HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER November/December 2026

Urban Dirt

Gardening Events and Information for Harris County



Message from our President



Dianne Lawrence, President
Harris County Master Gardeners

Well, I think we can safely say that fall has hit Houston since the night temperature has dropped below 70 a couple of times. It looks to get even nicer in the next week. One of the perks of living in this hot climate is that we have two growing seasons. I am planting my two favorite tomatoes: 42-day and Juliet's, both small in size and great producers. I hope you are planning a fall garden. It's a much more pleasant time to get out to weed and water. Check out our Planting Guide for suggestions.

We have begun classes for our next group of Master Gardeners! There are 46 new recruits who are participating, and they are so enthusiastic and excited. This class is a combination of online and in-person classes. The in-person classes offer training and experiences at several of our gardens, at plant sales, and at Extension. Say hello and welcome these folks when you see them at events.

One of the exciting things that's happening this fall is the opening of our new garden at Spring Creek Park near Tomball. It's the first time we've had a big garden on the north side, and we hope that many of you who live in that direction will be able to come and work there. We have a fenced-in irrigated garden bed area as well as some storage facilities. We begin planting very soon. It's a lovely county park, and we will be having plant sales there next spring. Our thanks to David Wright for working so hard to facilitate this partnership. Come out and visit us there!

I'm really looking forward to our November First Tuesday presentation called "Doug's Favorite Fruit Tree Tips" by our own Doug McLeod, Master Gardener. REMEMBER: Our November First Tuesday meeting will be held at Genoa Friendship Gardens rather than at Trini Mendenhall Community Center due to that facility's being a voting center.

Our very important election of the next Board of Directors will be held at the December First Tuesday meeting. The slate put forward by the Nominating Committee (consisting of the Past President, a member of the Board, and member of the membership at large) will be presented at the November meeting. Please be there to cast your vote and ask any questions you may have.

This will be my last article as your Board president. Thank you all for your support and keep on gardening!!

Dianne Lawrence

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Upcoming EVENTS

Tuesday, November 3, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
First Tuesday Meeting Lecture: "Doug's Favorite Fruit Tree Tips" with Doug McLeod, Harris County Master Gardener
Genoa Friendship Gardens
1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston 77034
Click for updates:
https://txmg.org/hcmga/lecture-series/

Tuesday, December 1, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
First Tuesday Meeting Lecture: "Citrus Problems" with Janis Teas, Citrus Health Inspector, Texas Department of Agriculture
Trini Mendenhall Community Center
1414 Wirt Rd, Houston 77055
Click for updates:
ttps://txmg.org/hcmga/lecture-series/

Friday, November 6, 10:30 a.m.
Texas Arbor Day with Archana Nair
Tracy Gee Community Center,
3599 Westcenter Dr., Houston 77042

Saturday, November 7, 11:00 a.m.
Native Plants with Chevvy Tang
Lone Star College - Cyfair Library,
9191 Barker Cypress Rd., Cypress 77433

Wednesday, November 11, 10:00 a.m.
Container Gardening with Teresa See
Bayland Community Center,
6400 Bissonnet St., Houston 77074

Tuesday, December 1, 11:00 a.m.
Herbs with Maggie Zamora
Glazier Senior Education Center,
16600 Pine Forest Lane, Houston 77084

Saturday, December 5, 1:00 p.m.
Herbs with Chevvy Tang
Lone Star College - Cyfair Library,
9191 Barker Cypress Rd., Cypress 77433

Tuesday, December 8, 11:00 a.m.
Tomatoes with Teresa See
Weekley Community Center,
8440 Greenhouse Road, Cypress 77433



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Madelyn's Cotton Story

A backyard trial of Texas A&M "Aggie Cotton," from seed packet to open boll

Article and photos by Madelyn Mauritz Bossé, Master Gardener

From class packet to garden bed



After a Master Gardener class at Mercer Botanic Gardens this year, seed packets from Texas A&M were free for the taking. I helped myself to the bags labeled "Aggie Cotton." The timing was fortunate: I was able to sow the seed in my garden almost immediately.

My front yard holds several raised beds of different heights. I chose the twelve-inch bed that faces south along the street and receives afternoon shade. In the backyard I planted two thirty-six-inch beds in full sun. Consider the arrangement a modest backyard trial—same seed stock, different bed height, exposure, and microclimate.







The three raised beds used for the cotton trial

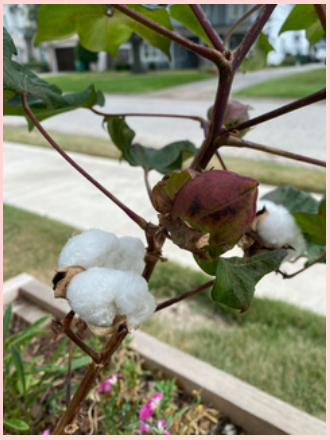
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Madelyn's Cotton Story

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An unexpected first boll

To my surprise, the front-yard plant produced the first boll. I cannot help wondering why that smaller plant finished first. The backyard plants were at least twice as large, with many more blooms and branches. I hope “bush” is not too informal a word for cotton grown in a home garden. In commercial fields the crop is managed as an upright plant; in a raised bed, it takes on a distinctly shrubby habit.




First boll on the smaller front-yard plant

Growth, bloom, and color

From seed, the plant develops a strong central stem and several lateral branches off that main axis. Flowering begins as the plant matures. I did not photograph the stems themselves.




Developing plant at the onset of flowering

Cotton flowers are perfect—bearing both stamens and pistil—and are largely self-pollinating. In many cultivars the corolla opens creamy white, then flushes pink as the bloom ages after anthesis.

My Aggie cotton never opened white. It began a deep pink and moved through several shades of pink with maroon markings. Gig ’em.

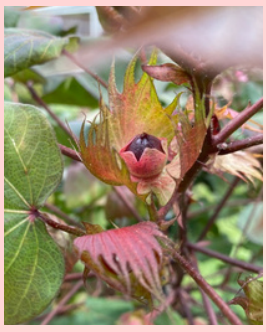
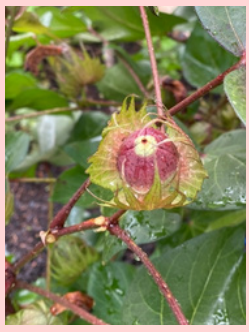


The flower withers and dies. As the spent corolla falls, the boll begins to take shape.



From green capsule to open lock

As the boll enlarges, the capsule often turns from green to purple or even brown. When it reaches full size, the bracts dry and the boll itself splits. The bracts continue to reflex and pull apart until the fiber inside is fully exposed. Harvest time.

Enlarging bolls shifting from green to purple or brown

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Madelyn's Cotton Story

Continued



Open boll at harvest: dry bracts and exposed fiber

Harvest results

Each boll typically contained four compartments—sometimes five. In cotton these chambers are locules; the fiber mass in each locule is a lock, the familiar "cotton ball." Each lock on my plants produced six seeds.



Opened bolls, locks of fiber, and seed

A family footnote

I grew up in Jackson County, where my great-grandfather settled years ago from Sweden. We farmed the land and raised cattle. I remember the cotton fields, and I also worked in corn, maize, and rice. My grandmother's father operated a cotton gin in El Campo, Texas: the Isaacson Cotton Gin Company.

It was a successful plant. Its layout allowed two horse-drawn wagons to enter the processing floor at once, rather than the single entrance typical of smaller gins.



