

# Urban Dirt

Exploring Ethnic Vegetables!

Gardening Events and Information for Texans

## Ethnic Indian Plants: Discover Sasi's Garden

Article and photos by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

They're not ethnic plants to Sasi. To Sasi Vajha, a gardener friend of mine, they're just homegrown edibles. Sasi is from Vijayawa, India, and his love of gardening comes from his mom, Lakshmi S. Vajha. You may remember Lakshmi. She is a self-proclaimed food artist and I wrote about her in the December, 2022 *Urban Dirt*. Lakshmi has gardened in several countries and she and her son Sasi both garden together here in Texas. Sometimes gardeners specialize in what they grow. One may prefer roses, another fruit trees or perhaps vegetables. Mine is basil. Sasi is what I call a full spectrum gardener. He loves plants. Trees, herbs, fruits, vegetables, flowers, Sasi doesn't discriminate. He tries to grow a lot of his own food since he is a vegetarian. He is also a seed saver. Some of his plants have names. Sasi also sings to his plants. He has a nice voice. To see a glimpse of Sasi's garden and hear him singing to his plants, go this link - <https://www.facebook.com/598308920/videos/275935895031963/>.

Records at statista.com show that India has the world's greatest number of vegetarians at 25%. Can you guess which country has the next to the largest percentage of vegetarians? Scroll to the end of this article for the answer! Indian food is delicious and amazing to me. The taste between dishes is varied and flavorful. So many

spices and different preparations can be used for Indian food. I have been fortunate enough to try a few dishes at work and at my friend's homes. According to euronews.com, currently, there is a tomato shortage in India due to flooding and heatwaves. Prices have skyrocketed and availability is scarce. Even McDonald's has quit adding tomatoes to its burgers. In some places prices have increased by 400%. Some suppliers need bodyguards to protect their supply or harvest. Tomatoes are such an integral part of Indian cooking that canned products are being substituted if they are available.

Sasi has several moringa trees in his back yard. The *Moringa oleifera* is native to India and is used throughout Asia. It can also be found in the Philippines, the Caribbean and Latin America just to name a few locations. It is versatile and hardy. Every bit of the moringa is edible. If the immature pods, the leaves and roots are harvested, then they can be considered vegetables. Its leaves, mature pods, seeds, tubers, bark and flowers are all edible. They can be dried and ground up or used fresh. Moringa oil resists becoming rancid. Its seeds can be used to make curries or roasted and steeped as a tea.

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

# UPCOMING EVENTS - AUGUST 2023

## Educational Programs

**Aug. 1,** First Tuesday 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Program: *What is OE?– Protecting Monarch Butterflies* by Linda Pearson, Master Gardener. Meeting in-person at Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Road, Houston, TX 77055

## Public Gardening Lectures

**Aug. 22,** 11:00 a.m., *Fall Gardening* by Stephanie McIntyre, Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Rd., Cypress, TX 77433

**Aug. 22,** 1:00 p.m., *Fall Gardening* by Teresa See, Glazier Senior Education Center, 16600 Pine Forest Lane, Houston, TX 77084

**Aug. 23,** 10:30 a.m., *Residential Rainwater Harvesting* by Teresa See, Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Drive, Houston, TX 77042

**Aug. 24,** 1:00 p.m., *Fall Gardening* by Jean Fefer, Fonteno Senior Education Center 6600 Bissonnet St., Houston, TX 77074

## Green Thumb Gardening Series

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

### Exploring Ethnic Vegetables

**Aug. 14,** 10:00 - 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)

**Aug. 15,** 11:00 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)

## Open Garden Day at Genoa Friendship Gardens

**Aug. 21,** 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

**Aug. 19,** 9:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Towne Lake Farmers Market, 9955 Barker Cypress Rd., Cypress, TX 77433. Everyone is 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](#)



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

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*Ethnic Indian Plants: Discover Sasi's Garden, cont'd from pg. 1*

Sasi's garden is an oasis of edible Indian plants along with a variety of flowers, herbs, fruits and trees. One plant he grows is tindora, *Coccinia grandis*. It is classified as a fruit and resembles a cucumber. Also called the Ivy gourd, when young they are juicy but they gradually develop a bitter taste. It can be prepared many ways. If eaten raw, it may need sugar and vinegar since it is bitter. Sasi has an American friend who pickled them and they tasted delicious to him. It is usually cooked and is excellent with a peanut sauce. It can be soaked in warm water and cooked with lentils or cooked in coconut milk for a curry. This plant can handle the Texas heat and may be a perennial if our winter temps don't drop too low. I recommend keeping it contained since it can be invasive.

The snake gourd he grows is a cucurbit (either *Trichosanthes anguina* or *T. cucumerina*) that tastes like a cucumber and grows extremely long. Varieties can range from half a foot up to seven feet. Its flower opens at night and it also likes Texas heat. If allowed to mature the fruit is bitter so it is best harvested while immature. The gourd is popular in Indian dishes many of which contain yogurt.

Sasi prepares small fried patties made from the seeds of the snake gourd. As snake gourd seeds can be difficult to germinate, scarring the seed coat and soaking in warm water may help.



Snake gourd plant

One of the most popular vegetable crops in India is the bottle gourd plant. Sasi grows these also. The gourd has a variety of uses. It matures quickly and within two months after planting, flowers will appear. The bottle gourd can be eaten. It can be added to soups or served with a variety of sauces. Mature gourds have other uses.

