

THE FLOWER ISSUE

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TEXAS

MASTER GARDENER

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Galveston County

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OF TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

Flowers Make You Smile!



Kathy Maines

Flowers are known to help reduce stress and make you feel secure and relaxed. They make you smile. As a child, I remember picking wildflowers out of the yard for my mother. She always smiled, gave me a hug, said ‘thank you’ and the flowers always went in a glass or jar and were displayed. As a mother, I always smiled, said ‘thank you,’ gave my son a hug and put the flowers he brought me in a glass or jar where everyone could see them.

Flowers are big business. According to IBISWorld, flowers are a \$7 billion industry. Is this because flowers create happiness or because they feed insects, birds, animals and people? Maybe it is the way they attract pollinators or their link to romance and passion. There is probably not a sentiment that cannot be expressed with a flower. The Farmer’s Almanac states that learning the symbolism of flowers was popular in the 1800s and flowers were used to deliver messages. This depended not just on type or color of flower, but how it was delivered. For example, which hand used to deliver the flowers; the right hand meant ‘yes’ and the left hand ‘no’.

One of the best things about flowers is that there are so many of them. There come in thousands of different shapes and colors and growing conditions. Whether you want something in a container on your desk or something you love to see and smell every time you walk out the door, there is a flower for you. Just remember what Luther Burbank, botanist, horticulturist and pioneer of agricultural science said, “Don’t wait for someone to bring you flowers. Plant your own garden and decorate your own soul.”

Kathy Maines
GCMG President

Kathy Maines

Enjoy the Blooms of Spring!



From day to night bloomers, cutting gardens, blooming shrubs, and using your garden as a palette of colors: flowers are nature’s beauty and all we need to do is plant them. In this issue, Master Gardeners share their flower tips and experiences and let us know what flowers they like to see in their gardens.

Propagation of plants and determining what colors of flowers and plants in your landscape are two of the many interesting articles we have in this issue. Lisa Davis offers information from her greenhouse experiences for propagating and Tish Reustle takes readers back to the color wheel and color theory.

How does Listerine fit into this information? As you read through this issue, note a tip from Dr. William Welch, Professor and Extension Horticulturist Emeritus. It is included in the article on Planting a Cutting Garden.

Welcome Spring. Take time to smell the roses, as well as the many other fragrant blooming flowers in your garden!

Karolyn Gephart
Editor

Karolyn Gephart



Cosmos
Cosmos bipinnatus
Photo by MG Pam Hunter

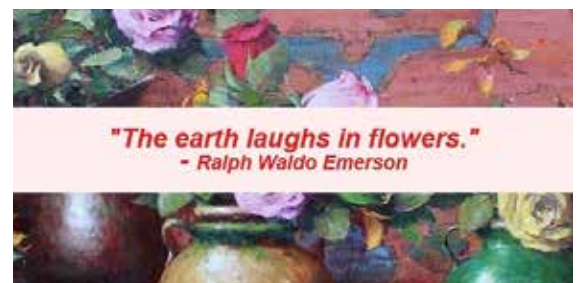




Photo by Vicki Blythe

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Annuals in Your Garden



Pam Hunter
GCMG 2018

If you're a gardener, you know how excited it is walking into a nursery this month! And if you're a new gardener, the annuals area is a great place to find plants to start a garden. Annuals are plants that complete their life cycle from seed to bloom and then die in a single growing season.

With that being said, some plants can behave as an annual or as a perennial depending on local climate and geographic growing conditions.

Annuals must be planted every year. Many naturally reseed like zinnias, celosia and cosmos to name a few. There are many to choose from, anything from full sun (sunflowers, marigolds, petunias) to full shade (impatiens, some caladiums and some coleus).

Planning an annual garden is fun and exciting. Be sure to take care when choosing your plants. Note the location of your flower bed. Some annuals can take morning sun but not the late, hot summer afternoon. Do your research on plants before buying them. You'll save from a lot of disappointment.

Knowing your plant zone is also an important factor in planning your garden. Here on the Galveston County Gulf Coast, we are located in USDA Zones 9a (Friendswood to parts of Dickinson) and 9b (parts of Dickinson to Galveston).

A few things to remember when planning your annual garden. 1) Know your plants. Name, height, width, zone, watering requirements, light requirements. 2) Always, always, ALWAYS label your plants immediately after planting. You can use your research to choose what to put on your label. You'll be glad you did when three months from now your friend asks what plant that is.



Balsam (*impatiens balsamina*)

One way of prolonging the blooming of your annual plants is by succession planting. For example, sow marigold seeds every two weeks for six weeks. This will give you months of bloom time.

Please note: Some annuals, especially marigolds (*Tagetes* sp.) and celosia benefit from being planted BEFORE they are allowed to flower.

Another way of extending your annuals is by cutting propagation. Only certain annuals can be propagated by cuttings. Coleus, geraniums (*Pelargonium x hortorum*), begonia, portulaca (*Portulaca oleracea*), and Swedish Ivy (*Plectranthus verticillatus*) are excellent annuals to propagate by cuttings.

Annuals fall into three main categories: tender annuals, hardy annuals and half-hardy annuals. Tender annuals are warm weather plants that do not tolerate freezing temperatures like balsam (*Impatiens balsamina*), angelonia (*Angelonia angustifolia*) and vinca. Hardy annuals can take the cold weather and frost. Pansies (*Viola x wittrockiana*), fringed dianthus (*Dianthus superbus*) and snapdragons (*Antirrhinum majus*) are good examples of hardy annuals. Half-hardy annuals have some ability to withstand freezing temperatures but are not as tolerant as hardy annuals. Cleome (*Cleome hassleriana*), nasturtiums (*Tropaeolum majus*) and amaranthus are considered half-hardy annuals.

Planting your annuals: Dig the hole slightly larger than the root ball, set the plant in place at the same level at which it was growing and carefully firm soil around the roots. New plants will need to be watered well after planting and frequently thereafter until they are established and new growth has started.



Bluebonnets

“Planting an annual garden is fun and exciting.”

Adding a 2-3 inch layer of mulch is optional but it does add a decorative finished look and it reduces weeds and conserves soil moisture for better growth.

Manicuring: Many annuals, mainly begonia, impatiens (*Impatiens walleriana*), sweet alyssum (*Lobularia maritima*), ageratum, lobelia, vinca, blue sage (*S. azurea*) and others require little additional care. Their flowers fall cleanly from the plant after fading. Others, such as marigold, geranium, zinnias (*Zinnia elegans*) and calendula benefit from having faded flowers removed. This is known as dead-heading. This not only encourages new blooms but discourages disease and keeps plants from going to seed.

Based on my 50+ years of gardening, I would recommend a few of the following varieties of annuals for your garden. As previously stated, research is your best friend.

Marigolds, sunflowers (*Helianthus* sp.), pansies, amaranthus, sweet pea (*Lathyrus odoratus*), nemesia, balsam, celosia, cosmos, lobelia, cleome, nasturtium, petunia, tithonia, borage (*Borago officinalis*), nicotiana, violas, calibrachoa, honeywort (*Cerinthe major*), larkspur (*Consolida* sp.), zinnia and coleus.

Source:

<https://agrillife.tamu.edu> Cut Flower Gardening



Calibrachoa



Impatiens



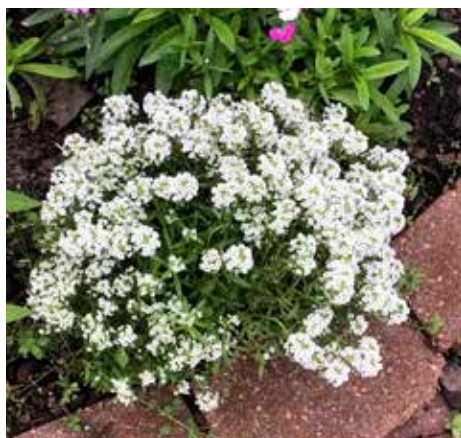
Lobelia



Sparkler Bush Cleome



Bush Impatiens



Sweet Alyssum (*Lobularia maritima*)



Zinnias



Vinca

Photo by MG Pam Hunter

Create a Cutting Garden



Stacey Phillips
GCMG 2017

I make it a habit to keep a vase of fresh-cut flowers in my kitchen year-round; my husband likes to bring home mixed bouquets from the local grocery store. As so many things were affected during the pandemic, the cut flower supply from growers was not sustainable, thus my regular bouquets ceased for quite a while. That got me thinking...instead of just occasionally supplementing my store-bought arrangements with cut flowers from my home garden, perhaps it's time to consider intentionally growing plants in my gardens that make good floral arrangements. And as a bonus, it will save me money to replace flowers from the store with home-grown selections.

There are several different approaches to adding a cutting garden to your outdoor space. You can dedicate an entire planting area to this, whether it be a formal or a cottage style garden. You can also carve out a section of your existing beds to use for cut flowers, or even incorporate it into your vegetable/herb garden. I have fond memories of helping my grandmother harvest pole beans and tomatoes during my summer visits, and she also always had cosmos and zinnias growing around the borders, which we would clip to make our own little bouquet for enjoying indoors. Just be mindful as you remove blooms for your use, that it could leave a gap in your landscaping, so arranging "non-cutting" plants around them will prevent your overall garden from appearing depleted.

Once you've determined the right spot for your cut flower beauties, make a list of your selected plants and their bloom times to ensure blooms throughout the year. Perennials tend to have longer periods of blooming, but the blooms are not

quite as plentiful as most annuals. Use multiples of perennial plants to provide more blooms for cutting without leaving a noticeable space in the garden. In addition to using perennials, consider annuals too. Annuals provide quick seasonal color but be sure to remove them once their season ends and replace with the appropriate seasonal annuals to fill the hole in the garden. Besides blooming specimens, consider using plants with interesting foliage and texture (coleus or fern), as well as anchor plants (boxwood or aspidistra) to include in your home floral arrangement.

Once your garden is set, be sure to mulch well and prevent weeds from distracting from the aesthetics of the bed. Regular cutting of your blooming beauties will encourage more blooms and create denser and bushier plants. Of course, keeping your plants evenly moist is always a good practice, as is adding a slow release, pelletized, balanced fertilizer (such as Osmocote®) to the soil.