Isaacson Cotton Gin Company, El Campo, Texas, September 16, 1916



The author's grandmother with her father

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Gardening Advice Is Everywhere:

Good Answers Come from Informed Search Techniques

Article by Valerie Depew, Master Gardener

Have you ever searched online for a solution to a gardening problem, only to discover that the advice you find is contradictory? One website recommends adding Epsom salts to your tomatoes, another suggests crushed eggshells, and a third insists that coffee grounds are the answer. The internet has given gardeners access to an extraordinary amount of information. Unfortunately, not all of it is accurate, and some of the most frequently repeated gardening advice has little scientific evidence to support it. The term Garden Myths came about because of inaccurate information being passed around as fact, when often it was based on coincidence or anecdotal observations.

When I was taking the Master Gardener classes in 2019, we had an outstanding talk on the subject of Garden Myths and Online Resources. Our instructor for this class was Skip Richter, who was at that time the Horticulture Agent for Harris County. Skip's discussion made a big impression on all of us, because he demonstrated how to clear out the clutter and find those research-based answers that we are seeking.

As Master Gardeners, we learn the importance of using research-based information in our educational programs and when answering questions from the public. But knowing where and how to find that information is a skill we should continue to develop. Horticultural research is constantly evolving, and recommendations can change as new evidence becomes available.

Honing our research skills helps us stay current, provide the most accurate answers possible, and continue growing in our own gardening knowledge. After all, being a Master Gardener doesn't mean knowing every answer—it means knowing how to find a reliable one.

The good news is that a few simple search techniques can make that process much easier.

Start with the source. Universities, Cooperative Extension services, and other research institutions are excellent places to begin. Their recommendations are generally based on scientific research as opposed to personal experience or commercial interests.

One of the easiest ways to narrow your search is to use the ***site: command*****.** For example, searching for *tomato diseases site:edu* will limit results to educational domains. To find information specifically from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, try ***tomato diseases site:.tamu.edu***.

Be specific about what you're looking for. Broad searches often produce broad—and often irrelevant—results. Adding your location, plant name, or particular problem can make a considerable difference. Searching for *tomato leaf curl Houston* is more useful than simply searching for *tomato problems.* An example of a search term for this issue would be: ***site:.edu tomato leaf curl Houston****.*

Gardening Advice Is Everywhere:

Good Answers Come from Informed Search Techniques

Continued

Quotation marks are another helpful tool. Placing a phrase in quotation marks, such as "blossom end rot," tells the search engine to look for those words together. A search term that I have used with good results is: **site:.edu "blossom end rot" AND tomato**. Using the AND operator will add your specific plant into the mandatory search for "blossom end rot."

Eliminate what you don't need. A minus sign can exclude unwanted results. For example, **tomato pest -hornworm** helps remove references to hornworms when you're investigating other tomato pests. This is especially useful when commercial websites dominate your search results.

Look for publications, not just webpages. Many universities and Extension services publish fact sheets and research summaries as PDF documents. Adding **filetype:pdf** to your search can help locate these resources. Combining several of these techniques into a very specific search can look like: **site:.edu "blossom end rot" AND tomato filetype:pdf.**

Finally, remember that even information from a reputable source should be evaluated for relevance. Research conducted in another region may not apply directly to our Gulf Coast growing conditions. Check publication dates, look for supporting research, and distinguish between scientific evidence and personal opinion.

Ultimately a search engine can return very valuable links to us, but we have to determine how this information resolves our question. Developing better search habits helps us make informed decisions, avoid perpetuating gardening myths, and become more effective educators and gardeners.

Note: There will be a future article on the use of AI in gardening—how we can optimize AI for the same purposes, while avoiding pitfalls and inaccurate information.

Would you like to serve the community as a Master Gardener? Click here for information.

Catch our GREENTHUMB **blogs in partnership with the Houston Public Library at:**

https://hcpl.net/blogs/post/10-little-known-facts-about-herbs/

https://hcpl.net/blogs/post/garden-smarter-with-these-3-permaculture-principles/

Watch our Green Thumb gardening series

presented by HCMG and HCPL

WATCH NOW

Wildlife in the Garden

Fungi

Article by Debra Caldwell, Advanced Master Gardener: Entomology

Fungi can seem almost magical, the way mushrooms appear overnight, as if from nowhere. A mushroom is a fruiting body, the reproductive structure of a much larger fungus that has been quietly thriving beneath the mulch and soil in your garden.



Flowerpot Parasol fungus, *Leucocoprinus birnbaumiii*, is common in tropical and subtropical areas. It gets its name because it is often seen in greenhouses and flowerpots in temperate zones. It is poisonous. Photo by Debra Caldwell

So, what are fungi? They are living organisms, but they are neither plants nor animals. The fungal kingdom includes mushrooms, molds, and yeasts. Some fungi consist of a single cell, while others are multicellular. The main body of multicellular fungi consists of tiny threads called hyphae. These threads spread through soil, wood, food, and other organic matter. Together, they form web-like networks called mycelia, which allow the fungus to grow and absorb nutrients.

Unlike plants, fungi cannot make food using energy from sunlight. Instead, they release digestive enzymes that break down material outside their bodies, then absorb the small molecules. Many feed on dead organic matter and play a vital role in recycling it. Others can cause diseases in people, animals, or plants, including ringworm, athlete's foot, powdery mildew, and brown patch.



Reddening Lepiota fungus, *Macropsalliota americana*, feeds on wood chip mulch and stumps.

Photo by Debra Caldwell

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Wildlife in the Garden:

Fungi

Continued

The line “A loaf of bread, a jug of wine, and thou” from the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* hints at how deeply fungi are woven into human life. Yeasts make bread rise and transform grape juice into wine. We eat fungi such as mushrooms, and fungi also produce lifesaving medicines, including penicillin and cephalosporins.



Fluted Bird’s Nest fungus, *Cyathus striatus*, has fruiting bodies that look like tiny bird’s nests with “eggs” that contain spores.
Photo by Debra Caldwell

In the garden, fungi are equally important. Some form beneficial partnerships with plants called mycorrhizae which are networks of fungal hyphae. The hyphae connect with plant roots, helping plants absorb water and nutrients in exchange for sugars.

There are two main types of mycorrhizae. Many trees have ectomycorrhizae which live outside roots. Endomycorrhizae penetrate roots and form symbiotic relationships with about eighty percent of plants including grasses and other herbaceous plants. Follow the steps below to build a healthy community of mycorrhizae in your soil:

- add organic matter such as compost
- use fertilizers that have low to moderate amounts of phosphorus
- reduce tillage to avoid breaking up the fungal network
- make sure the soil is well drained and aerated
- use cover crops

Other fungi decompose dead organic matter, returning nutrients to the soil. Their hyphae bind soil particles together, improving soil structure, aeration, and drainage. A diverse fungal community can also make it harder for harmful microbes to gain a foothold.

For more information, you can read this article from Rutgers University, https://njaes.rutgers.edu/FS1384/.

Unfortunately, not all fungi are helpful. Turfgrass can suffer from fungal infections such as TARR (Take All Root Rot) and brown patch (large patch). Pecan scab, oak wilt, corn blight and many other fungal diseases bedevil our trees and crops. To help diagnose diseases including fungal problems, Texas AgriLife Extension has an online version of the Texas Plant Disease Handbook.

Wildlife in the Garden:

Fungi

Continued

Fungi are classified based on their mode of reproduction. Yeast can make new cells by budding, where a small bump grows and then separates. That is why a little sourdough starter can quickly become a bubbly jar full of yeast when mixed with flour and water. Many fungi also make spores, which are tiny reproductive cells that can travel through the air. Yeasts as well as morels, truffles and *Penicillium* (used for antibiotics) belong to Phylum Ascomycota, commonly known as sac fungi. This large phylum has over 64,000 described species.