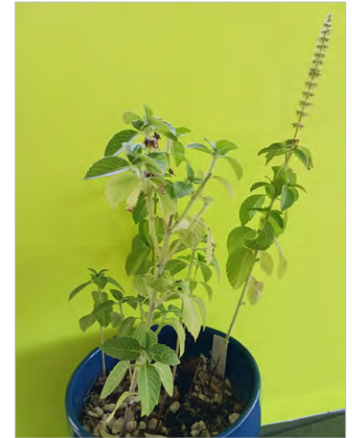


Bottle gourd plant

They are used as floats for fishing nets, food utensils or water bottles. This plant is one of Sasi's favorites. When the gourd is dried it is used to make the Indian national instrument,

called the veena. Sasi has many talents and he plays the veena.

I've included two photos of my own Indian herbs in this issue. One of them is Holy Basil, also known as Tulsi (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*). I received this variety from Rob Lucy, a former Harris County master gardener and editor of the *Urban Dirt*. I love this basil. I grow several basil varieties that rotate through my garden, but the Tulsi is always there. It dies out in the winter but returns every spring. Its leaves are slightly serrated and it has a sweet flavor. Tulsi is my go-to when I need fresh basil from the garden. Frankly, I'm not sure I could eradicate it from my yard. It makes itself at home. Tulsi is the gift that keeps on giving. Keep it in a pot and that helps. It loves the heat.



Tulsi Basil

My latest Indian herb acquisition is from my friend Dimpal.



▲ Ajwain plant

▼ Ajwain seeds



Photo by Sanjay Acharya

She gave me some Ajwain, *Trachyspermum ammi*. It's an annual herb but it does reseed every year according to Dimpal. I would recommend growing it in a pot as well. The seeds and leaves are edible. The seeds can be roasted and used in small amounts to flavor dishes,

but it is not recommended for pregnant women. I don't think I'll eat it- I'll just grow it for the glory.

There are several sites where you can order Indian herbs and vegetable seeds and seedlings from. I urge you to take a walk on the wild side and try some.

Some sites that Sasi is familiar with are: [theamazingseeds.com](http://theamazingseeds.com), [kattulafamilyfarms.com](http://kattulafamilyfarms.com) and [seedsofindia.com](http://seedsofindia.com)

**Q:** Which country has the next to the largest percentage of vegetarians?

**A:** According to [statista.com](http://statista.com), the United Kingdom has the second largest vegetarian population.



## NATIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH

# Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)

by Robin Yates, Master Gardener

For the past two months, I have avoided the sun as much as humanly possible. I garden before 9:00am due to the brutal sun beating down. After a month full of heat advisories, I appreciate shade trees even more! During a memorial ceremony in June honoring the late Georgia Lua, we dedicated a new bench donated by her husband. We planted the companion tree back in January, and this month I get to tell you about it.

When asked by the steering committee to choose a native, flowering, drought tolerant tree for Georgia's memorial, I looked through the Native Plant Society of Texas' database. There were several that fit our criteria, yet availability often trumps desire. Fortunately, my friends with Trees for Houston (<https://www.treesforhouston.org/>) came through and provided a native Black Cherry, *Prunus serotina*. This beautiful tree is found from Canada through the eastern US to eastern Texas. It is the largest native cherry that is found in the US, growing between 25 to 110 feet tall. While typically conical shaped in its youth, when grown out in the open, as Georgia's is, it becomes oval headed with large, pendulous limbs and arching branches. It grows in well-drained soil, in full sun to shade. The leaves are shiny on the surface, pointed with finely serrated edges and turn yellow in the fall. Flowers are white and appear March through July after the leaves arrive. From August through November, the dark red fruit transforms to black.

When discussing pollinator gardening, we usually think of flowers and shrubs with spring blooms. Yet native trees are also important to our pollinators. Black cherry is the larval host plant for the following species: Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Cherry Gall

Azure, Viceroy, Columbia Silkmoth, Promethea Moth, Small-eyed Sphinx Moth, Wild Cherry Sphinx Moth, Banded Tussock Moth, Band-edged Prominent, and Spotted Apatelodes. That is an impressive pollinator support resume, and why I chose this tree for our memorial.

Black cherry was the first tree taken back to Europe by colonizers in 1629. Unfortunately, removed from its native ecological checks and balances, it has since become invasive in Europe. On a more positive note, the beautiful wood has been used for fine furniture, paneling, scientific instruments, handles, and toys. Wild cherry syrup is derived from the bark, and I have taken many cough drops flavored with it over the years. Once pitted, the fruit can be ingested in delicious jams and wine.

Speaking of fruit, it is the only part of this tree that is edible. The wood, leaves, bark, and pit contain amygdalin, which breaks down into a toxic hydrocyanide or prussic acid, so spit those pits out if you eat the fruit! It may be toxic to Homo sapiens, but many

birds and mammals love the berries.

We are fortunate to have the opportunity to carry on what others have worked hard to provide.

Georgia's memory will live on through this garden where she spent much of her time, skill, knowledge, experience, and heart. I invite you to join us as Harris County Master Gardeners continue the legacy of Georgia and so many others, as we maintain the Genoa Friendship Gardens! Come and see the memorial black cherry tree and park bench placed in her honor. You'll be glad you did!



Black Cherry tree

photo by Robin Yates



Black Cherry bloom photo by Linda Pearson

#### References:

[https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=PRSE2](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=PRSE2)



# August Gardening Calendar

by Karen Shook, Master Gardener

I could accurately quote from my 2022 calendar, “This summer has been hotter and drier than normal and the August forecast doesn't change that trend.” But August 2022 was wetter and cooler than normal despite the forecast, so who knows. It is still a good idea to look around your neighborhood and consider for your yard plants that still look good after the summer heat and drought. This

## Perennials and Ornamental Grasses

- As you walk through your garden, decide which perennials you want to divide, remove, or transplant in the fall.
- Prune back to 1/3 to 1/2 height any overgrown (or just too tall) plants, then gently work some compost into the soil around the plant, being careful not to disturb roots or rhizomes.
- Cut back old or spent flower stems on native wildflowers like Indian blanket and black-eyed Susan (unless you want them to go to seed).