When you're ready to cut your selections for your arrangement, cut them early in the morning or late in the evening when they are the most hydrated. Avoid cutting new growth from your plants for your arrangement; tender growth has not developed the cell structure to keep the cutting from wilting. Short-lived blooms (such as irises and lilies) should be cut in the bud stage and allowed to open in the floral bouquet. Once inside, re-cut your stems underwater to prevent air bubbles from "clogging" the stems which impedes water intake. Consider using preservative to extend the beauty of your home-grown cut flower arrangement. Floral preservative will provide nutrients and prevent bacterial growth and should consist of three ingredients:



Arrangement by Stacey Phillips



Rudbeckia, salvia, and iris by Stacey Phillips

“Enjoy your beautiful blooms indoors.”

Sugar (dextrose, not table sugar)

Biocide (controls the growth of bacteria)

Acidifier (lowers the pH of the water and improves water uptake)

AgriLife Extension emeritus Dr. William Welch suggests a suitable substitute for a home use floral preservative is Listerine® mouthwash—one ounce of Listerine® per gallon of lukewarm water will provide the correct solution. Wilted flowers can be revived after cutting the stem underwater and keeping the entire flower submerged underwater until revived.

Regardless of whether you dedicate an entire bed to a cut flower garden, or simply work some new selections into your existing beds, I hope it will bring you a novel way to enjoy your beautiful blooms indoors and save you a little money too!

Following is a list of suitable annuals and perennials for use in your cut flower garden (many of these selections can be grown from seed):

Annuals

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

Cleome (*Tarenaya hassleriana*)

Cosmos (*Cosmos bipinnatus*)

Bachelor Button (*Gomphrena globosa*)

Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*)

Snapdragon (*Antirrhinum majus*)

Stock (*Mathiola incana*)

Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*)

Marigold (*Tagetes* spp.)

Pansy (*Viola tricolor*)

Zinnia (*Zinnia elegans*)

Perennials

Yarrow (*Achillea* spp.)

Aster (*Aster* spp.)

Butterfly weed (*Asclepius* spp.)

Aspidistra (*Aspidistra elatior*)

Canna lily (*Canna x generalis*)

Clerodendrum (*Clerodendrum x speciosum*)

Coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*)

Crinum (*Crinum* spp.)

Montbretia (*Crocasmia pottsii*)

Dianthus (*Dianthus* spp.)

Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)

Leatherleaf fern (*Rumohra adiantiformis*)

Amaryllis (*Hippeastrum* spp.)

Iris (*Iris* spp.)

Snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*)

Liatris, Gayfeather (*Liatris* spp.)

Lily (*Lilium candidum*, *L. tigrinum*, *L. formosanum*)

Narcissus/Daffodils (*Narcissus* spp.)

Summer phlox (*Phlox paniculata*)

Salvia (*Salvia leucantha*)

Mexican mint marigold (*Tagetes lucida*)

Sources:

Cutflower Gardening, William Welch/Landscape Horticulturist-TAMU

Care and Handling of Cut Plant Materials, Jim Johnson/AAF/AIFD/TMF/
Director Benz School of Floral Design-TAMU and Kimberly Williams/
SAIFD

Here are the best flowers for a Houston cutting garden, Kathy Huber/
Houston Chronicle journalist/Master Gardener



Arrangement by Stacey Phillips

Color Your Garden



Tish Reustle
GCMG 2008

Remember the freeze of February 2021? How could we forget! Like many people I lost plants in that freeze and had to pull out quite a few dead bushes and perennials leaving a large vacant space just crying out to be planted. Like a lot of people, I love to wander the local nurseries saying to myself, “Oh, that’s beautiful, I need that,” and “What lovely foliage, I should get that.” I know, I know, I’m supposed to be a Master Gardener and should do better! I do check the USDA Plant Zone, the sun/shade requirements and the water needs, but color planning. . . . mmm not so much! This time I decided to make more thoughtful decisions after carefully considering what my requirements were for a specific area — and that included color. There was nothing to it! I had to find my color wheel and start reading up on color theory. The following are considerations for garden design.

Start by asking yourself the kind of mood you want to establish in your garden. Do you want a garden encouraging singing and dancing or one of rest and repose? Vibrant and full of energy, or peaceful and relaxed? If you’re uncertain, wander around a nursery and check your immediate reactions to various colors. How do you feel about those bright orange marigolds and red geraniums? Do you feel drawn towards them or to the pale blue of plumbago or the pastels of all those petunias? These are clues that will help with design.

Remember what you learned in school. The primary colors are red, yellow and blue, and they can be mixed to make other colors. An analogous color scheme uses three colors next to each other on the color wheel such as blue, violet and purple or red, orange and yellow. A complimentary color scheme uses opposite colors on the wheel such as yellow and purple or blue and orange. It is interesting that so many plants have red flowers against green leaves — a classic complimentary color scheme. Or maybe a complex color scheme? Blues, greens and purples are considered cool colors and reds, oranges and yellows are warm. Dark colors such as dark blue, purple and deep reds tend to be calming, serene and cool, and can make spaces look larger.

Bright colors such as yellow, orange, bright reds and turquoise jump forward to greet you and bring energy and excitement to a space, though they can also make the space seem smaller. Using bright colors together in layers can add a sense of depth. Too much stimulation can overwhelm the senses making the viewer feel anxious. On the other hand, not enough can lead to boredom. In a garden with a sense of balance and order, you

have color harmony.

Another type of color scheme used in the garden is referred to as monochromatic. A large bed full of red tulips would be a stunning example when they were in bloom but rather sad when they were finished. Monochromatic can also refer to all the shades and hues of one color such as yellows, oranges and yellow-reds or purples from the deepest down to the palest violets and mauves. Whites, greys, silvers and very pale greens together is another example of a monochromatic color scheme very famously used by Vita Sackville West at Sissinghurst Castle Garden in England. Combining these white and silver colors can do a wonderful job of brightening dark corners, but to try this type of color scheme you need to use height variation and contrasting textures in order to achieve balance and harmony mentioned earlier.



Analogous color scheme

“What mood do you want to establish in your garden?”

Now, why have we neglected to mention the most dominant color in the garden, which of course is green? Many garden books consider green to be a neutral in the garden but there are so, so many shades of green from the almost black of a magnolia leaf to the pale bluish green of many succulents. White flowers such as Baby’s breath euphorbia hybrid Diamond Frost® (*Euphorbia hypericifolia*) or alyssum (*Lobularia maritima*) show up much better against the dark green of boxwood (*Buxus* spp.) or Plum yew (*Cephalotaxus harringtonia*) than they would against the medium greens of iris species or Agapanthus (*Agapanthus africanus*) leaves. A variation of green known as chartreuse behaves quite differently from other garden greens. Most people are familiar with chartreuse-colored sweet potato vine (*Ipomoea batatas*) that can look anything but common against purple plants such as the elephant ear variety Black Sapphire Gecko (*Colocasia esculenta*). I recently discovered that the Japanese sedge variety Everillo (*Carex oshimensis*) as a border plant can really brighten a dark corner and the golden color Sunshine Ligustrum (*Ligustrum sinense*) looks thoroughly modern against a dark fence or a dark green hedge.

Another thing to consider is that many of your plant choices will be planted against a backdrop. When I recently had to replace an old fence behind some Star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*), I noticed the vine appeared to disappear against the old, dark wood but it really “pops” out against the

light tan of the new fencing. Consider the color of your paint, siding or brick if your plants will be placed in front of them. The dark red of the Chinese fringe flower shrub (*Loropetalum chinense*) will show up well against white brick but will tend to recede against a navy-blue paint.

You now have some tools to help you plan that new color coordinated perennial bed you’ve always wanted. I have one last piece of advice! Gardening should be an exercise that provides us with spiritual renewal, helps us find our place in nature and gives us peace in a very troubled world, so throw away the rule book and the color wheel, plant what pleases you and brings you happiness. I promise you, it will be beautiful!



Monochromatic color scheme



Complimentary color

Photo by MG Elaine Kouzounis

The Beauty of Almond Verbena (*Aloysia virgata*)



Elayne Kouzounis
GCMG 1998

The almond verbena, also known as sweet almond bush, is a plant that is a favorite in the American South. The almond verbena, native to Argentina, South America, is my personal number one small fragrant tree. It is a small, multi-trunk tree or large shrub with long, thin slightly arching branches. The almond verbena enjoys sun to partial shade and moist, well-drained soil. Its leaves are stiff, sandpapery and scalloped. Usually when you think of fall color you think of the leaves of trees, and the bright green color of almond verbena is a stand-out contender compared with other shrubs.

The shrub is hardy to USDA Zone 8 to 11. Almond verbena can be evergreen to semi-evergreen, or deciduous if grown in cooler climates. In perpetually warm climates it never loses its leaves. It can grow to 15 feet or more, and height can be kept in check through vigorous pruning. Growing in full sun is recommended, although it can tolerate partial shade. Once the plant is established you do not have to water much as it requires only moderate to low irrigation and it tolerates great heat.

The small showy white flowers of almond verbena exude a powerful honeyed fragrance. One plant can fill your garden with its sweet fragrance. Plants express fragrant flowers in order to attract specific pollinators, which encourages us to plant them. Flowers stay on the bush all summer long and well into the fall (mine stay on even through the winter) making almond verbena a good food source for butterflies and birds.



Photo Courtesy Dr. William M. Johnson

We will often tolerate this shrub's seasonal bloom and the lankiness of its branches just to get that yearly fix of swooningly sweet scent. For some gardeners, fragrance is everything. In general, where you locate a fragrant shrub is important. Placing it beneath certain windows brings the scent indoors. For instance, if you choose fragrant shrubs, they will scent the air above them. If you have a deck, particularly one high off the ground, surrounding it with shrubs will conceal the underpinnings. It's also fun to tuck a fragrant plant in odd corners of the yard where people stroll.

The plant does not require deadheading, although it is a good idea to trim between bloom cycles since it tends to get leggy over time. Propagation is quite easy with soft wood or green wood cuttings - nonflowering growth from the coming year. Take cuttings about as long as your hand in spring or early summer, then sit back and enjoy this beautiful small tree.