In the garden, you might encounter Ascomycetes such as Black Spot on Roses (*Diplocarpon rosae*) or Cup Fungi (*Peziza* species): After heavy rain, small, rubbery, brown or tan cups may pop up on wood mulch. They are harmless decomposers recycling nutrients back into the soil.

Another common group of fungi includes bread molds such as *Rhizopus*. If you have seen fuzzy mold growing on old bread, you have seen this kind of fungus at work. It sends tiny threads through the bread, breaks it down, and absorbs the nutrients. Bread mold can also make spores that spread through the air.

A third phylum, Basidiomycota, includes the mushrooms we often see on pizza, as well as shelf fungi on trees, puffballs, and some plant diseases called rusts and smuts. The mushroom we notice above ground is only part of the fungus. Much of the fungus is hidden, spreading through soil, wood, or another food source.

The Elegant Stinkhorn fungus, *Mutinus elegans*, lives up to its name by producing a foul-smelling slime on its stalk to attract bugs to spread spores. Photo by Jennifer Bennett



If you want to grow your own mushrooms, you can buy mushroom kits inoculated with spore or buy spawn and inoculate your own growing medium. Spores can grow in sawdust, grain, wood chips, straw, compost, etc. The mushrooms need a dark, cool, moist, and humid environment with temperatures between 55 and 60 ° F. Some types grow outdoors in prepared ground or logs.

Wildlife in the Garden:

Fungi

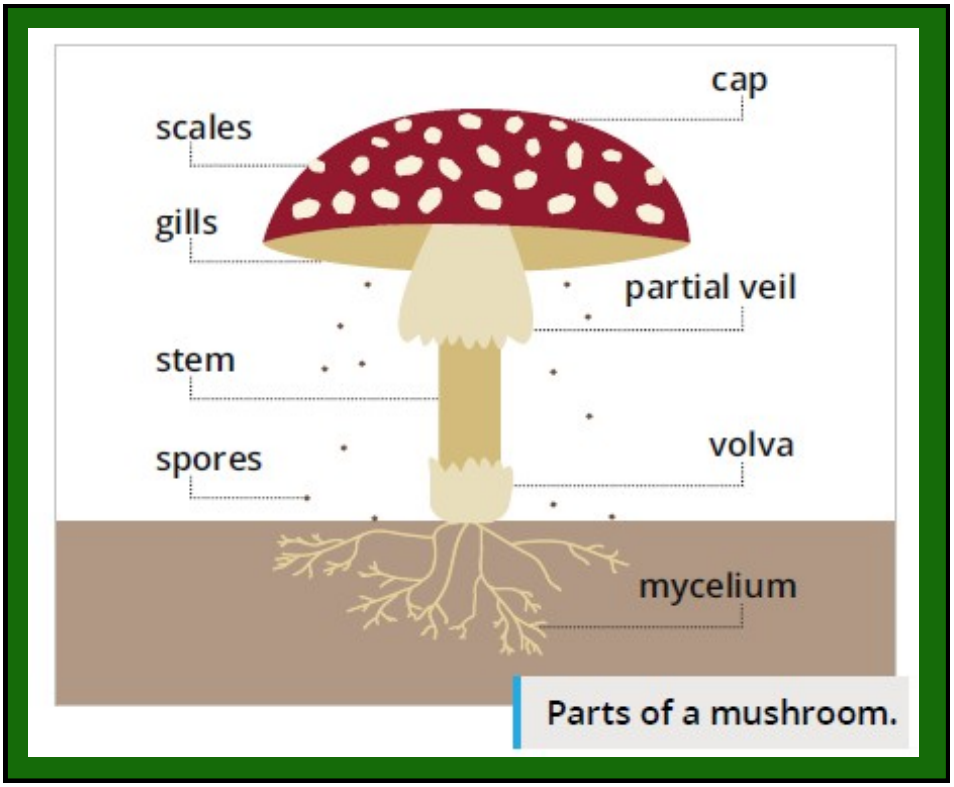
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Some of the easiest types of mushrooms to grow at home include oyster, white button, crimini, maitake, portobello, shiitake, and enoki (prefer cooler temperatures).

The humid climate of Harris County helps to produce a diverse crop of tasty fungi. However, there are also many deadly species in our area. Some mushrooms protect themselves by creating toxins that can lead to organ failure or death. Every year people frolic through the woodlands picking mushrooms and are poisoned by choosing the wrong, deadly mushroom.

If you want to learn more, about foraging for mushrooms, you can go on walks or attend events hosted by the Gulf South Mycological Society or the Central Texas Mycological Society.

Whether they are nourishing plants, recycling organic matter, producing food, or causing disease, fungi are essential members of the garden community. The next time a mushroom appears, take a closer look—but leave tasting to the experts. By building healthy soil and learning to recognize the fungi around us, we can better appreciate the vital roles these organisms play in our gardens.



From the Texas Agrilfe Guide to growing and cooking your own mushrooms:
https://mytexas.ag.tamu.edu/publications/growing-and-cooking-mushrooms-a-texas-guide/



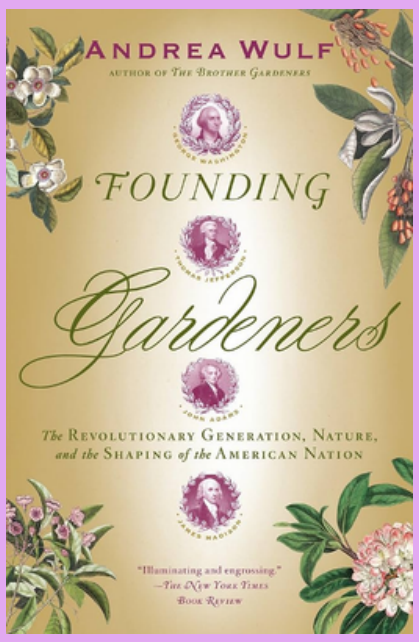
Recommended Reading

For Your Gift List

Article by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener

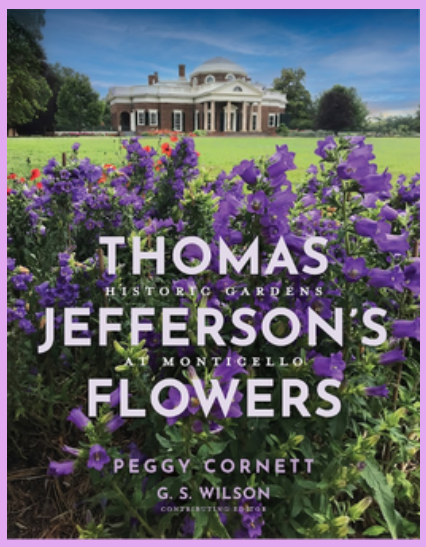
It has been fun to celebrate America's 250th birthday throughout this year. We close with a review of some timely books that I hope you will consider reading, or gifting.

The first is ***Founding Gardeners*** by Andrea Wulf (a German-British historian and writer), subtitled "The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, and the Shaping of the American Nation."



For the author, it all started with a visit to Monticello in 2006. She described standing on Thomas Jefferson's vegetable terrace, "with straight lines of cabbages and squashes at my feet, and saw man and nature in perfect harmony." This book examines the lives of George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and Benjamin Franklin during the creation of America and through a "lens of gardens, landscapes, nature and agriculture." She tells stories of letters written, visits to European gardens, the creation of Washington, D.C. and the White House, and describes James Madison as "the forgotten father of environmentalism."