## Annuals

- Even heat tolerant annuals may look tired. If they have stopped growing/ blooming, consider replacing with heat tolerant or perhaps foliage plants. Established plants may benefit from an application of a complete fertilizer.
- Sow seeds of snapdragons, dianthus, and pansies in flats for planting in late August into Sept.

## Bulbs

- Prune ginger and canna stalks to the ground after blooms fade.
- If foliage on iris has browned, cut it off. Work a little bone meal or compost around rhizomes, being careful not to disturb them too much.

## Roses

- Late August is time for summer pruning of roses (other than once blooming). Reduce size by 1/3 (or to desired height), making cuts just above a bud. Remove dead wood, diseased canes, twiggy growth. Fertilize and water after pruning.
- Keep up with pest and fungus controls (every 7 to 10 days) and feeding (every 4 to 8 weeks until early October). Keep any yellow, dropped leaves cleaned out of the bed.

## 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)

link to the [Texas Water Resources Institute](http://Texas Water Resources Institute) provides several articles on water conservation.

Personally, I am turning my thoughts toward fall gardening with focus on cleaning out summer beds that are looking a bit ragged, preparing beds for late August planting, replenishing mulch, and reading some of these articles during the heat of the day.

## Shrubs

- Watch those shallow rooted azaleas; they are drought vulnerable and are setting buds for spring bloom.
- If needed visually, prune out dead, diseased wood from shrubs, but wait until mid-winter for serious pruning. Do not prune camellias. Their flower buds for fall blooms are already set.

## Lawns

- Sod can be laid in bare areas. Water it in well.
- August is time for the third and final fertilizer application this year. Note if you return grass clippings to the yard, you may not need this application.
- The largest population of chinch bugs is typically late summer to early fall. If you see irregular patches of dead or stunted grass particularly in sunny areas near driveways or curbs, check for chinch bugs.

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

- Check this link for the guide to this month's seed and transplant options: [Harris County Vegetable Planting Guide](http://Harris County Vegetable Planting Guide)
- If you want to grow your Halloween pumpkin, it is time to plant the seeds.
- Stop fertilizing fruit and nut trees to prepare for winter dormancy.

## Groundcovers and Vines

- Complete any minor pruning needed for spring blooming vines to allow time to set buds between now and mid to late fall.
- If your groundcover is looking sad, cut back now with lawn mower or string trimmer. Water well.



## HERB OF THE MONTH

# Fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*)

by Karen McGowan, Master Gardener

Moving into the final, official full month of summer, we are turning from our drought-tolerant herb series toward a companion herb to ethnic vegetables, complementing this month's overall gardening focus. In mind of the August ethnic theme I looked to incorporate one herb from the field (get it?) of several potential choices, an herb that is successfully used in more than a single ethnic cuisine, or two. With that, this month's herb selection is fenugreek.



*Fenugreek*

Ancient civilizations cultivated fenugreek; the discovery of fenugreek seeds dating back to 4000 BC in present-day Iraq supports this theory. Fenugreek seeds were also discovered in the tomb of Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamen, further suggesting that fenugreek was revered by the ancients. The Romans were known to utilize fenugreek as an ingredient for flavoring wine, and Jewish priest, historian, and scholar Titus Flavius Josephus noted that fenugreek was grown as a staple food in Galilee in the 1st century AD.

Fenugreek is an herb closely resembling common clover, and is native to the Mediterranean, southern Europe, and western Asia. It is widely used both in culinary and folk remedies, throughout the world, including as an ingredient in spice blends and a flavoring agent in foods, beverages, and tobacco. Fenugreek extract is also used in the production of some soaps and cosmetics. Although there is little conclusive scientific evidence for the use, fenugreek has specifically long been used in North Africa, Asia, and southern Europe for diabetes and to increase milk supply in women who are breastfeeding. The seeds are used to cleverly approximate the smell and taste of maple syrup, which they parallel.

Two very popular usages in ethnic cooking of fenugreek include one with which many of us are familiar: Curry powder. Probably the most identifiable of all the Indian subcontinent spices, curry seasoning is actually an Indian-inspired British invention, typically including turmeric, coriander, cumin, fenugreek, and red pepper.



*Fenugreek in bloom*

The combination produces a distinctive yellow color to food when added, and a warmly pungent kick of heat. A potentially somewhat less known yet still popular use of fenugreek is in the European spice blend "Khmeli Suneli" a Georgian mix of warm, nutty, grassy, and bitter spices including fenugreek, coriander, savory, and black peppercorns. Back to the Indian subcontinent, another highly popular blend (now widely available in America, although like most blends, you can make your own) featuring fenugreek is "Garam Masala".

While fenugreek can be grown successfully in other planting zones, for a single season, in zones 9-11 it can be grown year-round and usually lasts one or two years. The plant prefers low to medium moisture conditions, and it can be prone to mildew, making it somewhat of a challenge to grow in one of south Texas' more rainy years. With a tolerance for light conditions ranging from full sun to partial shade and not too selective about soils, fenugreek is a good candidate for crop rotation and will improve depleted garden soils. Fenugreek's mature size is predictably 12–24" high and 12–24" wide, dependent upon growing conditions.