And now we welcome the New Year, full of things that have never been. ----Rainer Maria Rilke

Sources

A Garden Book for Houston and the Gulf Coast by River Oaks Garden Club

The Complete Book of Garden Magic by Roy E. Biles

Missouri Botanical Garden online: www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plantfinder/plantfindersearch.aspx



Photo Courtesy Creative Commons

Why Crapemyrtle Should Not Be Topped



Michelle Thompson
GCMG 2017

Soon across southern landscapes, we will see countless Crapemyrtle trees reshaped with severe horizontal cuts of their branches and trunks. This destructive outdated method of pruning is called topping or “crape murder.” Those who persist with such treatment leave the repeatedly cut branch or trunk ends with permanent scars of unsightly bulges or knob-by knuckles. Many landscapers continue the practice and charge for this unnecessary work.

As with all trees in our landscapes, Crapemyrtle do not need to be topped. Topping the tree causes new growth at the base (called suckers) which eventually needs to be trimmed away. Severely cutting back Crapemyrtle causes the tree to produce long thin weak growth that flops from the weight of the blooms and also delays the bloom time. Topping does not create more blooms, but produces stringy branches extending from where the tree was cut, promotes undesired suckers, and increases the chance of rot. The end result is an unhealthy and less attractive tree.

Among the many benefits of properly pruning Crapemyrtle is providing good air circulation and sunlight penetration which helps in preventing diseases. In our market places today there are new varieties available that are mildew resistant. A good time to prune is mid to late winter. Start your pruning process by first sterilizing your pruning utensils and loppers, then from the bottom work your way up. Remove unwanted suckers which are those small spindly shoots at the base of the tree trunk. You want to have three to five main trunks that grow from the ground if pruning for a multiple stemmed shape. Next, remove inward growing branches, branches pointing toward the ground, branches crossing or rubbing against other branches, dead branches, stubs from previous improper pruning and, of course, broken limbs. You want to show off the beautiful natural vase shape of the tree, so no excessive trimming is necessary.

The other Crapemyrtle tree form is the standard tree shape with one strong cane, often trained early by the grow-

er, and works well with intermediate to tall trees that reach 20 to 25 feet at maturity. The multiple stemmed bush shaped tree works well with shorter varieties, like the dwarf or semi-dwarf which grow to reach 4 to 8 feet.

Many a Crapemyrtle tree outgrows its area because the mature size of the tree was not considered when planning for the site. Selecting a tree variety with the right size and shape for your desired location is the first step in minimizing unnecessary trimming later on down the road when the tree starts to reach its mature size. Remember, there are many cultivars of Crapemyrtle ranging in height from 4 to 25 feet.

To prove the bad effects of topping Crapemyrtles, the North Carolina Urban Forestry Council conducted a case study with photos showing the difference. They selected two trees identical in size and topped one. The photos comparing the growth of the two trees over time can be found in the article at <http://www.ncufc.org/uploads/TheTreeToppingStory-picsspeak-louder.pdf>.

Source

UT (University of TN) and TSU Extension Agent-Hamilton County, TN



This picture from the study shows the topped tree (left) did not perform as well as the tree kept natural (right) that was not topped. Even after two years the topped tree could not catch up. Photo courtesy of UT.

Photo courtesy of Urban Forestry Dept. Charlotte, NC

Flowers that Bloom at Night



Karen Nelson
GCMG 2020

A garden with night blooming plants can offer evenings of delight, especially for people who are night owls or insomniacs. With scents that attract night insects, the plants also offer beauty, fragrance and an evening debut.

Moonflower (*Ipomoea alba*)

The Moonflower is a perennial sun lover with large white or purple blooms that opens at night and has a pleasing fragrance. It has been called the night blooming morning glory. Like the morning glory, it is a vine that can reach a height of six feet. Moonflowers are a nice addition to a garden for fragrance, observation of night-time pollinators and for the occasional “pop” with a flower opening. A romantic meaning behind gifting someone with the moonflower is about “dreaming of love.”

Datura

Devil’s trumpet, Jimsonweed, hell’s bells and thorn-apple (*Datura* sp.) are all common names of a tall woody species that is grown for the large fragrant flowers that open at night. The colors range from white to yellow, pink, blue and purple. The flowers are shaped like a trumpet and are held upright or hanging pendant depending on the variety. They are a sun lover growing two feet in height and can spread up to 10 feet wide requiring little water. Species *Datura innoxia* is also referred to as moonflower. It is poisonous to animals and humans, and all parts of the plant contain elements of atropine, hyoscyamine and scopolamine. It is recommended not to plant where children or pets can access.



Cereus. Photo by MG Karolyn Gephart



Jasmine. Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons

Brugmansia

Also called angel’s trumpet, Brugmansia is part of the nightshade family (Solanaceae) and is a tropical plant with large soft leaves that can be grown and shaped into a single trunk tree. The flower is fragrant, and a night time bloomer of dramatic large pink, yellow, white, blue and peach blooms that resemble a pendent trumpet. Brugmansia can reach 30 feet tall in tropical climates and 15 to 20 feet in subtropical climates. They are native to South America and love full sun and humidity. All parts of the angel’s trumpet are poisonous and should not be planted where children and pets can access.

Night Gladiolus (*Gladiolus tristis*)

Also called sword lily, the night gladiolus is a pale yellow or striped dark yellow and green flower that blooms in the evening with a spicy scent. They grow three to four feet tall, with blooms first appearing in the late spring or early summer months. The plants love full sun. Parts of the plant are poisonous. The name is from Latin *gladioli* which means strong moral character and strength of integrity.

Night Phlox (*Zaluzianskya capensis*)

Night phlox is also called Midnight Candy due to its addicting sweet honey, almond and vanilla fragrance. Recommended to plant under a window or next to a door. Originally from South Africa, night phlox has flowers of white, purple and maroon that attract bees, birds and butterflies. It is extremely easy to grow from seeds. The seeds germinate in 7 to 14 days and grow easily in containers. The non-toxic plants prefer sun and well-drained soil. Plant under a window or next to a door for its fragrance or plant close to brugmansia for a symphony of fragrances.



Datura. Photo courtesy of Pixabay



Night Gladiolus. Photo courtesy Creative Commons

“Night bloomers offer beauty, fragrance and a night debut.”

Night Blooming Jasmine (*Cestrum nocturnum*)

The plant is not a true jasmine but is a plant in the nightshade (Solanaceae) plant family. It is also called Lady of the Night and has a strong sweet fragrance. It is a tropical shrub that can be aggressive but does well root bound in a pot. It also prefers partial sunlight. Its nightly flowers are white-yellow tubular blooms that attract night pollinators such as the hummingbird moth. While the flowers continue to bloom in daylight, the fragrance is only present at night. Cutting at regular intervals stimulates flowering. The plant is toxic to cattle, horses, fish, pets and humans.

Night Scented Orchid (*Epidendrum nocturnum*)

This perennial plant is native to swampland areas in Florida, Bahamas, West Indies and Belize. It is an endangered species in Florida due to orchid poachers and a decline in wetland ecosystems. It attaches to tree trunks and branches with thick white aerial roots and can reach a height of three feet. The flowers are exotic white to yellow pointed petals with a strong scent at night.

Night Blooming Cactus (*Epiphyllum oxypetalum*)

Also called Queen of the Night, night blooming cactus is a member of the cactus plant family (Cactaceae) and native to Southern Mexico and distributed through parts of South America. Each sweet scented bloom opens only one night in midsummer each year, then closes with the morning sun. The bloom is trumpet shaped white or hot pink that blooms on foliage that resembles dried branches. The turnip like roots can grow to a weight of 5 to 15 pounds and are noted for use as a food source in its natural range. It does well in hanging baskets but the weight eventually causes a problem. The scent is harvested and turned into fragrances.

Sources:

Tamu.org

Desertusa.com

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

fnai.org

hor.ext.wisc.edu

CDC.org

ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

centraltexasgardener.org



Moonflower. Photo courtesy of Pixabay.com



Night phlox. Photo courtesy of kitchengardenseeds.com



Night Scented Orchid. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia



Trumpets. Photo courtesy of Karolyn Gephart

Greenhouse Lessons: Propagation Methods



Lisa Davis
GCMG 2018

Propagating plants is a fun and rewarding experience but can seem daunting to the uninitiated. Creating new plants from existing ones is accomplished by using two primary forms of plant propagation: sexual and asexual. Sexual propagation is performed through the pollination of flowers. As long as they aren't sterile, most will form seeds after pollen is transferred from the anther of a flower of one plant to the stigma of another flower and fertilization occurs. The other form, asexual propagation, involves taking a vegetative part of a parent plant causing it to regenerate itself into a new plant that will be genetically identical to its parent. Various methods to propagate asexually are set out below.

Supplies Required

Containers - new or recycled. Clay pots are okay but they are more difficult to disinfect. If your containers are not new, they should be disinfected.

Propagation media - a good medium offers the best aeration, moisture holding and drainage characteristics. Many different materials can be used to start seeds if it is loose, porous and fine textured, free of insects, disease organisms and weed seeds. Commercial products are available which contain peat moss, vermiculite and perlite. Using a sterile medium is very important. Resist the urge to use garden soil for it is not sterile, is too heavy and does not drain well.

Propagation knife - sterilize between cuts

Hand pruners - sterilize between cuts

Plastic bags

Disinfecting solution - mixture of one part chlorine bleach to nine parts water.

Rooting hormone - correct strength determined for plant variety being propagated.

Heat mat and grow lights – optional

Propagation by Cuttings

Cuttings are classified based upon the part of the plant removed for the cutting such as leaf, tip, stem or vein.

Take cuttings with a sharp, sterilized blade to reduce injury to the parent plant and to prevent transferring infections. Dip the end of the cuttings in a rooting hormone, gently tap off any excess then insert the cutting into the media. Place stem and leaf cuttings in bright, indirect light. Make sure they are kept evenly moist while rooting.