Thomas Jefferson's Flowers by Peggy Cornett (2026) begins with the gardens at Jefferson's boyhood home, Shadwell, then Monticello and Poplar Forest, while also exploring the gardens of Jefferson's contemporaries—the Washingtons' Mount Vernon, the Madisons' Montpelier, and more. Jefferson had "a genuine affinity for the flower garden."

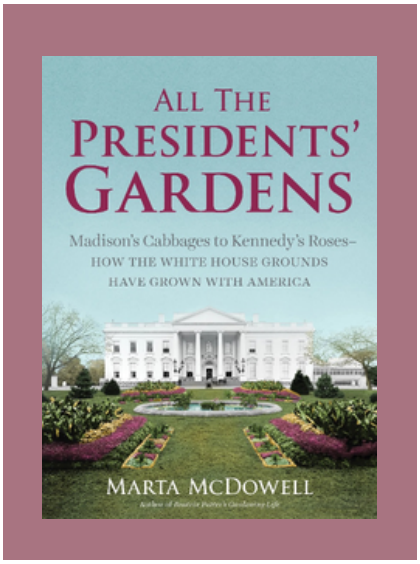


He kept a personal diary from 1766–1824, specifically to record blooming periods and observations of flowers. Approximately half of this book is a comprehensive list of the flowers that Jefferson documented from his gardens and those that are still grown at Monticello today.

Recommended Reading

For Your Gift List
Continued

All the Presidents' Gardens by Marta McDowell is an interesting, historical look at the influences of our Presidents and their families on "America's house." Published in 2024 and a New York Times bestseller, it details the impacts from George Washington through Barack Obama, "revealing how the story of the garden is also the story of America."



The gorgeous book includes historical photographs, stories about President Lincoln's goats, Eleanor Roosevelt's victory garden, and Eisenhower's putting green.

There are stories from the gardeners themselves and, as one said, "What's great about the job is that our trees, our plants, our shrubs, know nothing about politics." An unexpected chapter is "Two Centuries of Shrubs, Trees, and Vines," a list that includes dates and cultivars grown on the White House grounds. An audiobook version is also available.



Vegetable Spotlight:

All the Presidents' Vegetables
Article by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener

You may have read or heard stories about the gardens at Mount Vernon and Monticello. But have you ever thought about the vegetables grown at the White House by the Presidents and First Families?

A number of building projects prevented President Jefferson from growing vegetables at the White House, but he was able to keep precise records of the produce availability in the Washington markets. Of the 40 items listed in his charts from 1801–1809, only three were available year-round (lettuce, parsley and spinach).

The first documented presidential vegetable garden was the work of James Madison, who served from 1809–1817. His garden included: cabbages, broccoli, radishes, endive, cucumbers, carrots, beets, parsnip, turnips, and leeks.

Marta McDowell, author of *All the Presidents' Gardens* (see article above) traced the story of how the 18 acres surrounding the White House changed from one administration to the next. Included are stories about the documented vegetable gardens.

Vegetable Spotlight:

Continued

Why did some Presidents grow vegetables at the White House? Perhaps, for some, it was enjoyment, but for others it was a necessity. President Madison's garden harvests supplemented his table—"at the time, presidents paid the expenses of feeding guests out of their own pockets."

President John Quincy Adams is said to have regretted not becoming a botanist. His garden had mulberry, plum, cherry and hazelnut trees, plus potatoes, carrots, beets, radishes, cabbages, cauliflower, lettuce, peas, beans, onions, garlic, chives, asparagus, kale, and herbs. McDowell's book details a harvest of "Balm and Hyssop, Marjoram, Mint, Rue, Sage, Tansy, Tar[ra]gon, and Wormwood…the diversity of herbs and vegetables was striking." For exercise, President Adams would take a daily swim in the Potomac and then spend up to three hours "vigorously" weeding the garden.

1941 brought the "victory garden" to America. After First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt judged a Victory Garden Show in Boston (September 1942), she arranged for some of the White House roses to be replaced the next spring with a victory garden. Mrs. Roosevelt didn't tend that garden, but she is credited with its implementation.

Fast forward to 2009. Michelle Obama created a food garden on the South Lawn and included plant varieties that were grown at Monticello. This kitchen garden was used as a demonstration garden to promote healthy eating among children. You may recall First Lady Obama's "Let's Move" initiative.



White House Kitchen Garden, 2021.
Official White House Photo by Katie Ricks.

School children helped plant and harvest in the garden and also cooked and ate from it. Peanuts were also grown to include a lesson about George Washington Carver. Beet seeds were planted in sort of a tongue-in-cheek gesture because President Obama doesn't like beets, just as President George H. W. Bush famously didn't like broccoli.

It's interesting to note that, with few exceptions, all of these fruits and vegetables mentioned above can be grown by us here in Harris County.

Picture the White House garden.
O, to be a spider on the gate!
Tales of first families I would spin,
About food they grew and food they ate!

By Jo Ann Stevenson

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Herb Spotlight

Herbs For Fall

Article and photos by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener

Fall is a great time to plant herbs. They are easy to grow and add flavor and fragrance to your holiday meals. Herbs don't need a lot of space to grow, so they are good for containers and small garden spaces. They also attract pollinators to your garden.

Herbs can be grown from seed or starter plants, which are plentiful this time of year at most local nurseries. If you plant seeds, be sure to keep the soil moist until the seedlings pop through the soil and show their first leaves. You can reduce watering after that. Herbs need well drained soil because most are from the Mediterranean regions and grow best without "wet feet." Morning sun is best, with some afternoon shade.

Herbs are beneficial to your vegetable garden because they help to deter pests but be sure to monitor your herbs and look for any pests that might be attracted to the herbs themselves, such as worms, bugs, rabbits and deer. Insecticidal soap can be used on bugs, and animals can be blocked with screening or fencing.

You will need to provide frost and freeze protection for your herbs, especially if temperatures will dip below 10 degrees. Cover outdoor plants and bring pots indoors for protection.

Some favorite herbs to plant in the fall include:

Cilantro/coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*) is used fresh in salsas, for instance, and the dried seeds are saved for recipes that call for coriander.

Dill (*Anethum graveolens*) is used for pickles and dips; it can be used fresh and dried. It pairs very well with salmon and other fish. The yellow flowers are attractive to us and swallowtail butterfly caterpillars love to eat the plants.

Fennel is one herb I don't have experience with. There are two types. *Foeniculum vulgare* is grown for its seeds and leaves for flavoring, and *Foeniculum vulgare* var. azoricum is grown for its bulbous base and cooked. The fronds of fennel plants are beautiful and look similar to dill.

Garlic (*Allium sativum*) is planted October–January. Look for soft neck garlic at local nurseries and feed stores. This is the first year I've planted garlic, and am excited to see how it turns out.



Mexican mint marigold (*Tagetes lucida*), designated as a Texas Superstar ® plant in 2025, grows well in Harris County, and its leaves are a culinary substitute for tarragon. My Mexican mint marigold starting to bloom in October (photo by Jo Ann Stevenson)



Herb Spotlight

Herbs For Fall

Continued

Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*) is a great cool weather herb, and used extensively in cooking—think salad dressings, dips, soups and more.

Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) has many varieties and is a hardy perennial. Both the leaves and flowers are edible.



Rosemary

Sage (*Salvia officinalis*) is a staple in holiday stuffings and can be used fresh or dried. It also makes a pretty border plant.

Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*) has many varieties and sizes. I've planted a container this year with English, French, German and Lemon thyme varieties.

I also plant basil in the early fall, while knowing that the plants won't last when temperatures get below 40 degrees. If you plant basil early enough, you can harvest the leaves and either dry or freeze them to use all winter.



A variety of thyme

Joe Masabni, Ph.D., from the Texas A&M Department of Horticultural Sciences has some great herb tips in this article: https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2024/09/18/herb-gardening-tips-for-texas/.

When researching for this article, I found some recipes from Martin's Famous Potato Rolls and Bread (https://potatorolls.com/blog/fall-herb-guide/), and also Bob's Red Mill Natural Foods (https://www.bobsredmill.com/articles/5-fall-herbs-to-use-in-your-autumn-recipes). Both of these sites contain some good recipe options for the fall.

Additional resources:

- https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn-and-garden/fall-herbs/
- https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/herbs/culinary-herbs-to-plant-this-fall/
- https://hcpl.net/blogs/post/10-little-known-facts-about-herbs/
- https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2025/03/28/mexican-mint-marigold-designated-as-a-texas-superstar/
- https://harris.agrilife.org/files/2025/02/2025-herbs-for-harris-county.pdf



Recipe Spotlight:

Smoky Sweet Potato Soup

Article by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener

If you are looking for a great fall and winter soup, you are in the right place!

This soup is a simple yet satisfying puree of sweet potatoes, apple and leeks. You can add a chipotle chile in adobo sauce for smoky flavor—or omit it, which we did, simply because we didn't have one. This soup is silky smooth and tastes rich, but it contains NO butter or heavy cream. You will have to taste it to believe it.

We made this soup as an appetizer for a November meal, and it was a huge hit. Serve it in your finest soup bowl or your best coffee mug, and you are sure to enjoy this tasty soup.



Photo and recipe found in Martha Stewart Living, October 2011
https://www.marthastewart.com/853630/smoky-sweet-potato-soup

Prep time: 25 minutes
Total time: 40 minutes
Serves: 10

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 small leek, white and pale-green parts only, thinly sliced and rinsed well
- 1 tart green apple, such as Granny Smith, cored, peeled, and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 celery stalk, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon finely grated fresh ginger
- 2 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 6 cups chicken stock
- 1 medium canned chipotle chile in adobo sauce
- Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper
- ½ cup salted pepitas (green hulled pumpkin seeds)

Directions

1. Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat. Cook garlic and leek until soft and translucent, about 4 minutes. Add apple, celery, and ginger, and cook for 3 minutes. Add sweet potatoes and chicken stock, and simmer until sweet potatoes are tender, about 15 minutes. Add chipotle chile, if using.
2. Working in batches, transfer mixture to a blender, and puree until smooth, transferring soup to a large bowl as you work. (For safety, remove cap from hole in lid, and cover with a dish towel to prevent spattering.)
3. Season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with pepitas before serving.

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Recipe Spotlight:

Lemon Basil Salt

Article and photos by Madelyn Mauritz Bossé

Fresh-picked basil from the garden smells heavenly and makes a wonderful pesto for meats, dips, and sauces. If you don't already grow lemon basil, consider adding a plant to your herb garden. Lemon basil has a bright, fresh, citrusy aroma that sets it apart from common sweet basil. Be sure to save a few stems with seeds so you can grow it again next year.



Ingredients

- Fresh lemon basil leaves
- Salt or sea salt

Equipment

- Baking sheet or pan
- Parchment paper or wax paper
- Airtight container (glass is preferred)
- Food processor, small blender, or parchment paper for hand-crushing





Directions

1. Harvest the leaves. Pick lemon basil leaves, preferably the newer growth near the tops of the stems. Avoid including stems, or remove them afterward. If a flower is just beginning to bloom, you may include it for extra flavor.

2. Rinse and dry. Rinse the leaves gently and pat them completely dry with a clean towel or paper towels.

3. Prepare the pan. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or wax paper. Fold the edges if needed so the paper fits the pan. This makes transferring the leaves easy and simplifies cleanup.

4. Dry the leaves. Preheat the oven to 145°F (about 63°C). Spread the leaves in a single layer on the prepared pan. Bake for 20–30 minutes, checking frequently. The leaves should be dry and crisp. Do not overbake—overheating causes the leaves to lose their essential oils and much of their flavor. Use the smell test: the dried leaves should still smell fragrant and lemony.

Recipe Spotlight:

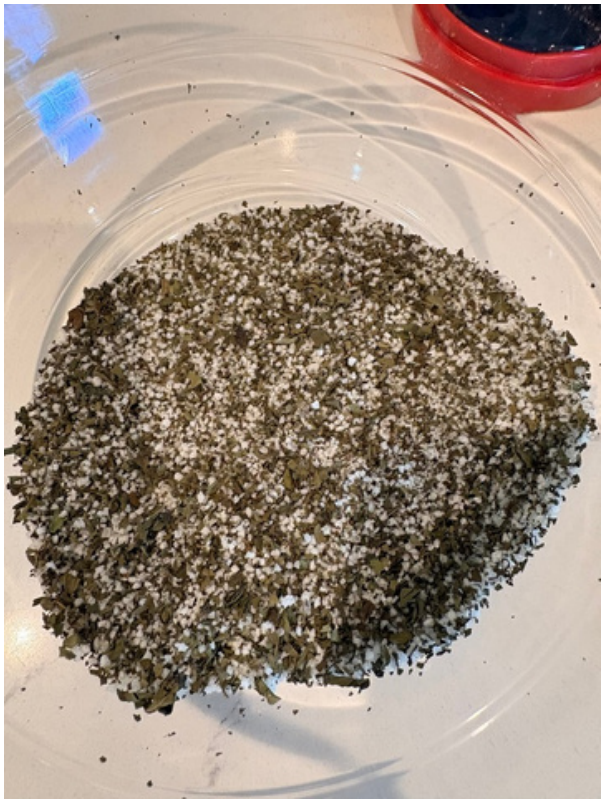
Lemon Basil Salt

Article and photos by Madelyn Mauritz Bossé

5. Crush the leaves. Transfer the dried leaves to a bowl or container. Crush them into very small pieces by hand (rubbing them between sheets of parchment paper works well) or with a food processor or small blender.

6. Repeat as needed. Continue drying and crushing batches until you have the amount of dried lemon basil you want. A large plant may require several baking sessions.

7. Mix with salt. Combine the crushed dried leaves with salt. A good starting ratio is 1 part dried basil to 2 parts salt. Some recipes use equal parts; adjust to suit your taste.



Storage

Store the finished lemon basil salt in a glass airtight container, such as a small mason jar or a clean, reused spice jar. Like other dried herbs and spices, it keeps well for at least three months (and often longer) when stored in a cool, dark place.

Serving Ideas

Try sprinkling lemon basil salt on:

- Fresh tomato slices
- Chicken, salmon, or steak
- Sliced hard-boiled eggs
- Pizza
- Salads—especially tomato-burrata or Caprese
- Roasted vegetables



Getting Down to Earth

News From Genoa Friendship Garden

Article and photos by Pam Longley, Master Gardener

You know how there is nothing like company coming to motivate you to turn into a human tornado to get the house ready? Such was the case to get ready for a tour group from ROYAL OAKS GARDEN CLUB. We worked like a 20 mule team (you have to be old to get these references) to spruce up the gardens after a weed plague had taken over several of the flower gardens. Sixteen members of the club visited on September 23 and were led through the native garden, butterfly garden, perennial trial beds, veggie beds, herb garden and the greenhouse by Mike Breazelle, Jeannie Dunn, Carolyn Boyd, Linda Pearson, Noe Tristan and Pam Longley. The garden club ladies have been together for over 20 years visiting gardens and sharing their successes and failures with flower gardening in Houston.