Whether or not you decide to try growing fenugreek, it is definitely an herb worth familiarizing oneself with, for a multitude of reasons and uses. Here's to cooler temperatures sooner rather than later!

#### Citations:

<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/fenugreek>  
<https://www.thekitchn.com/spice-mixes-189368>  
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Flavius-Josephus>

# Getting Down to Earth

Article and photos by Pam Longley, Master Gardener

## News from Genoa Friendship Gardens

**Brandi Keller**, Harris County Extension Horticulture Agent and **Stephanie Gray**, Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator, brought the 2023 Master Gardener Class to GFG on Thursday, July 11.

**Carolyn Boyd** spoke to the group about the *Urban Dirt* newsletter and the openings on that team, as well as the purpose and protocols of the data assessments in the perennial and vegetable trial gardens for the use of the Harris County Extension Service.

**Pam Longley** told the interns about the duties involved in the planting, maintenance and harvesting of the Vegetable Garden.

**Kathryn McCleod** spoke about the Perennial Trial Garden.

**Janice Muhm** talked about the many opportunities to help with the spring and fall plant sales and the importance of the income derived from them to support the care and upkeep of GFG.

Tours of the entire property were led by Carolyn, Pam and **Doug McCleod**. **Sandy Stevens** was on hand to talk about the Entry Perennial Garden and the Cylinder Garden.

We were impressed by the enthusiasm and knowledge of this class! When we decided to go ahead and pass around a sign-up sheet for volunteers instead of waiting until the last MG class, we were absolutely thrilled by the response! Brandi is allowing the interns to get started on their 60 required volunteer hours and

they are ready to help. In fact, the following Monday there were six interns at GFG bright and early. They weeded out much of the overgrown Herb Garden and pulled out the spent heirloom tomato plants.

*cont'd on pg. 8*



*Kathryn McCleod and interns in the Perennial Trial Gardens*



*Sandy Stevens talking about how the Cylinder Garden concept is used in school gardens*



*Janice Muhm with interns in the Greenhouse*



*Getting Down to Earth - Genoa Friendship Gardens, cont'd from pg. 7*



*Pam Longley with group in the Butterfly Garden area*

As seen at GFG



*Emerald Empire Amethyst King Crape Myrtle lives up to it's lofty name with companion zinnias in the Rose Garden*



*Sunflowers reach towards the sun in the Perennial Trial Garden*

*cont'd on pg. 9*



*Getting Down to Earth, cont'd from pg. 8*

Article and photos by Jack Goodwin, Master Gardener

**Christ the Good Shepherd Garden - Spring, TX**

At Christ the Good Shepherd Garden (CGS) in Klein our year round vegetable growing continues to supply food pantries in the Spring Klein area with our donated produce. This past spring we finished red and white onions, tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, broccoli, kale, and zucchini. We are still harvesting various peppers and are starting some sweet potatoes and okra. Our 28 raised beds are continually rotated and periodically fed with new 13-13-13 fertilizer and top-dressed with fresh compost

which we make all year long in our silos. We have removed all the tomato plants which had dried up after a good harvest and we will redo those beds for summer and fall vegetables.

Since the early start with hot weather, our drip irrigation system is working overtime. We recently had the sprinkler company tune up the controller for the operating system to improve our water usage. The consistently hot days stress the plants and they require extra water to survive.

*cont'd on pg. 10*



*Various peppers at an earlier stage of growth.*



*CGS volunteers, at the far side of the beds, discussing the tomatoes and squash.*

## *Getting Down to Earth - Christ the Good Shepherd Garden, cont'd from pg. 9*

### **Wine Barrel Herb Gardening**

At my home garden I have experimented with wine barrel herb gardening. Starting in late February or early March (depending on the arrival of the last frost) I prepare the soil in the barrel removing any dead material assuring there are at least 12 to 14 inches of rich potting soil and compost and some 13-13-13 fertilizer. I have grown oregano, thyme, Swiss chard, sage, mint, basil, parsley, dill and rosemary. I always grow the mint in a separate pot because it is very aggressive in self rooting and will take over other plants in the larger barrel. Blending taller herbs such as dill and rosemary and basil in the center and lower

growing herbs such as thyme on the outside edges makes an attractive and easy to harvest arrangement. Most herbs respond positively to harvesting and will make new growth. They do best with filtered sunlight and moist but not overly wet soil. Harvesting can be helped by using a dehydrator. By drying the herbs this way you will preserve the color and flavor better than air drying and it is faster. The harvested herbs in the round trays are ready to be stacked in the dehydrator for drying. Herbs are fun to grow, fun to smell, fun to cook with and pleasant to look at. Have fun, and plant some herbs in barrels.



*Herbs growing in wine barrels and their leaves drying on hydrator trays*



# 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.

The growing with Plants and Nature Committee had the opportunity to address and interact with the current Master Gardener class of students, to speak about the range of programs we have and will continue to offer the community. Some students have gotten off to a fast start by volunteering and contributing their talents and knowledge to some of the programs described below.



> We worked alongside students and interns at the Ag Literacy Day to teach approximately 150 children about microgreens, and to help each child plant a tray of microgreen seeds to take home to grow,

> We participated in a family event at Woodchase Park with welcome assistance from an intern and a student. The children learned about butterflies by each making a "butterfly fan". This was an opportunity to discuss the parts of a butterfly and their functions. The fans were welcomed later when the children joined their parents for an outdoor movie in the park.



> We worked alongside AAMG at Towne Lake Farmer's Market. Lots of hands-on assistance from students and interns helped children complete a Malabar spinach planting project to take home.

> Finally, we joined AgriLife Extension and Houston Community College staff to review the four-day summer camp program we completed in June.