Stem Cuttings – Medial/Section and Tip

Most plants can be propagated by stem cuttings any time of the year. The exception is woody plants which should have cuttings taken in the dormant season. There are two types of stem cuttings: medial or section and tip. A medial or section cutting is making the first cut just above a node, and the sec-



Stem Propagation. Photo courtesy TAMU



Stem Propagation



Stems

“Propagating plants can be fun and rewarding.”

and cut just above a node two to six inches down the stem. For tip cuttings, cut a piece of stem two to six inches and include the terminal bud. The following is the same for both types. Remove the lower foliage that would touch or be below the media. Dip the cutting into rooting hormone then gently tap off any excess. Insert the cutting into the media deeply enough to support itself. An optional heat mat or grow lights will encourage earlier rooting. Plants that can successfully be propagated by medial cuttings include Red Hot Cat Tail (*Acalypha hispida*) and poinsettias (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*). Croton, geraniums, and both India rubber plant (*Ficus elastica*) and weeping fig (*Ficus benjamina*) are best propagated by tip cuttings. Some plants such as Dracaena, Philodendron and Plectranthus can be propagated by both methods.

Whole-Leaf Cuttings

Simply cut a healthy leaf with the petiole (the leafstalk that joins a leaf to the stem) from the parent plant. Dip the end in rooting hormone, gently tap off any excess then put the cutting in moist media. Either water frequently or cover the container with clear plastic or a plastic bag to provide enough humidity for the new plant. In a few weeks the leaf should have roots and later shoots. African Violets (*Saintpaulia* sp.), Peperomia and many succulents such as Crassula, Kalanchoe, Sansevieria (*Dracaena trifasciata*) and sedum can easily be grown from whole-leaf cuttings.

Leaf Wedge and Split Vein Cuttings

There are two ways to accomplish leaf cuttings. To obtain up to a dozen new plants from one leaf try the leaf wedge method. Cut a leaf into wedges with at least one primary vein in each wedge. Lay the leaf wedge flat on the propagation medium. Roots and plantlets will begin to grow in a couple of months. A second type of leaf cutting is the split vein method. Select a large leaf. Slit the veins on the underside of the leaf. Lay the cutting, lower side down, on the propagation media. If the leaf curls up, weight it down on the edges with propagation media. New plants will begin to grow from each cut in the leaf in about three months. Plants that can be successfully propagated from these two methods include Rex Begonia, Gloxinia (*Sinningia* sp.) and Temple Bells (*Smithiantha* sp.)

Rooting Cuttings in Water

Detach the leaf from the parent plant and put in a container filled with fresh, aerated water. Keep the cutting in a bright location, out of direct sunlight. Some of the easiest plants to root in water include Coleus, Christmas Cactus (*Schlumbergera* sp.), and Inch plant (*Tradescantia* sp.)

Hardening Off

Hardening off is the process of allowing a plant to transition from a protected indoor to outdoor conditions of fluctuating temperatures, wind, and full sun. Hardening off is an important step. Begin by placing plants in partial sun for a few hours daily. Gradually increase the amount of time they are outdoors and increase to full sun. Avoid windy days or below 45 degrees. Once the process is complete, plants are ready to be transplanted to the garden.

Sources

Ornamental Production: Propagating Foliage & Flowering Plants, Aggie Horticulture, Texas A&M University System.

Cooperative Extension: Garden & Yard, The University of Maine

Plant Propagation, Davis Trinklein, University of Missouri Extension, 2009.



Water Propagation. Photo courtesy GCMG

Paste Tomato Trials. Spring 2021



Gene Speller
GCMG 1997

In the Spring of 2021, paste tomato trials were conducted in order to upgrade limited and/or outdated information on paste tomatoes. The trials were organized by Master Gardener David Eskins after considerable research. The trials compared production, taste, sugar content, and other measurements for two sets of 12 different varieties

⁽¹⁾ of paste tomatoes. One set was grown in Tomato Bed No. 1 and the other comparable set was grown in Tomato Bed No.2 in the GCMGA Discovery garden. Two of the varieties (Black Plum and Roma) were also grown in the GCMGA Aquaponics unit for comparison of sugar content and taste. An additional taste test was conducted using marinara sauces made from each of the 12 varieties.

On March 11, 2021 (after a two-week rain & cold temperature delay), several members of the paste tomato team planted the two sets of paste tomatoes. The plants were initially side dressed with “Sam’s Mix” tomato fertilizer ⁽²⁾ and later supplemented with foliar applications of Miracle-Gro®. Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) was periodically sprayed to control caterpillars, and Serenade was used as an organic fungicide. Harvesting started on May 13 and continued to July 5, 2021. Monitoring data were recorded and uploaded to a Google worksheet for all team members.

Total production for all 24 plants over the season was approximately 375 lbs. of viable paste tomatoes. The top three producers were Andiamo (31 lbs.), Black Plum (30 lbs.), and Heirloom Marriage™ Marziner Hybrid (HMMH at 27 lbs).

The primary taste testing was conducted on June 10, 2021 at the Discovery Garden by seven different MG’s. Additional taste testing was conducted on six other days by four additional MG’s. With regard to taste testing and using a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (5 rated the best) for fresh tomatoes, four out of twelve varieties tested scored values of 4 or better as follows: HMMH at 4.2; Yaqui at 4.1; Black Plum and Roma at 4. Black Plum and Roma were also grown in the Aquaponics unit and included in taste testing for comparison with soil grown tomatoes of the same variety. Aquaponics-grown Black Plum and Roma each scored values of 4, whereas soil-grown Black Plum and Roma scored values of 3.5 and 3.3 respectively.

A separate marinara sauce was made from each paste tomato variety and taste tested for comparison with its fresh fruit counterpart. Each batch was made by MG Karen Nelson with the same ingredients (olive oil, onion and garlic) and processed the same way (oven roasted and blended). Taste testing was conducted on July 8, 2021 with a panel of 13 different MG volunteers using the same test scale. Eight sauce varieties (Andiamo, Hungarian Italian Paste, Incas, Invincible, La Roma III, Pozzano, Roma, and San Marzano) tested higher than its fresh fruit. Two of the eight (La Roma III and San Marzano) had sauce ratings greater than twice as high as its fresh fruit. The fresh fruit for four varieties (Black Plum, HMMH, Sunrise Sauce, and Yaqui) tested slightly higher ($\leq 20\%$) than marinara sauces made from these varieties.

A refractometer (optical instrument) was used to measure the sugar content, called the Brix value, for nine of the twelve varieties grown in the trials. The Brix data for



Photos by Gene Speller

Aquaponics Tomatoes



Collecting Data

“The trials compared production, taste, sugar content...”

all varieties tested were all within one percentage point of each other (range 4 to 5). The soil-grown Black Plum had a Brix value of 5 and the Aquaponics-grown Black Plum had a Brix value of 4.7. The soil-grown Roma had a Brix value of 4 as did the Aquaponics-grown Roma tomatoes. Thus, there was no significant difference in the sugar content of soil-grown tomatoes vs aquaponics-grown tomatoes based on this comparison test.

For reference, additional Brix testing included the following tomatoes: (1) an unknown paste variety from Kroger at Brix 4, (2) home garden medium large hybrid (Carmello) at Brix 5, and (3) home garden cherry tomato (Sakuro) at Brix 6. These Brix numbers tested for different varieties are consistent with data from other studies.

Notes:

(1) Twelve Varieties of Paste Tomatoes Tested:

Andiamo	Black Plum	HMMH	Hungarian Italian Paste
Incas	Invincible	La Roma III	Pozzano
Roma	San Marzano	Sunrise Sauce	Yaqui

(2) “Sam’s Mix” is a special blend of several fertilizer components originally developed by former Galveston County Master Gardener and tomato specialist Sam Scarcella (1930 to 2013). This fertilizer blend has been used in tomato trials at the Discovery Garden since his passing in 2013. This blend is also sold at GCMG plant sales.



Tasting area set up. Photo by Gene Speller



Judges participation by Gene Speller

Applesnails - Nightmare of an Invasive Pest



Barbara Lyons
GCMG 2014

After Hurricane Harvey, it took a while to get back into our backyard garden since house repairs and daily living in a post-flood environment were priorities. After several months when the piles of trash were removed and the inside of our home was making progress toward full restoration, my husband and I turned our sights to the vegetable raised beds in our backyard adjoining Chigger Creek in Friendswood. As we removed debris and weeds from one bed, I picked up a very large shell, about the size of a Mandarin orange and I set it aside to investigate when I had more time.

Applesnails (*Pomacea maculata*), like other more common garden snails are members of the Gastropod family; however, apple snails are an aquatic species. They were brought from Argentina to the US primarily through the aquarium trade to keep as pets. It is estimated that many were set free outdoors after outgrowing the interest of owners. The applesnail was also introduced in Asia through commercial production. Because they are very large, the snail meat was considered to be a good protein source for both restaurants as well as places where protein sources were scarce. Unfortunately, the snail never took off in either of these situations. Many individual farmers did not keep the snails confined to their artificial growing environments and snails escaped into local

landscapes. The snail can be transferred between freshwater environments by unwitting boaters, with the snail attaching itself to vessels in still waters and hitching a ride. The snails may also be spread through flooding events.

Applesnails can get as big as an apple, thus the name. Size can reach as tall as 6 inches (15 cm), although a smaller size is more typical. Size variations have been compared to apples, clenched fists, and baseballs. The adults are often submerged and embedded in muddy areas and are voracious eaters of a variety of plants and decomposing matter. In the US they are found in warmer climates including the southern border states and along the east coast to Virginia and west coast to central California. The range appears to be increasing as temperate zones move northward. Today the snails are an agricultural pest in Texas affecting rice farmers; their voracious appetite can contribute to the destruction of levees and clear waterways of vegetation, in turn altering the environment for other aquatic wildlife.

The shell of the adult has a typical snail shape, and has wide color variation including black, brown, yellow, or green and often with banded patterns. They lay eggs in bright bubble gum pink or coral clumps of between 200 and 600 eggs on sticks, branches, growing vegetation, or man-made structures near or in shallow slow-moving freshwater environments like ponds, lakes or irrigation ditches. The egg coloration is due



Egg clusters from Lake Friendswood

“Applesnails have few if any native predators.”

to a high level of carotenoids which fades to white as the eggs mature. Within two weeks the eggs hatch and snails immediately crawl or fall into the water.