Royal Oaks Garden Club members in the Butterfly Garden

We hired a wonderful 2-man crew for the Herculean effort required to clear out the beds near the entrance. Our poor Peggy Martin roses were barely recognizable under the thicket of unwelcome invaders. They also cleared the old Wildflower Garden that had been overrun with native sunflowers that choked out everything else over time.

All this illustrates how much we need more volunteers!



The wonderful crew that cleared for us

Getting Down to Earth

News From Genoa Friendship Garden

Continued



The Kirk Lewis Career and Technical School students down the road have returned for 3 workdays this fall! We were so grateful for their morning with us on October 5 for weeding, trimming, and spreading mulch. Pam got the 8 vegetable beds loaded with compost and Microlife and ready to plant the fall garden seeds. She and Noe planted Lacinato kale, Scarlet Nantes and Danvers carrots, Sugar Snap peas, Detroit Dark Red beets, Arugula, Bloomsdale spinach, Yod Fah Chinese broccoli, Japanese Red mustard greens, Buttercrunch lettuce, Flash of Better Gem lettuce, and Outrageous leaf lettuce.



Getting Down to Earth

News From Genoa Friendship Garden

Continued

As seen at GFG:

MG Mary Haskins in the perennial garden





Gulf Fritillary in the daisy patch



Butterfly pea vine. Photo by Jo Ann Stevenson

As seen on Pam's latest trip:

Scottish Thistle at Culloden Battlefield, Highlands, Scotland



Christ the Good Shepherd Garden – Spring 77379

Article and photos by John Moss, Master Gardener

As of mid-August, the CGS garden's total of 28 no. 3' x 30' raised beds contained sweet potatoes (8 beds) and jalapeños (4 beds). The remaining 16 beds are undergoing solarization. The sweet potato tops (see photo below) look good and are on track to be harvested between late September and early November. We're hoping for a bumper crop! The jalapeño plants are now past peak production, but we're still harvesting about 7 lbs.–8 lbs. a week. We'll leave the producing plants in the ground for the time-being.



8 beds of sweet potatoes. In the top right corner is site preparation for the second shipping container to be used for additional storage of garden items.

For those readers unfamiliar with solarization of a bed, here's how this simple but highly effective process works.

- After clearing the bed of old plants, large weeds, & debris in general, the soil is watered deeply to improve heat conduction.
- A sheet of clear good quality polyethylene is stretched tightly over the bed and sealed around the edges to trap heat and moisture. In the photo below, the CGS gardeners used the existing pavers to secure the plastic sheets.
- Over 4–8 weeks, typically July through early September, the Gulf Coast sun pasteurizes the upper soil layer.
- Provided the seal is good, the temperature of the soil beneath the plastic will reach 140°F plus. This heat will kill weed seeds, harmful fungi, and nematodes.
- Besides pest control, solarization can improve soil structure and boost populations of beneficial microbes. The result is a cleaner, healthier growing environment—an ideal reset before planting vegetables prone to soil-borne issues.



Some of the beds that were solarized.

Christ the Good Shepherd Garden – Spring 77379

Continued

With over half of our beds dormant due to solarization and eight beds of sweet potatoes growing unaided, one might think that there's not much work currently going on at the CGS garden. Nothing could be further from the truth. There's a list of maintenance items that need to be done along with the ongoing composting operation. Also, a second shipping container for the storage of equipment, tools, fertilizers, etc. was delivered in September and so site foundation work has been necessary.



The Paver Ravers after completing foundation work for the second shipping container - left to right: Baxter Swenson, Jack Goodwin, Charlie Dorchek, and Mark Weatherford.

As always, we welcome visitors and anybody interested in being a CGS garden volunteer. The garden's regular fall and winter operating time is from 8:00 am to 10:00 am on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Our location is directly opposite the Christ the Good Shepherd Church at 18511 Klein Church Road (in between Spring Cypress Road and Louetta Road) in Klein/Spring.

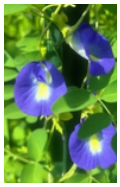


Baxter "The Beekeeper" Swenson a/k/a Stinger Swenson hard at work doing maintenance on the herb garden.

No matter what level of gardening skill you have, we guarantee that you'll have a good time, will learn a lot, and meet some great fun-loving people. Come join us!

For information on volunteering please contact:

- **Ann Zdansky – 713-806-3656 (Call/Text)**
- **John Moss – 713-805-8846 (Call/Text) or Email: jmoss32@att.net**



Butterfly Pea Vine Magic

Article and photos by Cindy Tan, Master Gardener

As Master Gardeners, we are always searching for plant combinations that bring both ecological harmony and vibrant beauty to our Texas landscapes. This season, I experienced extraordinary success by pairing two dynamic bloomers: Butterfly Pea Flower (*Clitoria ternatea*) and Coral Vine (*Antigonon leptopus*).

By allowing these two heat-tolerant climbers to grow interwoven along the trellis, my garden came alive with an unbeatable contrast of rich cobalt blues and bright magenta pinks. More importantly, this companion planting strategy created a continuous, blooming paradise that attracted a bustling diversity of pollinators all summer long.

Beyond its striking appearance in the garden, Butterfly Pea Flower is a powerhouse of natural wellness:

- **Rich in Antioxidants:** Packed with anthocyanins (ternatins), which help fight oxidative stress and support cell health.
- **Natural Stress Relief:** Revered for its adaptogenic properties that encourage relaxation and a balanced mood.
- **Ph-Sensitive Magic:** When brewed into tea, the natural cobalt blue liquid magically transforms into a vibrant royal purple with just a squeeze of citrus (like lemon or lime)!



As a home baker, my passion lies in connecting garden-fresh, wholesome ingredients with artisanal baking to support our community's health. Using fresh and dried harvests from my backyard, I steep butterfly pea flowers to naturally infuse long-fermented sourdough loaves with rich antioxidants and stunning violet-blue swirls for my microbakery. Paired with gut-healthy sourdough fermentation, it's a wonderful way to bring nourishing, functional plant magic directly to the dinner table.



Whether you're steeping a refreshing glass of color-changing herbal tea or incorporating edible blooms into your favorite recipes, growing Butterfly Pea Flower is a rewarding addition to any Harris County garden.

Blue Pea Butterfly Tea with Fruits and Herbs

Servings: 4 glasses; **Prep Time**: 10 minutes; **Chill Time**: 30 minutes

Ingredients:

For the tea base:

- 2 cups (480 ml) hot water (just under boiling)
- 2–3 tsp dried blue pea flowers or 10–12 fresh blooms, washed
- 1–2 tsp honey or agave syrup

Fruits and Herb (mix and match)

- ½ cup fresh pineapple chunks
- ½ cup orange slices
- ½ cup strawberries or raspberries
- ¼ cup blueberries

Growing Butterfly Pea Vine

Article by Jennifer Bennett, Master Gardener

Butterfly Pea Vine or Blue Pea Vine, *Clitorea Ternatea*, is named because its bright blue flowers resemble butterflies. A native to Tropical Asia, the Butterfly Pea Vine does provide some benefits to our Texas gardens.

Getting up to 15 feet, this rapidly growing vine helps to fix the nitrogen in the soil. It is a host to Longtailed Skipper butterflies. And its flowers, tender seed pods, leaves, and young shoots are edible.