We want to thank team members, other Master Gardeners, interns, and students for their contribution to the success of our events in July: Regina Gardner for putting together pages like this one that represent our committee, Lois Pierce, Liz, Pozzi, Connie Bihner, Susan Visinski-Bracken, Pat Whipple, Rita Whipple, Linda Persse, Sally McMillan,



Maggie Mentakis, Stephanie McIntyre, Noah Ingram and Nerandra Cordova, and Stephanie Gray, our Master Gardener coordinator for her management skills and support of our efforts.

## 'BUG' OF THE MONTH

# Insect Pollinators

Article and photos by Debra Caldwell, Advanced Master Gardener: Entomology

Plants face a dilemma. How can they transport pollen from one flower to another? Some use water to move pollen while others rely on wind, but many plants enlist the help of animals including many insects. Animal pollinated flowers are usually big, colorful and supply nectar. In addition to bees and butterflies, flowers are also pollinated by flies, moths, wasps, and beetles. Flowers pollinated by beetles are often bowl shaped with exposed male and female parts. Beetles can fly but usually climb around on top of the flower. They tend to be attracted by white, dull, or greenish flowers that smell like fruit, are open during the day, and have moderate amounts of nectar. Magnolias evolved before bees and are often pollinated by beetles.



*Stapelia*

Flies are often attracted to brightly colored flowers such as sunflowers. Many species of pollinating flies

resemble and act very much like bees. Look closely and you will notice that they have only one pair of functional wings. There are fly species that pollinate flowers such as *Stapelia* that smell like feces or rotten meat.

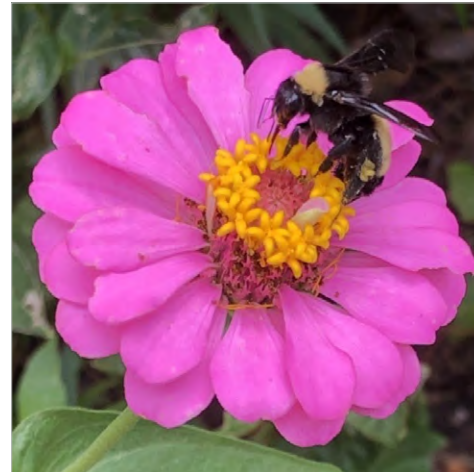
Butterflies, skippers and moths are prolific insect pollinators. The larvae have chewing mouth parts, and can become pests, while the adults have a long, coiled proboscis to suck nectar. Moths tend to pollinate flowers that open at night and have white or dull, flat flowers. Butterflies pollinate colorful flowers that are open during the day and have large, deep nectaries.

Bees pollinate flowers that are full of nectar and pollen and have bright petals--usually blue or yellow. They are active during the day and are attracted to flowers that open in daytime and provide landing platforms. Bees can pollinate larger tubular flowers but may "cheat" and chew into the base of slender tubular flowers to reach the nectary. Bees are considered to be ideal pollinators because they spend most of their time collecting pollen to feed their larvae and nectar to make honey. They have fuzzy little bodies that develop static charges that attract pollen grains. They

use stiff hairs on their back legs to store pollen in sacs. We have six native bee families in Texas as well as the introduced European Honeybee, *Apis mellifera*.

For gardeners, the question is

how to attract pollinators to your garden. Choose an area that isn't exposed to much wind which buffets the little insect pollinators. Although there are some flowering plants that grow and bloom in shady areas, you will attract more pollinators with flowers grow-



*Bee on Zinnia*

ing in partial to full sun. Group clusters of flowers of the same type together to help pollinators find them.

Attract pollinators throughout the year by planning for sequential blooming. Some pollinators, such as some species of butterflies, like monarch butterflies, migrate through Harris County and need food at a specific time. Other species remain in the area and need reliable sources of food for several months.

In winter, alyssum and flowering quince can provide much-needed sources of nectar. Salvias such as the Henry Duelberg salvia bloom from spring to frost. Pentas and lantanas such as



*Gulf Fritillary*

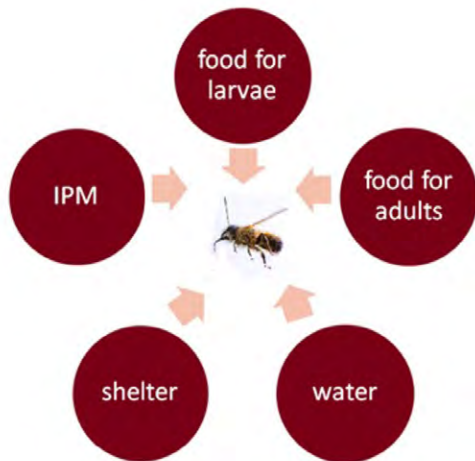
ing in partial to full sun. Group clusters of flowers of the same type together to help pollinators find them.

Attract pollinators throughout the year by planning for sequential blooming. Some pollinators, such as some species of butterflies, like

*cont'd on pg. 13*



## *Insect Pollinators*, cont'd from pg. 12



*Attracting pollinators to the garden*

*Lantana camera* ‘New Gold’, a sun-loving Texas Superstar®, attract butterflies. Turk’s Cap, Mexican Buckeye and Chaste Tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*) help attract diverse types of pollinators. Using a variety of plants of different heights including ground covers, low growing annuals and perennials, shrubs, and trees attracts diverse pollinators. One of my favorites is the red orchid bush, *Bauhinia galpinii*. Even though it dies back each winter, it grows into a large bush by summer and is a butterfly magnet.