Approximately 70 percent of the eggs hatch. Reproduction takes place every 5-14 days during times of warm weather which occurs most months in Galveston County. At this rate of reproduction, it is easy to see how the population can overwhelm an ecosystem.

During times of more intense heat, the snails burrow into the coolness of mud and aestivate, kind of like a state of hibernation in hot rather than cold temperatures. In natural settings they may be in a concentration of 2 to 3 per square meter; however, in agricultural settings they may reach concentrations of >130 per square meter. Apple snails are known to transmit a parasite, Rat Lung Worm (*Angiostrongylus cantonensis*) which can cause human infection through eating them raw or undercooked. The disease in humans is not usually fatal but can cause slow destruction and scarring of the brain. Consumption of apple snails is not advised.

Apple snails have few if any native predators. Reduction methods include limited use of pesticides applied by state agencies. Egg clusters can be eradicated by careful scraping of the eggs off of the plant or structure, submersing the eggs in water for several minutes then crushing by foot for good measure. If adult snails are sighted, leave them in place and report their location and photos of the egg mass and/or snail to aquaticinvasives@tpwd.texas.gov using the form at environmental collaborative working group Texas Invasive Species Institute: https://www.texasinvasives.org/action/report_detail.php?alert_id=20. This Texas institution works in conjunction with other state and federal agencies to document the distribution of the species and plan for control methods. Note that experts remark that the apple snail will continue to be an invasive as long as they continue to be sold in the aquarium trade.

As for the applesnail shell found in our home garden, there haven't been any others noted. The snail most likely died in the flood being displaced from an area upstream as has been documented since the flooding associated with Hurricane Harvey.

Note: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M Forest Service as well as Texas State University System, federal governmental and non-profit partners support education and

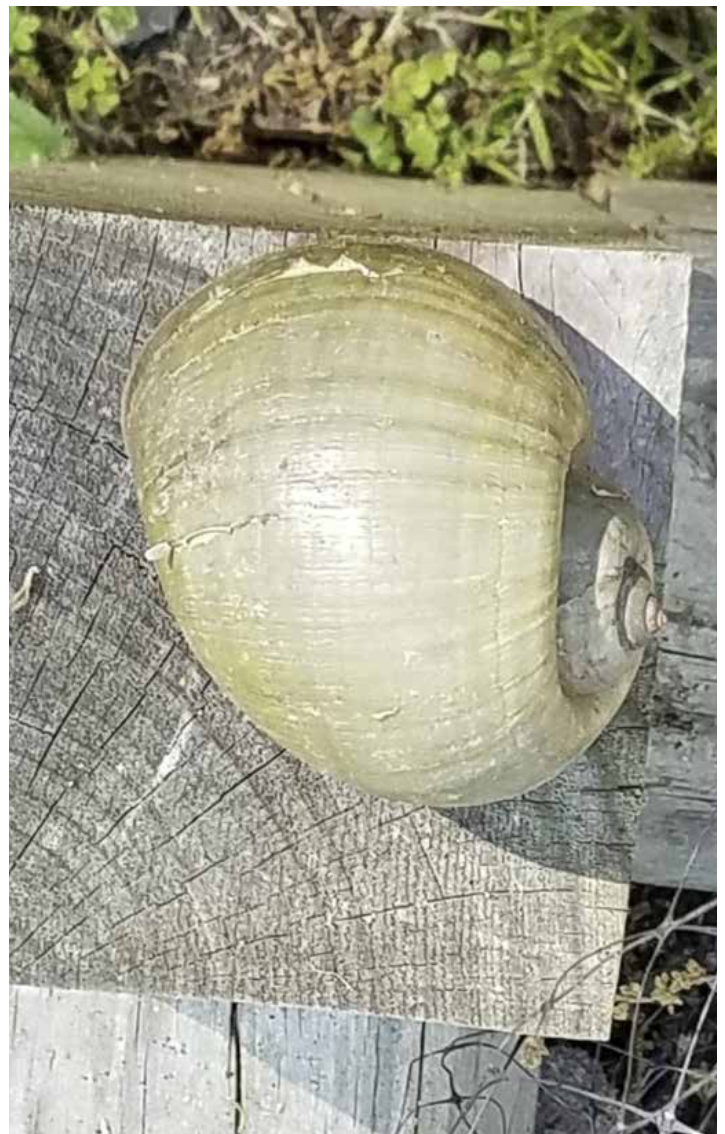
awareness about invasive species. For more information, browse online to the Texas Invasive Species Institute: www.texasinvasives.org.

Resources:

https://texasinvasives.org/animal_database/detail.php?symbol=15#:~:tex-=-Description,1.5%20inches%20is%20more%20common.

<https://www.fws.gov/fisheries/ANS/erss/highrisk/ERSS-Pomacea-maculata-FINAL-March2018.pdf>

Reporting form at https://www.texasinvasives.org/action/report_detail.php?alert_id=20



The size of the shell. Photo by Barbara Lyons

Gardeners Tasks for March & April



Patricia Martin
GCMG 1998

March

Early March is the best time to set out tomato transplants. Try Celebrity, Better Boy, Big Beef, and other recommended varieties.

Plant these vegetable seeds: beans (bush, lima, and pole), cantaloupe, corn, cucumbers, summer squash. Plant these transplants: cucumbers, eggplant, bell peppers, hot peppers, summer squash and tomatoes. Some herb seeds may germinate slowly, some herbs are vegetative propagated. Use transplants of basil, bay, chives, lemon grass, marjoram, mint, oregano, rosemary, and thyme.

Plant woody ornamentals as soon as possible to establish roots and reduce transplant shock.

Prune spring flowering shrubs as soon as they finish blooming. A good rule of thumb to remember is remove as much as one-third of their height. Don't prune summer blooming hydrangeas yet because of danger of removing flower buds.

Feed azaleas and camellias immediately after blooming period and through early summer in small amounts rather than one large dose. These shrubs require acidic soil, from 4.5 to 5.5 pH. To know whether to adjust soil pH and choose the right fertilizer, take a soil test at <http://soiltesting.tamu.edu>.

After pruning hibiscus, feed with a formulated hibiscus or balanced fertilizer and occasional feedings until October.

Plant the following to attract hummingbirds: four o'clock (*Mirabilis jalapa*), phlox, cypress vine (*Ipomoea quamoclit*), fire-spice (*Odontonema strictum*) and perennial salvia. Set out ageratum, copper plant (*Acalypha wilkesiana*), celosia, portulaca and petunia for color in the garden.

Beginning in late March, set out caladium bulbs through mid-May. After spring flowering bulbs have finished blooming, remove flower stalks but not the foliage.

Use fungicides on crape myrtles if powdery mildew is a problem. Strong water spray early in the morning helps to remove aphids and spider mites.

April

This is the last month for planting wax and lima beans, pintos, snap bush and pole beans. Plant these herb transplants: basil, lavender, Mexican mint marigold and scented geranium. Plant okra now to mid-May. Okra has a long harvesting season, through to August.

Feed established roses every four to six weeks with formulated rose fertilizer.

Fertilize lawns in the spring after grass puts out new growth. Use a 15-5-10 fertilizer.

Prune azaleas as they finish blooming. Fertilize azaleas for the first time after blooms fall. Use an azalea fertilizer repeat in six weeks. Fertilize the azaleas one more time in June, but no later than this because of disrupting bloom set for the following year in the shrub's dormant period.

Camellias need to be pruned and fertilized after flowering. Remove interior branches along with dead wood to provide better air circulation. Use a well-balanced fertilizer to promote growth and blooms.

Prune flowering shrubs and trees after they bloom. This includes flowering quince (*Chaenomeles speciosa*) and bridal wreath (*Spirea* sp.).

Set out vincas after mid-April to help reduce problems with fungal blight.

Plant cleome, four-o'clocks, plumbago, hibiscus and shrimp plant (*Justicia brandegeana*) for summer color. The following plants can be planted in shady areas: impatiens, coleus, begonias and pentas.

Plant the following tuberous plants: gloriosa lily, daylily (*Hemerocallis* sp.), butterfly lily (*Hedychium coronarium*, fragrant, white-blooming species of ginger), red spider lily (*Lycoris radiata*), rain lilies (*Zephyranthes grandiflora*), yellow spider lily (*Lycoris aurea*), Shell Ginger (*Alpinia* sp.), and tuberose (*Agave amica*). Plant caladium tubers this month; whites and greens do well in the shade, the reds need partial sun.

Add mulch to flowers, shrubs and trees. This will help to discourage weeds and conserve soil moisture during the hot summer months. The mulch should be two to four inches thick. Remember to leave breathing room or free space around the trunks of trees. Piling too much mulch around tree trunks could cause microbial decay of the tree trunk.

Keep aphids, thrips and caterpillars controlled. Check in the morning for insects in the vegetable garden and hand pick the insects if possible. Check roses for black spot fungus. Keep the areas around blooming flowers clear of debris that could harbor insects.

Sources:

Spade to Spoon by GCMGA

A Garden Book for Houston and the Texas Gulf Coast by River Oaks Garden Club, fifth edition

Azalea Culture in Harris County: <https://harris.agrilife.org/files/2011/05/azaleas.pdf>

Complete Guide to Bulbs in Houston by Sally McQueen.

Innovation with Raised Beds



Kevin Lancon
GCMG 2018

With so many raised garden beds at our Discovery Garden in Carbide Park, we are always on the lookout for new and innovative designs and materials particularly when it comes to durability, ease of assembly and installation, as well as cost. Since we are a demonstration garden, we also want to showcase many gardening alternatives in fit, form and function that are also suitable for many budgets.

With that said, each year we plan and budget for various maintenance activities around the Discovery Garden. One of the biggest and most frequent activities is repairing or replacing existing wooden beds. One such bed that was at the top of our list to replace was our multi-tiered herb bed. It was constructed about eight years ago and was in desperate need of repair. Not only was the wood rotten and the sides falling apart, but it also was the home to a very happy termite nest. The existing tiered wooden bed is shown below.

