we feel the wet and cool spring this year attributed to a smaller harvest.



5th graders planting cherry tomatoes

In January and February, 3rd graders harvested and took home their cabbage. Students planted spring veggies around mid March.

Kindergarteners planted green bean seeds, 4th graders planted sweet and hot pepper plants, and 5th graders planted a variety of cherry tomato plants. In April, our Lifeskills class harvested a nice crop of



Learning about the life cycles of beans

spinach and lettuce. In May, Kindergarteners harvested and took home their green beans, 1st graders pulled up their carrots (seeds planted in fall), 2nd graders pulled their onions (sets planted in fall), 4th graders took home several helpings of sweet and hot peppers, and 5th graders took home lots of cherry tomatoes.



1st grade carrots

As an extension to Earth Day, garden volunteers provided three days of informative garden tours for all 300 Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd graders. Each volunteer took small groups of students around the garden, and told them about six different veggie areas, and six butterfly and host plant areas.

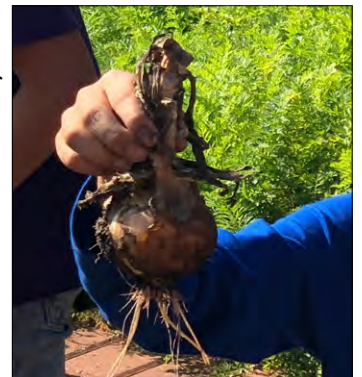


Kindergarteners picking their beans

Students put matching stickers on a two-sided fan to remember each area they visited and what learned.

On the last day of school, the school staff was invited to come pick all leftover veggies and herbs in the garden to take home. We

will continue to maintain the butterfly and herb areas of the garden throughout the summer. Peppers and tomatoes are still producing, so summer school and office staff will continue to harvest and take those treats home to enjoy. We are looking forward to another great year of learning, discovery, and excitement in the Spring Branch Elementary garden when school starts again!



2nd graders harvesting onions

# Master Gardeners



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

## Topics, Dates and Locations

<b>Native Plants</b>	Wednesday, June 28   11 AM - 12 PM   Young Neighborhood Library
<b>Fall Vegetable Gardening</b>	Wednesday, July 5   5 PM - 6 PM   McCrane-Kashmere Gardens Neighborhood Library
<b>Composting</b>	Friday, July 7   2 PM - 3 PM   Collier Regional Library
<b>Rainwater Harvesting</b>	Thursday, July 13   11 AM - 12 PM   Mancuso Neighborhood Library
<b>Container Gardening</b>	Tuesday, July 18   11 AM - 12 PM   Jungman Neighborhood Library
<b>Organic Gardening</b>	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](http://www.houstonlibrary.com/events)  
or scan the QR code below.



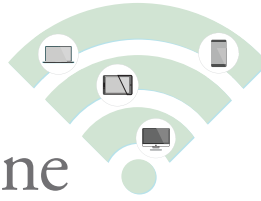
**John P. McGovern Adult  
Summer Reading Program**  
AT HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



Linking YOU to the World  
[www.houstonlibrary.org](http://www.houstonlibrary.org)



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# Ask A Master Gardener Online

by the AAMGO Committee

**Q:** I tried to start a tray of seeds in May, but I didn't have much success. I was trying to start sunflower seeds. First, I planted some seeds directly in the garden. By the next morning the squirrels had dug up and eaten them all. Then I tried again in seed starting medium in trays with humidity domes - I left the vents open. This was more to protect my seeds from the squirrels than for humidity. I left the trays with the domes out in the sun. I think it was maybe too hot and humid in those trays. I got some germination, but none of the seeds really grew so much except for a couple.

I would like some advice on starting seeds in Houston. Is it something to only do in February or March? Do you start them in trays but put the trays in the shade? Or indoors? Is that enough light? Is the May/June heat too hot? How does one protect them from squirrels/birds?

I have some Black-eyed Susan seeds which say they can be started even late in the season -- but after these experiences I am not sure how. I have some sunflower seeds left over too.

**A:** Thank you for sending in your questions about starting seeds. I am sorry to hear that you have had some challenges with it. You are not alone in this--I failed many more times than I succeeded, and yet every year I start more seeds and keep on trying. There is a definite learning curve involved in the process for some of us.

First, dealing with pests such as squirrels and birds is a challenge when you try to plant seeds directly outside. Sometimes there is strength in numbers. In other words, you can plant many more seeds than you would like to have in the hopes of their missing some. Physical barriers may help, such as chicken wire or other wire screening. However, those can be a problem if not removed once the seeds germinate (although with chicken wire there is usually enough room for the seeds to grow through. Other physical deterrents include motion-activated sprinklers and squirrel repellent. These work with mixed success, though you can

have better results if you are concentrating in a specific area of your yard. This article, [Squirrels and Nuisance Wildlife](#) from the University of Florida has helpful tips for keeping squirrels away from your garden plants.

When it comes to starting seeds, we can do that almost any time here in Houston. However, this does not apply to all seeds. It is important to read the packet to understand the ideal germination conditions for each seed. Some of the variables include soil temperature, light exposure, oxygen, and moisture levels. It sounds as though your seedlings under the humidity dome and in the sun did simply become too hot and humid to survive. To prevent this, it is important to remove the humidity dome as soon as the seeds germinate. Even if it is only a few that have sprouted, most will follow if uncovered. Just be sure to keep the soil uniformly moist but not wet. At the point that they have germinated all seeds benefit from good air circulation to help prevent fungal diseases.