Plant old-fashioned varieties: avoid hybrids that have ‘double’ flowers that make it difficult for pollinators to feed or may lack pollen and nectar. The *Echniacea purpurea* species is a great source of nectar for pollinators but the new double hybrid types make it difficult for pollinators to reach the nectar.

Grow plants that supply food for different life stages from larva to adult. Many larvae (caterpillars) feed on only one (or a few) host plant species. As their name implies, Pipevine Swallowtail caterpillars eat Dutchman’s pipevine and Brazilian pipevine. Monarch, Queen, and Soldier butterfly caterpillars feed on milkweed, *Asclepias* species which makes them toxic (and unpalatable) to predators. Gulf fritillaries feed on passionflower vines. It makes sense to use native plants to provide food and habitat for native pollinators because they co-evolved in this ecosystem.

Provide water for pollinators by using shallow dishes or drippers with pebbles as landing sites. Be sure to change water often

### References

Native Plant Society <https://npsot.org/wp/houston/go-native/>

Insect Identification <https://www.insectidentification.org/>

Bug Guide <https://bugguide.net/node/view/15740>

Butterfly Gardening Harris County <https://counties.agrilife.org/harris/files/2011/05/bflygrdn.pdf>

when mosquitoes are breeding. Some butterflies “puddle” to get minerals from soil and some bees need mud for nests so they will appreciate a spot with moist, bare soil. Ground-nesting native bees also will be attracted to bare spots in the garden.



*Bauhinia galpinii*

It is important to supply shelter and nesting habitat for pollinators. Plant in layers to provide natural shelter. Don’t be too quick to clean up in the fall. Leaves, brush, and snags supply shelter for overwintering insects. If you have an “artificial” habitat such as a bee house, place it in a sheltered east- to southeast-facing spot. The warm morning sun will help warm up the insects, but they won’t be baked by harsh afternoon sun.

After going to all the effort to attract pollinators to our gardens, we don’t want to kill them with pesticides. Integrated Pest Management, IPM, allows us to use a variety of methods to control pest populations. The best strategy is to prevent pests in the first place. By using plant varieties that are well adapted to their environment, building the soil, irrigating properly, and using other good cultural methods, pests can often be kept at bay. If pest problems do occur, they can be managed with less invasive and toxic, nonchemical methods. Judicious use of chemical substances and pesticides is a last resort to avoid harming the pollinators.

Insect pollinators have been hit hard by pesticides, habitat loss, climate change, and lack of food sources. By making a few simple changes in our gardens, we can attract and support pollinators which in turn, support our plants.

# Roselle

Article and photos by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener

I drank “hibiscus tea” long before I heard of roselle. The burgundy/red calyx from Roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) is used to make the tangy red herbal tea that many of us enjoy. I heard of roselle four or five years ago from a farmer friend and Fort Bend County Master Gardener. He grows the plants and sells the calyces along with homemade jellies and jams (great Christmas gifts, by the way).

Roselle, which goes by other names such as Florida cranberry, red sorrel or Jamaica sorrel, is native to Central and West Africa but is grown in many areas around the world now. Roselle is in the mallow family, and this is obvious when you see how closely its flowers resemble the flowers on okra plants and hibiscus. The calyx and bracts are used to make teas, jellies, smoothies, spiced cider and syrup, and can be substituted for cranberries in some dishes (like cranberry sauce at the holidays). A popular drink called “Jamaica” or “Rosa de Jamaica” is a Christmas tradition in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.

Two years ago we grew four roselle plants in the corners of a 4x12 ft. raised bed. I don’t recommend repeating this unless you don’t want room for any other plants in your garden during the summer. Roselle is one of those plants that loves our summer heat and is easy to grow, but it will get as big and happy as you let it. We put in transplants in May and harvested from September until frost that year. Our cooking group made roselle tea and a roselle-rosemary syrup to serve over chicken.



Calyces separated from seedpods; flower still attached at bottom right



Roselle in garden, Summer 2021

When eaten raw, it has a tartness like cranberry with a crunch similar to cabbage, and is delicious in salads. When steeped in boiling water, you can drink the tea as a hot or cold (iced) beverage. The calyces can be

dehydrated or frozen<sup>1</sup> to use later. I still have some roselle in my office freezer and enjoy steeping it into a tea with coworkers. I’ve heard that the entire plant is edible. Tender leaves can be cooked like spinach or added raw to salads, but I’ve yet to eat the leaves.

The green seed pods are high in natural pectin.

Sow seeds (or transplants if you can get them) in late April or May. Give them plenty of room to grow (they can get 3 feet wide by 5 to 7 feet tall). The plants need full sun to thrive. Harvest will begin about August and last until October or later. The flowers are a creamy yellowish color with a dark center. The bloom will last a couple of days and then dry up and fall off. The deep red, fleshy calyx should appear closed and feel solid and will be ready to pick easily from the branch. Be

sure to save the seeds for next year; you will need to dry the seed pod to extract the tiny round, flat seeds. With consistent weekly watering and well draining soil, you can get as much as 12 pounds of fruit per plant, although as much as 16 pounds have been reported in south Florida<sup>2</sup>.

Roselle is reported to have anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antidepressant and even anti-cancer properties. It used in some countries to manage blood pressure, aid digestion, manage colds and fever, and more. It is also a good source of calcium, niacin, riboflavin, iron, antioxidants and vitamin C.

Roselle is growing in popularity. I now see dried leaves on the grocery shelf. Kim Perry gave a presentation on Roselle at the September 2022 First Tuesday meeting. Brazoria County agent Stephen Brueggerhoff wrote a great article “Hibiscus Tea for Summer Cool” that includes his tea recipe, <https://brazoria.agrilife.org/2020/08/19/hibiscus-tea-article/>. Find more tips and recipes in the links below<sup>3</sup>.