After doing a little research, we found company Vego Garden and headquartered in Houston, that provided DIY modular metal garden bed systems with a 20+ year life expectancy, utilizing eco-friendly metal materials instead of wood. The metal components of the bed are made from zinc, magnesium, and aluminum coated steel and painted with an award-winning paint manufactured from AkzoNobel. According to Vego Garden's literature, the metal's exceptional performance, i.e. an expected 20+ year life expectancy, has been verified at the Texas A&M National Corrosion & Materials Reliability Lab. Additionally, Vego Garden kits feature an innovative modular design, which means you can assemble a kit into various

configurations. For example, in a 10-in-1 Kit, you can build one of 10 possible configurations to fit your garden plans. The 4-in-1 offers four configurations, the 6-in-1 offers six, and so on. They also come in multiple colors and two different side heights, 32 inches or 17 inches.

We chose to utilize three 10-in-1 Kits, one with 32 inch sides for the center bed and two with 17 inch sides for the tiered side beds.

I can't speak to the longevity of the beds yet, but the DIY assembly was quick and easy. The beds are lightweight and can be moved into position easily, yet they have a strong and durable feel to them, which I imagine will hold up exceptionally well over time. We also chose the British Green color, which is the perfect color scheme to match the rest of the Discovery Garden. We still have a bit more work to do on these beds, such as run irrigation, add soil and then plant our herbs, but without a doubt, these new beds from Vego Garden are a welcome new addition to the Discovery Garden and we are eager to see how they perform longer term.

If you are interested in learning more about these products, you can visit Vegogarden.com or you are certainly welcome to visit us in the Discovery Garden in Carbide Park any Thursday morning between the hours of 9 am and 11 am. We would be happy to show you these beds as well as the rest of our beautiful garden. We also want to thank our friends at Vego Garden for all of the education and support that they have given us throughout this process.



Old herb bed area



One of the new vego bed designs set up

Photos by Kevin Lancon

Discovery Garden Update



Tom Fountain
GCMG 2008

After a record warm year, our cooler winter weather was a welcome relief, although the average area temperatures continued a degree or two above normal. Rainfall across southeast Texas was about two inches below normal for each of the past three months leaving the area teetering on the edge of drought conditions. The extended forecast from NOAA indicates temperatures will likely be above normal into summer with rainfall likely to become near normal this spring.

Cooler weather has helped bring out a few more Master Gardeners. Actively involved gardeners make garden projects easier to complete and make The Discovery Garden a much more interesting place. Plans for big projects in the works include replacing some of the troubled wooden beds with new steel beds and getting the pergola flooring replaced. The contractors finished the pergola floor and it looks great. The task of putting new flooring in the hoop house was taken on by Ronnie Corley with a little help from others. He is seen finishing up a part of that task in (Fig 1).

The garden has always had many cleanup projects, even more so since the weather last year and the pandemic. There have been stumps and trees to remove, and keeping all the different areas in the garden weeded and cleaned are big activities. One recent big project was the removal of a large stump from the native tree area. Volunteer workers included Kevin Lancon, Robert Marshall, Larry Brizendine, Phil Haught, David Eskins. They used the tractor and worked for several hours to remove the stump pictured in (Fig 2).

Tish Reustle, Sue Bain, and Vicki Blythe normally spend their time in the garden keeping the beds weeded. However, on a cold day just before a winter freeze, they turned into plumbers to pull water timers in the pollinator garden area to prevent them from freezing. (Fig 3). The timers are made of plastic and are easily damaged by freezing temperatures. Some cut off valves were damaged by the freeze as well as some timers which were not removed.

Other things that happened in the garden during



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“Actively involved gardeners make garden projects easier”

cold weather include a power failure that threatened the tilapia in Aquaponics and the tomato plants that were in the Hoop house. Thankfully, Briana Etie, Kathy Maines and Kevin Lancon responded to the power outage at the garden. They moved tomatoes into the Discovery House and plugged in the pump and aerator into our generator and replaced the heater for the fish. We did lose quite a few fish but it could have been much worse if it had not been for their quick response.

(Fig. 4) Ronnie Corley, Kevin Lancon and Ira Gervais are examining and labeling tomato plants in the hoop house on a day or two before the power failure as our Horticulture Agent Stephen is taking pictures. Moving all of those tomato plants was quite a task on a cold dark night.

On one of the warmer days Kevin Lancon (Fig. 5) was busy mixing up some of Sam’s Mix for the Spring Plant Sale while others were packaging it up. This is quite an involved process and it needs to be mixed outside.

On one of our windy cold days when not many gardeners were out, I came across Bill Cummins and his wife Joanie. (Fig. 6) They were out taking care of their onions. Bill wanted to try and get an early start on spring planting. I asked if it wasn’t a little early. He indicated he might be, but if that was the case he would just replant again in about two weeks.

Kevin Lancon joins David Hebert of Archideck to show off the new pergola floor. (Fig. 7 and 8)

Linda Barnett proposed that we have a soup day at the garden. It turned out to be a great idea, all the soups were very good, the weather was cool and all agreed we should have soup days more often.

Now we are headed into year three dealing with yet another variance of Covid-19. The good news is most of our gardeners are vaccinated and most of the activity is outside. And so the Discovery Garden is a relatively safe place to get out, get a little exercise, and meet with friends. Looking forward to seeing you in the garden soon. Stay safe.



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Photos 1-6 by Tom Fountain and photos 7 and 8 by Stephen Brueggerhoff

Meet a Master Gardener: GCMG President Kathy Maines



Barbara Canetti
GCMG 2016

When Kathy Maines became a Master Gardener in 2017, she jumped in with both feet; she has continued with earnest enthusiasm ever since. And it's a good thing. In January she became President of the Galveston County Master Gardener Association.

"I have a lot to learn but I am excited about this," Kathy said with her usual smile.

When approached by former MG President Sharon Zaal to be a vice president, Kathy said she hesitated. Did this mean the next step was to be president, she asked. "Not necessarily," is what she was told. But after working alongside Sharon for the past few years, learning so much from her and discovering ideas with her, Kathy felt she was ready to take the helm.

Kathy joined the Master Gardeners after retiring in 2016 from a career in nursing and moving to Galveston from San Leon. Since her move to the island, she has emerged herself in other volunteer organizations as well that are diversified and interesting to her, including Friends of Moody Gardens (currently Vice President-Membership) and City of Galveston Tree Committee (currently Board Member-District 5). She has a short-term rental just a few blocks from the beach, which she maintains and rents through Airbnb.

As president of our association, which by the way will be celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, Kathy has been quietly setting goals to help re-establish and build membership, which has been affected by the pandemic and the last year's passing of some members and our county agent.

"We have lost a lot of people and volunteer hours because of COVID-19, which could put us in a different size category in the Texas Master Gardeners' membership," she said. "We are trying to create additional programs and opportunities for members to get service and continuing educational hours."

One of the programs she is implementing in the Discovery Garden will be to make more use of the weekly Thursday gatherings in the Discovery House. Kathy is asking members to make short presentations about a specific and narrow topic, delivered while the many members are gathered for lunch. Service hours as well as continuing education hours can be accrued with this activity. In addition and at the monthly meetings, she would like

to continue engaging speakers to share information with members, which are also considered continuing education hours.

As the new Dr. William M. Johnson Outdoor Classroom is constructed in the Discovery Garden, she wants to put together programs for the public – adults as well as school-age children – to make use of that facility. Also, since the Discovery House is suitable for lectures, seminars and demonstrations, she would like to see the building utilized more for such activities.

Additionally, she is hoping to develop a partnership with Scooter Langley, Horticulture instructor for Lee College Huntsville Center's program on the O.B. Ellis Unit in Huntsville, and the Texas Department of Corrections; inmates grow native milkweed to feed the migrating monarch butterfly population.

"I am so thankful I have a great support team to rely on for help. I am new to this job, as is our County Extension Agent Stephen (Brueggerhoff)," she said. "It means a lot to me that so many people are helping. I really believe everyone has something they can give and that's what makes this a great organization."



Benson wins State Award for dedication, commitment to job



Karolyn Gephart
GCMG 2017

Faculty and staff of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, gathered from across the state to receive the agency's Superior Service Award during a ceremony January 28 in Bryan-College Station.

Office manager for the Galveston County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office in La Marque, Genevieve "Ginger" Benson was a recipient of a prestigious State Award. Benson received the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Superior Service Award, Administration Support for the State of Texas.

The Superior Service Award is the agency's highest award, recognizing personnel who provide outstanding performance in education or other services to the organization and Texas residents, according to Rick Avery, Ph.D., interim director for AgriLife Extension, Bryan-College Station.

"These award winners are to be commended for the exemplary work they do each day to improve the lives of Texans, both in their respective counties and across the state," Avery said. "Their educational outreach and technical assistance help Texans meet society's challenges as well as their individual needs. We are incredibly thankful for their service."

Ginger started as a volunteer in the Galveston County Master Gardener intern class of 2014, and in 2015 was hired as the administrative assistant for the horticulture department of the AgriLife Extension office in Galveston. She was promoted to office manager in 2019. She has become an important part of both the Galveston County Master Gardeners and horticulture department in the office.

Ginger was cited in the award for her contributions to the office, programs and community through her dedication and commitment to the agency mission, as well as her attention to detail, research and problem-solving skills and general success managing the budget.

"Ginger Benson is a dedicated, professional whose ability to foster relationships is a huge part of the success of the Galveston County Extension Office and the Galveston County Master Gardener Program. Ginger's compassion and reliability create positive and meaningful relationships which benefits volunteers and Galveston County residents," Julie Massey, Galveston County Extension Agent for Coastal and Marine Resources, said. "Ginger is very deserving of the Superior Service Award from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service."

Horticulture Agent Stephen Brueggerhoff agrees.

"I am very happy for and proud of Ginger. The Superior Service Award is one of the highest honors bestowed annually by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Ginger is a vital staff member dedicated to administering the fine details involved in seamless office management, and is recognized for her outstanding contribution to our colleagues and our Master Gardener volunteers. Brava for a much deserved award!" he said.



Seasonal Bites



Sandra Gervais
GCMG 2011

On December 3, 2021, the Galveston County Agrilife Extension Office was renamed to honor deceased former Agrilife agents Dr. William McCray Johnson and Preston E. Poole, guiding lights in the early formation of our current Galveston County Master Gardener organization. As with most GCMG events, great food was served. This involved a lot of planning and behind the scenes work by many Master Gardeners. The result, as usual, was a good time for all that Dr. Johnson would have thoroughly enjoyed. We think of him often, especially when a chocolate dessert is served.