Butterfly pea prefers full sun and well draining soil. In Harris County, it may be a perenial, if there is only light frost. But it produces abundant seeds and reseeds easily.

The magical part of the plant is the flower. It blooms year-round and the flowers can be used to make dyes or tea. The leaves are also used to make a green dye.

But we do have a native Butterfly Pea called the Spurred Butterfly Pea, *Centrosema Virginianum*. It produces pale blue, pink or white flowers that usually only last a day. It is a great groundcover with its extensive root system that helps stablilize the soil and prevent erosion. This pea vine blooms during the summer and attracts bees and butterflies. It's also a great forage crop for livestock due to its high mineral and protein content.

But it is the bright blue flower of the Blue Pea Vine that contains phenolic pigments called anthocyanins. These contain antioxidants. The butterfly pea extract is also used as a natural food dye. By lowering its pH, the dye turns pink. When raising the pH, it turns green.



Butterfly Pea Vine at Genoa Friendship Gardens. Photo by Jo Ann Stevenson



Spurred Butterfly Pea Photo by Debbie Roos.
https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/centrosema-virginianum/

Watch this fun tutorial on how to make color-changing tea.
https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/butterfly-pea/

References:

- https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/centrosema-virginianum/
- https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/butterfly-pea/
- https://www.npsot.org/posts/native-plant/centrosema-virginianum/



Ask A Master Gardener Online

by the AAMGO Committee

Q: Hello, will you please assist me in identifying this plant/fruit/vegetable? I thought I planted a squash seed. It's hard outer like a pumpkin. I'm trying to figure out how to cook or eat it. I appreciate your help. Thank you.





A:

Your photos look to me like Tromboncino squash. Tromboncino is an Italian heirloom cultivar of the species *Cucurbita moschata*, a/k/a the butternut squash. Other names used are zucchetta rampicante, zucchino rampicante, climbing zucchini, climbing crookneck, trombolino d'albenga, trombetta and serpentine squash. It is more resistant to some common summer squash pests including the squash vine borer and squash bugs. There is not much information specific to Tromboncino in the educational sites we use, but here is one reference specific to Tromboncino and here is a general guide to growing squash. Tromboncino can be used as either summer or winter squash.

For summer squash, harvest when it is small and immature. When picked young and light green, the skin is soft and tender, much like a zucchini. You can prepare them like you would zucchini. I am partial to sliced and grilled and love zucchini bread.

For winter squash, leave on the vine until the stem turns brown, the skin turns a tan or beige color and hardens into a tough rind just like a winter squash or pumpkin. (Some sources suggest storing winter squash for a month before use to allow sugars to fully develop.)

Note: I googled Tromboncino squash recipes and there seem to be quite a few to choose from for both summer and winter options.
Enjoy!

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Ask A Master Gardener Online

Continued

Q: Hi, I am growing purple tomatillos for the first time and after a few weeks, I remembered someone told me that you have to grow the plants in pairs as one plant alone does not have the ability to fertilize itself. Did I just waste months growing my one plant or is it possible it will still be fertilized (possibly by insects)?

A:

Thank you for the question about your tomatillos. I'm sorry to tell you that you probably will not get fruit from your plant. Tomatillos are not self-fertile meaning that they require cross-pollination from a genetically distinct tomatillo plant to set fruit. You should plant at least two (ideally three or more) plants close together to insure good pollination and fruiting. A good combination of varieties would be:

- **Toma Verde:** matures quickly (in about 60 days), green fruit with tart-sweet flavor.
- **De Milpa:** Mexican heirloom variety, green and purple fruit with rich flavor.
- **Rendidora:** Mexican “improved” variety with upright growth, high yield of green fruit.

Here is a publication on growing tomatillos for future reference. Sorry about this year, but hopefully you will have a bountiful harvest next year. Best wishes and please contact us again if you have additional questions.







Have a garden question?

Click here

Meet a Master Gardener

See What Our Interns Have Been Up To

Article by Jennifer Bennett, Master Gardener

We welcomed our latest group of interns on September 30 with their first in-person class held at Mercer Arboretum. While their online instruction began September 21, the in-person classes have consisted of walking tours, plant sales, tree plantings and giveaways, propagation, composting, water and irrigation, soil filtration, winter gardening, getting to know our Genoa Friendship Gardens, and learning about the fun ways to volunteer and give to our community. Hats off to Delores Whiteside, Jo Ann Stevenson and the entire committee of volunteers who have worked hard putting this outstanding course together.







Photos by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener

Meet a Master Gardener

See What Our Interns Have Been Up To











Photos by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener

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IF YOU ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT ISABELLA FOWLER, HARRIS COUNTY 4-H AGENT AT ISABELLA.FOWLER@AG.TAMU.EDU

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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 citrusbeds 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

Visit our Ask a Master Gardener table in the Family Garden on the first Saturday of each month!

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.

Genoa Friendship Gardens



The Flower Trial Garden



The Water Garden



The Greenhouse

The Texas A&M 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. – 11 a.m. (weather permitting)

We welcome professional organizations, schools, churches and individual tours of the garden! If interested in a tour, please email the HCMGA Program Coordinator at coordinator.harrishort@gmail.com

Open Garden Days

are on the 3rd Monday of the month, ***November through December***, 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Admission to the Exhibit Gardens is free. 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 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.

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Ask A Master Gardener In-Person Events

Friday, November 6, 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Harvest Festival Harris Cnty Precinct 1
El Franco Lee Park Community Center,
9500 Hall Rd, Houston 77089

Saturday, November 7, 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Urban Harvest Farmers Market
2752 Buffalo Speedway, Houston 77027

Saturday, November 7, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
McGovern Centennial Gardens
Family Gardens
1500 Hermann Dr, Houston 77004

Saturday, November 7, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Mercer Botanic Gardens
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble 77338

Saturday, November 14, 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Tomball Farmers Market
205 West Main St, Tomball 77375

Saturday, November 14, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Grand Parkway Farmers Market
Church of the Holy Apostles
1225 Grand Parkway South, Katy 77494

Saturday, November 14, 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.
River Oaks Elementary School Nature Center
2008 Kirby Dr, Houston 77019

Saturday, November 21, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Mercer Botanic Gardens
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble 77338

Saturday, November 28, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Memorial Villages Farmers Market
10840 Beinhorn Rd, Houston 77024

Saturday, November 28, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Houston Botanic Gardens
One Botanic Lane, Houston, TX 77017

Saturday, December 5, 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Urban Harvest Farmers Market
2752 Buffalo Speedway, Houston 77027

Saturday, December 5, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Mercer Botanic Gardens
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble 77338

Saturday, December 5, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
McGovern Centennial Gardens
Family Gardens
1500 Hermann Dr, Houston 77004

Saturday, December 5, 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.
River Oaks Elementary School Nature Center
2008 Kirby Dr, Houston 77019

Saturday, December 12, 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m
Tomball Farmers Market
205 West Main St, Tomball, 77375

Saturday, December 12, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Grand Parkway Farmers Market
Church of the Holy Apostles
1225 Grand Parkway South, Katy, 77494

Saturday, December 12, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Lake Houston Summerwood Market
Winter Festival Club Summerwood,
16136 Hunters Lake Way, Houston 77044

Saturday, December 19, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Mercer Botanic Gardens
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble 77338

Saturday, December 26, 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Memorial Villages Farmers Market
10840 Beinhorn Rd, Houston 77024

Saturday, December 26, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Houston Botanic Gardens
One Botanic Lane, Houston 77017

Gardening Calendar

By Karen Shook, Master Gardener

Year-to-date rainfall is well below average and is predicted to be lower than average in November and December. As the weather cools, plants may need less water, but stay vigilant. Check for "too wet, too dry, just right" and water accordingly. Keep up with mulch. A 2–3-inch layer helps maintain soil temps and deter weeds.