#### References

<sup>1</sup> Freezing tip: Separate the green seedpod from the red calyx and freeze the two separately.

<sup>2</sup> <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/mv126> and <https://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/roselle.html>

<sup>3</sup> Additional planting resources and recipes:

<https://www.bhg.com/how-to-plant-and-grow-roselle-7500662>

<https://ediblehouston.ediblecommunities.com/search/content/roselle>

<https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc9193/m1/4/>

<https://www.tallahasseeetable.com/how-to-make-juice-tea-from-roselle-plant/>

<https://www.thefoodieskitchen.com/2010/08/13/roselle-rosemary-chicken/>



# 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>

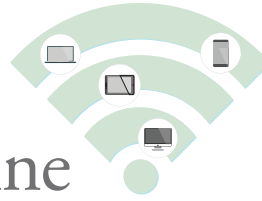
**Third Tuesday, 11:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.**  
**Harris County Public Library Facebook Live**  
No reservation required – [facebook.com/harriscountypub/events/](https://facebook.com/harriscountypub/events/)  
**Third Tuesday of each month**

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.





# Ask A Master Gardener Online

by the AAMGO Committee

**Q:** What type of caterpillars are these?



**A:** Thank you for submitting your caterpillar identification question. Those are Io moth (*Automeris io*) caterpillars. They eventually grow into a beautiful moth that is an effective pollinator. This Missouri Department of Conservation field guide [fact sheet](#) provides information about and photos of this moth so that you can see the mature insect.

These caterpillars feed on a variety of ornamental shrubbery. Some trees that serve as host plants include: maples, hackberries and redbud. They do have small black spines among the green, and these can cause a painful sting. It would be best not to handle them!

More information can be found in this page from the University of Florida Department of Entomology web site: [FEATURED CREATURES](#).

Please let us know if you have any further questions!

**Q:** How do you tell the difference between leaf scorch and leaf spot?

**A:** Thank you for your question about the difference between leaf scorch and leaf spot. You didn't mention the type of plant that was affected, and the terms can mean different things for different plants.

The term 'leaf scorch' is often used to describe drying of leaves during the summer. High temperatures, drying winds, and lack of moisture in the soil make it difficult for a plant to replace water lost through evapotranspiration. It usually begins on the margins of the leaves and can spread inward as plant tissues die. The publication, [Leaf Scorch](#), describes that type of scorch, causes, and prevention.

Bacterial leaf scorch is caused by the bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa*. The bacteria enter the xylem of trees which conducts water and minerals from the roots up through the plant. The symptoms may look similar to leaf scorch caused by environmental conditions. [Bacterial Leaf Scorch](#) is an article with information about symptoms, diagnosis, life cycle and Integrated Pest Management Systems.

Leaf spot can be caused by a number of bacteria and fungi. As the name implies, it usually presents as spots in the interior of the leaf. <https://extension.umn.edu/plant-diseases/leaf-spot-diseases-trees-and-shrubs#identification-1156261> is a link to a website that has much more information about various types of leaf spot. I hope these resources will help you identify any problems that may be occurring with your plants. Please contact us again if you have additional questions.



# 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 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 August

- Sat., Aug. 5**      **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., Aug. 12**      **Tomball Farmers Market**, 205 West Main St., Tomball, 77375 – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Thurs., Aug. 17**   **Westchase Farmer's Market**, 10503 Westheimer Rd., Houston, 77042 – 3 to 7 p.m.
- Sat., Aug. 19**      **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., Aug. 21**      **GFG Open Garden Day**, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston 77034 – 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.
- Sat., Aug. 26**      **Memorial Villages Farmers Market**, 10840 Beinhorn Rd., Houston 77024 – 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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

## Recipe of the Month

# Peach Caprese Salad

by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener (and foodie)

I remember my friend Angela giggling as she reminisced about her childhood summers in East Texas. This particular memory that made her eyes twinkle was eating fresh peaches with her sisters until the juice dripped down their chins. Sounds like summer, doesn't it?

This month's recipe was adapted from [Magnolia Table with Joanna Gaines](#)<sup>1</sup>. It doesn't require any cooking or baking, which is perfect for Houston summertime. It's also a nice twist on the traditional caprese salad made with tomatoes, mozzarella and basil. The peaches we usually buy at the farmers market were

already gone, of course, so I bought yellow peaches at the grocery store because none of the three stores we went to had white peaches in stock.

Grab some of that sweet, juicy stone fruit from your local farmers market or nearby roadside stand -- or your backyard if you are fortunate enough to have a peach tree<sup>2</sup> -- and make this dish in under 30 minutes. Serve it as a side with grilled chicken for dinner, or eat it on its own for a light lunch. I hope you enjoy it as much as we did, and I'm sure Angela would approve.

### Peach Caprese Salad<sup>3</sup>

4 servings

#### Ingredients

- 1/2 cup white balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 white peaches, chilled
- 2 yellow peaches, chilled
- Two 4-ounce fresh mozzarella balls, preferably water-packed
- 10 fresh basil leaves, torn
- 1 teaspoon flaky salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

#### Instructions

- In an 8-ounce screw-top jar, combine the vinegar and oil. Screw on the lid and shake well. Refrigerate until well chilled. The dressing can be made ahead and stored in the jar in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.
- Remove the pits from the peaches and cut them into 1/2-inch-thick slices or wedges. Drain the mozzarella if necessary and pat it dry. Use a sharp knife to cut it into 1/4-inch-thick slices.
- On a serving platter, decoratively arrange slices of the white peaches, yellow peaches, and mozzarella. Scatter the basil leaves on top, drizzle over the dressing, and sprinkle the flaky salt and pepper on top. Serve at once.