Here are two of the great recipes; interestingly, both use goat cheese. Kathy Maines, our new GCMG President, made the first recipe, one that her son really likes. And it's easy; the hardest part is pitting the dates. Next, the goat cheese truffles/balls are also easy and require no cooking. They are very different in taste and dress up easily for parties.



Bacon Wrapped Dates and Almonds

24 large, moist dates. (Medjool variety works well.)
12 not-too-thick slices of bacon
2 oz. softened goat cheese
24 whole toasted unsalted almonds

Directions:

Move oven rack to upper third; preheat oven to 500 degrees.

Pit dates, trying to tear them open as little as possible. Set aside.
Halve the 12 slices of bacon crossways.
Stuff cavity of each date with 1 almond.
Put goat cheese into a pastry bag and fit bag with a plain 1/4-inch tip.
Pipe goat cheese into the opening of each stuffed date.
Wrap a half-piece of bacon around width of each date.
Put dates, bacon seam side down, on foil covered baking sheet at least 1/2 inch apart.
Bake until bacon is golden and crisp, about 6-8 minutes.
Cool briefly before serving.
Yield: 24



Cranberry Pecan Goat Cheese Truffle/Balls

10 oz. goat cheese at room temperature
6 oz. cream cheese at room temperature
3 teaspoons cinnamon
3 tablespoons honey (plus extra for garnish if desired)
1 1/2 cups chopped pecans, divided
1 cup dried cranberries, diced
1 1/2 cup fresh parsley, minced

Directions:

In a large bowl, beat both cheeses, cinnamon and honey until light and fluffy.
Add 1/2 cup chopped pecans and fold to combine. Set aside.
On flat plate, toss together remaining pecans, dried cranberries and parsley.
Use a cookie scoop to make 18 large balls of cheese mixture.
Toss each into nut mixture and roll until well coated.
Refrigerate balls until ready to serve.
To serve, drizzle with honey if desired.
Serve on toothpicks or pretzel sticks.

Serving ideas:

Balls can simply be rolled into a single large cheese ball or log for crackers or made smaller and served individually on toothpicks for easier handling. The GCMG's served them on rosemary sprigs to look like mini-Christmas trees.

Note: these balls will keep well for three days if refrigerated in an airtight container.

Book Review

A Rich Spot of Earth: Thomas Jefferson's Revolutionary Garden at Monticello by Peter J Hatch



Lisa Belcher
GCMG 2014

Last year we read some pretty awesome gardening books — each different than the one before. Our last book for the months of November and December took us on a historical trip and garden tour of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. There have been numerous books written on our third President's plantation, but this book was written

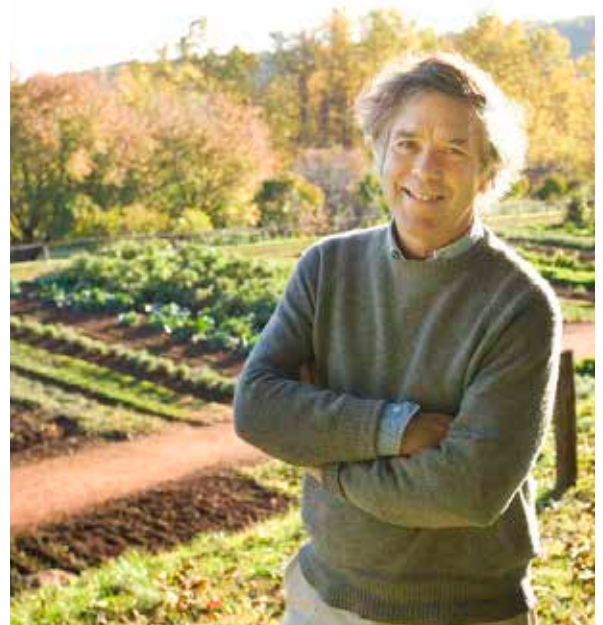
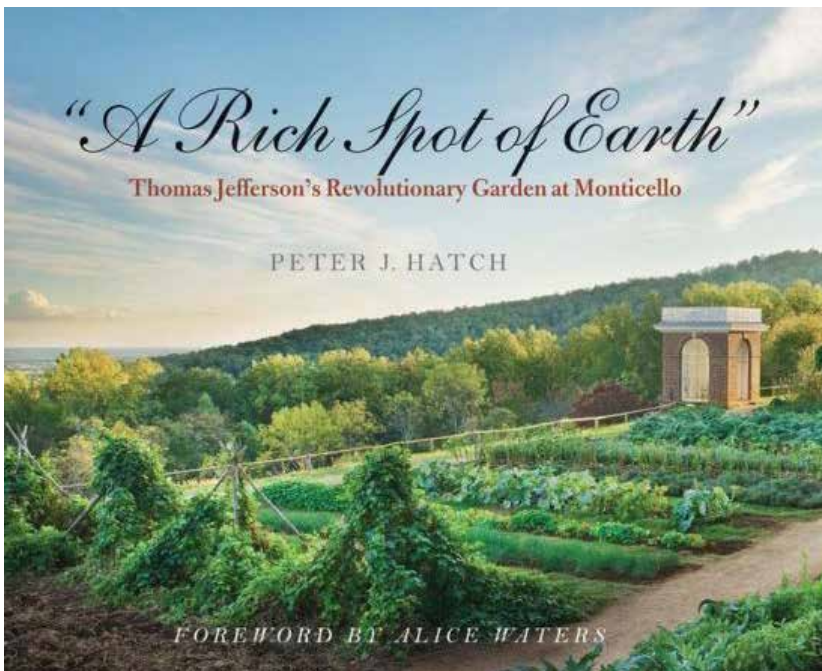
by an author with a special relationship with the grounds. Peter Hatch, who is a professional gardener and historian, has been instrumental in the restoration, maintenance, and conservation of the 2,400 acre landscape. In fact, he served as the Director of Gardens and Grounds for over 35 years.

Divided into two parts, the reader is introduced to Thomas' quest for new and unique vegetables, his trials of seeding his new found plants as well as practices used to sow, cultivate, harvest and even prepare vegetables and herbs from the plantation gardens. In part one the author provides information about Jefferson inheriting Monticello at the young age of 26, his political life, retirement and later, full-time relocation to Monticello where he resided until his death. Throughout his life, Jefferson continued to search for unique vegetables from other countries to try to grow at his home. It was Jefferson who introduced many of the vegetables that we eat daily today, including toma-

toes, okra and eggplants. Delving into the archives, the book is full of Thomas' journal entries including his own drawings of vegetable beds, plots, tables of both success and failure rates. The reader is enlightened to both his wife and daughter's recipes of dishes which were served to visiting politicians, dignitaries as well as friends and neighbors, some of which may sound very familiar to many cooks today.

Part two is a very in-depth list of the vegetables and herbs which were and are still grown at Monticello. Each entry shares Jefferson's quest to find that particular seed, the history of the variety he chose, and to what extent the vegetable or herb played in Monticello's daily preparation of foods. Anecdotes shared in this book include "a thimbleful of Lettuce is to be sown every Monday morn from Feb 1 to Sept 1." When reading just the paragraphs pertaining to lettuce varieties and the numbers sown on the grounds, one can begin to imagine on how vast the property of Monticello covers.

Not only is this a beautiful coffee table book with its 200 gorgeous color photos and illustrations, it is a step back in time and a well written historical manual of gardening practices, pests in the garden, companion gardening, Jefferson's experiments and even seed saving ideas. After reading *A Rich Spot of Earth* a trip to the Revolutionary Garden at Monticello will surely be on your "places to visit" list.



Hatch at Rev Garden

Quiz: Name These Plants



Lisa Belcher
GCMG 2014

With winter behind us (fingers crossed), it's time to run to our favorite nursery to grab flats upon flats of annuals and perennials to fill our dreary beds. If you are like most, those tiny plant cards are tossed in the trash, and sometimes you have to think long and hard which plant is what. It sometimes can be harder than you think to remember which tiny non-blooming plant you just popped into the soil.

Try this quiz:

You purchased the following seven plants. Match their names with their photos.

- a. Powis Castle Artemisia (*Artemisia* "Powis Castle")
- b. Pansies (*Viola wittrockiana*)
- c. Dianthus (*Dianthus deltooides* "Maiden Pink")
- d. Autumn Sage (*Salvia greggi* "Radio Red")
- e. Ajuga (*Ajuga reptans* "Blueberry Muffin")
- f. Petunias (*Petunia* "Bordeaux Red")
- g. Blue Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis* "Sky Blue")

See answers on page 32.



1. _____



2. _____



3. _____



4. _____



5. _____



6. _____



7. _____

2022 Master Gardener Recertification Hours

Date	Name of Program	Speaker	MG CEUs
1/8/2022	Wedge Grafting	Hazel Lampton, Herman Auer	2.50
1/11/2022	MGA Jan. Meeting - Looking Ahead in 2022	Kathy Maines, Stephen B.	1.00
1/13/2022	Discovery Garden Lunch & Learn - Pollinator Garden	Sue Bain	
1/15/2022	Planting Fruit Trees	Herman Auer	2.00
1/15/2022	Fruit Tree Selections	Robert Marshall	2.00
1/22/2022	Growing Great Tomatoes, Part 2 of 3	Ira Gervais	2.50
1/22/2022	Successful Spring Vegetable Gardening	Kevin Lancon	2.00
1/29/2022	Growinig Peaches in Galveston County	Herman Auer	2.00
1/29/2022	Garden Bulbs for Galveston County	Lisa Davis, Fran Brockington	2.00
2/5/2022	Growing Irish Potatoes	Kevin Lancon	2.00
2/5/2022	Growing Avocados	Hazel Lampton	2.00
2/8/2022	MGA Feb. Meeting - <i>Citrus Problems in Texas</i>	Janis Teas	1.00
2/10/2022	Discovery Garden Lunch & Learn - Pergola	Pam Hunter	0.25
2022 Recertification Hours for MGs		Total CEUs (Hours)	21.25

Last Updated: Feb. 23, 2022

Reminder: In order to maintain your status as a certified Texas Master Gardener, each year you must complete a minimum of 6 hours continuing education, as well as 12 service hours. Additionally, those hours must be reported through the online Volunteer Management System or other means.