November comes with a chance of frost so be sure to have your frost supplies ready. Historically, first frost in Zone 8 is November 7–November 28. First frost in Zone 9 is November 25–December 13.

Gather those fallen leaves (yours and your neighbors if they don't use them) to use as mulch or as the "brown" in your compost. (If you pick up leaves from others, be aware that some may be gathered via lawn mower and may contain grass, weed, weed treatments).

Now is a good time to dig and prepare planting beds for the spring. Soil preparation is critical to garden success. Here is a link to A&M soil testing lab if you'd like to find out more about your soils needs.

Perennials, Ornamental Grasses and Natives

- Finish dividing spring blooming perennials in November. Most like to be divided every couple of years. Remember to keep the roots moist until they can be replanted. Water the transplanted or divided perennials to keep the soil moist.
- As chrysanthemums and other perennials finish blooming, cut the stalks to the ground. Cutting back ornamental grasses can be done, but you might like the tan color, seed heads as a winter display.
- You can still spread wildflower seeds in November. Gently rake them into the soil.

Annuals

- Plant cool season annuals. Fertilize and mulch. Pansies and violas are fairly cold tolerant, but you can also still plant others like dusty miller, snapdragons, and stock.
- Existing annuals should be fertilized only if they are showing nutrient deficiency symptoms.

Bulbs

- Finish planting spring bulbs in November. For tulips and hyacinths, wait until December. Note: tulips should be refrigerated for at least three weeks. While bulbs are often planted in clusters or drifts, I sometime plant a bulb or two individually. It is also a good idea to mark where you plant spring bloomers so you don't accidentally dig them up or damage them digging in the vicinity.
- Cut back foliage that has browned. Mark the location of dormant summer bulbs.
- When you cut back iris foliage, gently dig some bone meal around the rhizomes.

Gardening Calendar

Continued

Shrubs

- November or early December is a good time to plant shrubs.
- Keep azaleas moist in cold weather to avoid damage.
- In late December, most shrubs will be dormant and can be pruned. Pruning too early (before dormancy) can signal plants to set out new growth. Avoid pruning shrubs that bloom in the spring.

Edibles (vegetables, herbs, berries, fruits)

- See the following link for recommended plantings times: Harris County Veg Planting Guide
- Oranges and satsumas may be ready to harvest. It is typically best if they are harvested before turning fully orange.
- Check the planting guide above for when to plant cool season crops like beets, radishes, lettuce.
- Prepare the vegetable garden for spring planting.

Trees

- Celebrate Texas Arbor Day on Friday, November 6 by planting a tree.

Works Cited

1. A Garden Book for Houston. 2nd ed., River Oaks Garden Club, Houston, TX, 1968.
2. Groom, Dale, and Dan Gill. Texas Gardener's Handbook. Cool Springs Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2012.
3. Richter, Robert. Month-by-Month Gardening Texas. Cool Springs Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2014.
4. Weather.gov/wrh/climate

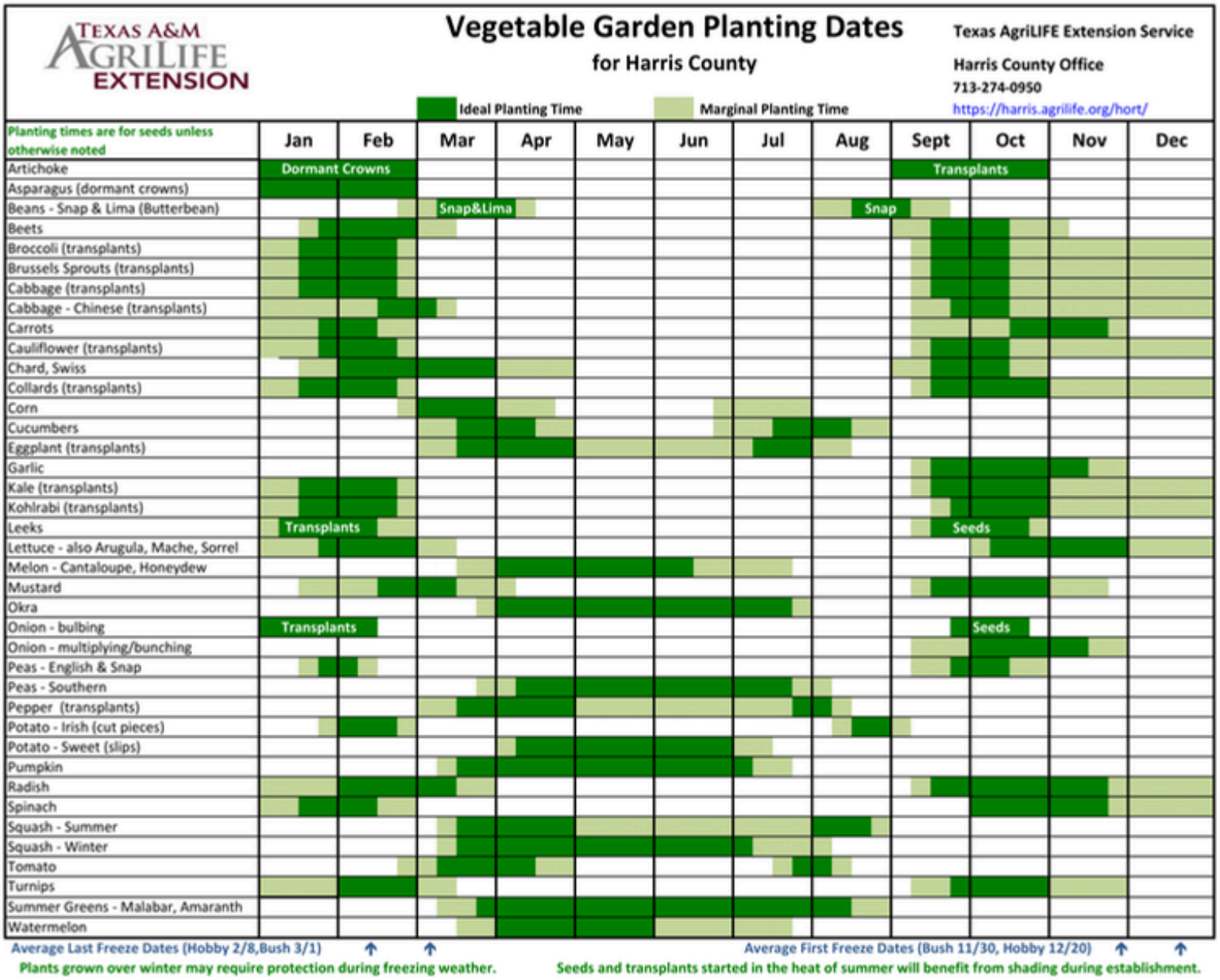
Lawns

- Apply preemergent herbicide in early November if you didn't apply in October.
- Gather fallen leaves so they don't shade your lawn. Use as mulch or in compost. Or using a mulching mower, mulch them down into the lawn to help cover the soil surface and deter cool season weeds.

Groundcovers and Vines

- Plant hardy perennial vines through the winter months with December prime time. No fertilizing needed until spring.
- Mulch tender vines covering the roots and lower stems.
- Ground covers can be divided and transplanted. Again, water in newly planted to maintain a moist soil.





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THANK YOU!