<sup>1</sup> "Magnolia Table: A Collection of Recipes for Gathering" by Joanna Gaines © William Morrow 2018.

<sup>2</sup> The Harris County Master Gardeners sell a few varieties of peach trees during the annual fruit tree sale in January/February. Look for details about our sales in upcoming Urban Dirt newsletters or on our website <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/>.

<sup>3</sup> Original recipe can be found on the Magnolia blog: <https://magnolia.com/blog/recipe/d6379a07-7703-432d-9cce-9d887be223bf/peach-caprese/>



# A Look Back in Time: The Silent Killer Plant

by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

It killed Abraham Lincoln's mother. Nancy Lincoln died when she was 34. She succumbed to a disease called milk sickness. Nancy had been nursing her aunt and uncle who also died from the same condition. She left behind her husband Thomas Lincoln, her son, Abraham, and her daughter Sarah.

The July/August 2023 Smithsonian had an article about a midwife who helped farmers by revealing the cause of milk

disease. Also referred to as the "trembles" or the "staggers", those afflicted with the disease would vomit, eventually fall into a coma and die. Calves and a few grown cattle would also die. Death could come within days. The disease was more common during summers when the weather was dry. It struck from 1809 to 1927. Doctor Anna Pierce was a healer whose mother and sister-in-law died from it. She thought since the condition was seasonal it could be due to plants. But which plants?



Nancy Lincoln  
Image courtesy womenhistoryblog.com

An encounter with a Shawnee woman who was hiding in the forest pointed Doctor Anna in the right direction. Many homesteads had a milk cow that roamed free and grazed in the woodlands. Anna was following cattle in the forest to keep track of what they ate. Anna took the Shawnee home to shelter her for a short while. She told the woman why she was following the cattle in the forest. The Shawnee woman led Anna to a plant with white fuzzy flowers. She told Anna that particular plant was the cause of milk disease. As a result, she cautioned neighbors not to consume any milk products until winter.

Called white snakeroot, the perennial herb was *Ageratina altissima*. Anna began feeding the plant to a few select animals. When calves were given the snakeroot, they began trembling and came down with milk sickness. She told everyone she could and soon the men began scouring the forests to wipe out the white snakeroot. She also grew the herb at home so neighbors

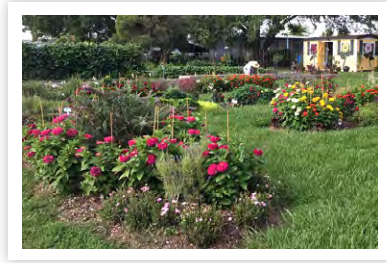


White snakeroot

Photo courtesy Mary Ann Borge

could identify it. Sadly, the news of Anna's discovery did not go far. Almost 30 years later, milk sickness was still rampant in parts of Indiana and Illinois. It became rarer in 1900. In 1927, researchers at the U.S. Department of Agriculture published an article about the toxicity of white snakeroot. Anna did not receive any credit.

## 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.

# 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/](http://www.listennotes.com/podcasts/)

[home-grown-podcast-paul-OM7PKqityX/](https://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 garden leads will be on hand to guide you through the tasks.

For some of you who consider this a distance you can't commit to on a regular basis, you can drop in any time. You will see old and 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>

Our monthly newsletters are jam-packed with information. The *Urban Dirt* is now indexed by various gardening categories. Go to <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/urban-dirt-index/> to dig deeper into past *Urban Dirt* issues.

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


Karol Arrington, Carolyn Boyd, Keeng Eng, Lynnell Goodson, James Holmes, Julee Jackson, Brandi Keller, Fiona Kilbride, Jana Lee, Sunya Lewis, Margaret Pierce, Dale Reid, Teresa See, Jo Ann Stevenson and Noe Tristan

*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.

 <b>Vegetable Garden Planting Dates</b> for Harris County	Texas AgriLIFE Extension Service											
	Harris County Office 713-274-0950 <a href="https://harris.agrilife.org/hort/">https://harris.agrilife.org/hort/</a>											
Planting times are for seeds unless otherwise noted	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Artichoke	Dormant Crowns								Transplants			
Asparagus (dormant crowns)									Transplants			
Beans - Snap & Lima (Butterbean)			Snap&Lima					Snap				
Beets												
Broccoli (transplants)												
Brussels Sprouts (transplants)												
Cabbage (transplants)												
Cabbage - Chinese (transplants)												
Carrots												
Cauliflower (transplants)												
Chard, Swiss												
Collards (transplants)												
Corn												
Cucumbers												
Eggplant (transplants)												
Garlic												
Kale (transplants)												
Kohlrabi (transplants)												
Leeks	Transplants									Seeds		
Lettuce - also Arugula, Mache, Sorrel												
Melon - Cantaloupe, Honeydew												
Mustard												
Okra												
Onion - bulbing	Transplants									Seeds		
Onion - multiplying/bunching												
Peas - English & Snap												
Peas - Southern												
Pepper (transplants)												
Potato - Irish (cut pieces)												
Potato - Sweet (slips)												
Pumpkin												
Radish												
Spinach												
Squash - Summer												
Squash - Winter												
Tomato												
Turnips												
Summer Greens - Malabar, Amaranth												
Watermelon												

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

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



# 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. You will avoid the need to track down planting guides and other gardening resources if you subscribe, and you can easily share information with others. This is 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)