Benson named new FCH Agent for Agrilife Extension

Ginger Benson is the new Family and Community Health (FCH) Agent position in the AgriLife Extension office; she began as county agent March 1.

“We welcome and congratulate Ginger in her new role and look forward to the great work she will provide to county residents and to our region,” Horticulture Extension Agent Stephen Brueggerhoff said.

Ginger was the officer manager and administrative support for Horticulture prior to this new position.

“This is an outstanding opportunity for Ginger; she is a most welcome colleague guiding the FCH programs,” Brueggerhoff said.

Ginger received her Bachelor of Science in Human Nutrition and Foods with a minor in Psychology from the University of Houston in 2013. She began her journey with Extension in 2015 as Texas Master Gardener volunteer, becoming Administrative Assistant for the Horticulture Department later that year and promoted to Office Manager in 2019. Ginger was awarded the prestigious Superior Service Award this January from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Administrative Support – County, for the State of Texas.



March 2022 GCMG Calendar of Public Educational Programs

Unless otherwise noted all programs are conducted at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located inside Carbide Park at 4102-B Main Street (FM 519), La Marque, 77568

TOMATO STRESS MANAGEMENT, Part 3 of 3 **Saturday, March 12, 2022 / 9 – 11:30 am**

Do you want to learn how to grow great tomatoes? The third in a series of three programs by Galveston County Master Gardener Ira Gervais on learning all about how to grow great tomatoes here in Galveston County. The program will provide an overview on identifying various tomato diseases and insect stress factors and how to minimize them to increase yields.

Register here:

<https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/>

CUCURBITS - THE SQUASH & CUCUMBER FAMILY **Saturday, March 19, 2022 / 9 – 11:30 am**

Galveston County Master Gardener Kevin Lancon will provide an overview of how to grow cucurbits, which will include cucumbers, squash, and melons in your home garden. The presentation will focus on the different varieties that can be successfully grown in our area, tips and suggested best practices for maximum production, different methods of trellising and how to deal with specific detrimental insects and diseases. There will also be a bit of health and nutritional information provided, as well as a few culinary tips and delicious recipes and ways to enjoy your fresh homegrown cucurbits.

Register here:

<https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/>

SUCCESSFUL CONTAINER GARDENING **Saturday, March 19, 2022 / 1 – 3 pm**

Galveston County Master Gardener Karolyn Gephart will present and lead a discussion on Container Gardening in our Gulf Coast Region. Topics covered will be practical and useful, and will include environment planting, locations, plant categories, maintenance, benefits, and more. In addition, Gephart along with GCMG Kaye Corey will be demonstrating how to prepare the container and insert plants which will then be given away during the program.

Register here:

<https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/>



IRISES FOR THE GULF COAST GARDEN **Saturday, March 26, 2022 / 9 – 11:30 am**

Iris enthusiast and Galveston County Master Gardener Monica Martens, Ed.D., will provide an overview of how to grow, care for, and increase the variety of hybrids and species irises in our community. The program includes information about the types of irises that can be grown locally and elsewhere in Texas. The presentation also addresses tips for growing, information about how to obtain irises and share them, and the effects of weather (i.e., freezes) and pests/diseases. Participants will learn about our iris preservation work and tour the iris beds, which will be in bloom, at the Master Gardener Discovery Garden.

Register here:

<https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/>

RAINWATER HARVESTING **Saturday, March 26, 2022 / 1-3 p.m.**

Don't let that water go down the drain! Learn to collect and store rainwater. Nat Gruesen, Galveston County Master Gardener and Certified Rainwater Harvesting Specialist, will present rainwater harvesting practices and ways to incorporate rainwater collection into your residential landscaping along with methods for making your rainwater barrel.

Register here:

<https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/>



Good Things Flower from Small Packages



Stephen Brueggerhoff
Extension Agent - Horticulture
Texas A&M Agrilife Extension
Service Galveston County

Spring flowering plants offer lively displays that help shake off somber tones of winter. We know that successful flower and vegetable gardening comes from planning and following planting charts months in advance. With planning we need to remember that it all starts from seed, and understanding the basic structure of seed and processes for plant development, combined with planting guides can make our garden endeavors successful.

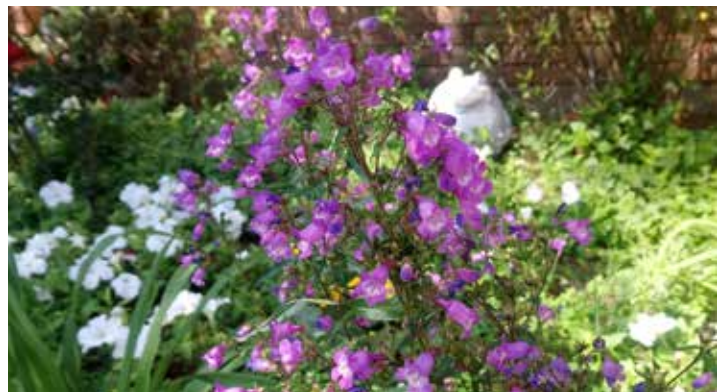
Seeds are comprised of three primary parts: seed coat, endosperm and embryo. The embryo is tissue that develops into a plant, the endosperm surrounds and is a food source for the developing embryo, and the seed coat protects the package. When planting a seed, we begin a process of germination that involves chemical signals initiated by a combination of local environmental conditions - water, light exposure, temperature, soil pH, and oxygen availability - triggering hormonal activity involved in dormancy or growth. Included with this is size and thickness of each seed coat. Thick seed coat of some species take weathering events to wear down the covering, allowing water to enter a seeds interior to continue this biochemical process. Specific germination information is important for scientists involved in plant conservation as well as to the public, and can mean success or challenges with gardening for vegetables or wildflowers.

One example of specific germination info is one of my favorite native wildflowers called Firewheel (*Gaillardia pulchella*). The blooming period of this lovely annual is from May to September. Germination can occur from 15 to 45 days, and is dependent on abiotic factors listed. Specifically, the optimal soil temperature for germination is around 70-F. Another factor involves sowing depth at 1/8th of an inch, related to small seed size and modest seed coat. Firewheel is known to germinate readily if all conditions are met, and success can be measured in its natural distribution from Mexico north to British Columbia and to the southeastern U.S..

Another favorite is native perennial Gulf Coast Penstemon (*Penstemon tenuis*). The seed requires a cool dormant period to initiate germination, achieved via cold stratification. For cold strat, the seed is mixed with equal parts moist sand or vermiculite and stored for three weeks at 40-F. The seed looks like ground black pepper and requires surface sowing after cold treatment to germinate. I am putting this information to the test, stratifying Gulf Coast Penstemon seed now and in time for mid-March sowing. While your Gulf Coast Penste-

mon will bloom from March to June, my planting must first be established and may take another year to show off delicate spires of lilac-colored tube-shaped flowers.

The proverb *big things come in small packages* applies to this season of renewal, and patience, planning and understanding biological process can only help to make us better gardeners. Thank you, dear reader, for this back to basics journey and I look forward to seeing you in the garden.



Gulf Coast Penstemon flowers



Gulf Coast Penstemon flowers



Gulf Coast Penstemon seeds

Photos by Stephen Brueggerhoff

2022 Master Gardener Association Leadership

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Sr. Vice President

Kevin Lancon

Treasurer

Debra Brizendine

Assistant Treasurer

Sharon Zaal

Secretary

Briana Etie

Assistant Secretary

Nancy Langston-Noh

State Association Delegates

Terry and Velda Cuclis

State Association Alternate Delegates

Ira Gervais and Sharon Zaal

VP for Programs

Herman Auer, Education Programs

Judy Anderson, Monthly Meetings

Speakers Bureau Coordinators

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Plant Sale Chairmen

Kathy Maines and Kevin Lancon

Discovery Garden Coordinator

Kevin Lancon

Discovery Garden Area Leaders

Judy Anderson, Sue Bain,

Linda Barnett, Julie Cartmill,

David Cooper, Lisa Davis, Briana

Etie,

Pam Hunter, John Jons, Debie

Lambson,

Kathy Maines, Monica Martens,

Rachel Montemayor, Tish Reustle,

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Nancy Greenfield

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Program Coordinator

Stephen Brueggerhoff, M.S.

Galveston County Monthly Meetings



Judy Anderson
GCMG 2012

March

Mark your calendar for an exciting Educational Evening with Stephen Brueggerhoff, Extension Agent – Horticulture. With a wealth of experience as an educator, including Public Programs Manager for the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and the Outreach Program Coordinator for the Environmental Science Institute in Austin, Texas, he has been with AgriLife Extension since 2011. He is an active member of the Texas County Agricultural Agents Association and is a member of the Houston Area Urban Forestry Council, International Society for Arboriculture, Texas Nursery and Landscape Association and Native Plant Society of Texas. Presenting 'The Native Plant Conundrum', Stephen will talk about the definition and concept of using Texas native plants in home landscaping, including a list of his 10-plus favorites. Plan on a potluck dinner for the evening.



April



April marks the return of the GCMG Backyard Meetings! The weather often is the star of April and we can hope for it to be a beautiful Texas evening. The meeting will be hosted by Helen Mabe at her home in Santa Fe where we visited in January and took a few photos. Things will green up by April for a visit from the Master Gardeners. The park-



like setting features an organized raised garden, gazebo, a collection of bird houses and her studio where quilters will want to visit to see where she practices her art. If bad weather happens to show up, she has a building to keep everyone comfortable. There is a fire pit where we will do a hot dog roast; Helen is making chili and will have the fixings. We are asking Master Gardeners to bring a potluck dish and a chair. Water and tea will be provided; please bring any other beverage desired. There will be plenty of parking.

May



Trish and Mike McDaniel will be hosting the May Backyard meeting at their beautifully landscaped home in Galveston. Recent updates to the back yard have been made. Look for more details in the spring.

Answers to Quiz on page 28

1b Pansies

2e Ajuga

3d Autumn Sage

4g Blue Cardinal Flower

5a Powis Castle Artemisia

6c Dianthus

7f Petunias