As to light, seedlings benefit from good light exposure, though the amount needed varies among the type being grown. Once the seeds have germinated and formed their "true" leaves, they need light to form the energy necessary to grow. In the summer direct sun is likely too powerful. In the case of the seedlings that you started, the sun heating up the humidity dome was too strong for the young plants. It is not unusual at all to start summer seeds under a porch or patio so that the heat is not too intense. You can gradually expose them to more direct sunlight for a little bit each day until they can handle the heat (depending on the needs of the plant).

Alternatively, an indoor grow light is a very helpful thing. These can be used throughout the year to start and grow seeds indoors. They are particularly helpful in the winter as seeds for the spring garden are often started indoors in early January so that they are ready to plant out in March. Houston gardeners will also be starting seeds for the fall garden indoors around July to plant out by early September. Personally, I use my indoor lights throughout the year, and have the flexibility with them to

*cont'd on pg. 23*

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*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 July

- Sat., July 1**      **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., July 8**      **Tomball Farmers Market**, 205 West Main St., Tomball, 77375 – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. .
- Thurs., July 21**   **Westchase Farmer's Market**, 10503 Westheimer Rd., Houston, 77042 – 3 to 7 p.m.
- Sat., July 15**      **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., July 17**    **GFG Open Garden Day**, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston 77034 – 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.
- Sat., July 29**      **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. 22*

start seeds all year long if I choose. This video, [Starting Plants from Seeds](#), was created by our former Horticulture County Agent Paul Winski. It has a lot of helpful information on starting seeds and can answer some of the questions that you have.

This article in our publication the *Urban Dirt*, [Starting Plants from Seeds](#), was written by one of our Master Gardeners, Debra

Caldwell. It is an excellent explanation of the seed starting process and how to decipher a seed packet.

I hope with these tips and resources you will have better results with growing some of your garden plants from seeds! Please feel free to contact us in the future with any additional questions that you may have.

## Recipe of the Month

# Summer Zucchini and Tomato Gratin

by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener (and foodie)

What can you do with an abundance of fresh tomatoes and zucchini? Well, here's one tasty idea. We made this gratin dish last summer in our cooking group and it was devoured. The recipe calls for Roma tomatoes, but you can use any tomato you have (oooh, maybe add in yellow or other colorful tomatoes from your garden!). We made a gluten-free main dish to go with this,

so we used Corn Chex cereal instead of Panko bread crumbs. We doubled the recipe, as shown in the photo. Panko does have a gluten-free option as well that can be used. This is a nice and easy, healthy and light side dish with not too much cheese to interfere with the taste of the fresh veggies. I hope you enjoy it.

### Summer Zucchini and Tomato Gratin<sup>1</sup>

6 servings

#### Ingredients

- 2 medium zucchini, sliced
- 4 to 5 Roma tomatoes, sliced (or any tomato)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1/3 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup Panko breadcrumbs (or substitute)
- Fresh basil or other herbs, optional for garnish

#### Instructions

- Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly coat an 8x8 inch baking dish with cooking spray.
- Arrange zucchini and tomato slices, alternating between the two. Drizzle vegetables with olive oil, sprinkle with seasonings, then top with parmesan cheese and bread crumbs.
- Cover with foil and bake for 25-30 minutes until tender. Remove foil and bake an additional 10 minutes until lightly browned. Top with fresh herbs (optional).



#### Nutrition per serving

(estimated):  
 Calories: 120  
 Sugar: 4.2 g  
 Sodium: 173.6 mg  
 Fat: 1.3 g  
 Saturated Fat: 0.7 g  
 Carbohydrates: 12.7 g  
 Fiber: 2.3 g  
 Protein: 3.5 g

<sup>1</sup> We adapted this dish from the blog Eat Yourself Skinny. Here is a link to the original recipe: <https://www.eatyourselfskinny.com/summer-zucchini-tomato-gratin/>

### Red White and Blue Charcuterie

If you are looking for something simple with fresh fruit and veggies for the Independence Day holiday, consider making this easy charcuterie with berries, nuts, peppers, apples, raisins (or craisins), cherry tomatoes, chips, crackers, cheese and meats. Just alternate the red and white layers and put cheese stars on blueberries in the top left corner and, voilà, you have the stars and stripes!



Niece Stephanie's version



Jo Ann's smaller version



## 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](mailto: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](http://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/](http://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](http://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/](https://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.



# 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/](http://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](mailto: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 **July** include the following. Wish them **HAPPY BIRTHDAY** when you see them!

Tommy Arnott, Judith Brocklehurst, Terri Simons, Anjanna Desai, Evelyn Dravis, Danny Dunn, Jeanie Dunnihoo, Ralph Gingell, Sharon Grady, Lucia Hansen, Mary Hawkins, Lonee Milon, Cheryl Tucker, and Diane Walker

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

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

## Follow Us On Facebook, Twitter & Instagram

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



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

[www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyHorticulture](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:UrbanDirt.harrishort@gmail.com)