

The "DIG IT" News



We dig spring!

*Transformation continues
in the Oaks Courtyard*

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HIGHLAND LAKES MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

President's Corner

Saying goodbye to winter's cold and hello to spring's volunteer opportunities!

Well... I guess I'm learning about the ever-changing weather in the Hill Country! Anyone who really knows me, knows I LOVE snow. Born and raised in Texas, most of my happiest childhood memories were spent on the ranch that my husband and I now own. Snow is very little of those happy childhood memories. I know... our February cold snap wasn't snow, but it was close enough. When I looked out the windows, it was white and glorious. I suspect that a large number of you are questioning my sanity... along with my Missouri-raised husband. I hope that you suffered small amounts of damage and that the lights weren't out too long.

As spring approaches, we have great opportunities for volunteer hours, not to mention the fun that will accompany those opportunities. On March 6 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., we will have the Burnet Middle School Plant Sale at 1401 N. Main in Burnet. Thank you to Carolyn Crouchet for the hard work that you supervise for this very popular project. I have just started working at the greenhouse, and it is amazing what our volunteers, the teacher Shelly Townsend and the students have done. If you haven't gone to the sale before, be sure that you do this year. This project runs October through March. Who doesn't love playing in soil and seeing your hard work make others happy?! Please advertise the sale on your personal Facebook pages, too. I put something on mine and had more than 80 "likes" in two days.

Also, the Burnet Farmer's and Craft Market starts May 6. This is another project that I love. It's so nice to sit under the pecan trees and meet and greet people from our community.



Plants are ready for the Burnet Middle School greenhouse sale.

Not only does it give us a chance to help the vendors, it's a great way to tell visitors about HLMGA. You don't have to work the entire day; we have two shifts. Just for the record, I'm not willing to give up my spot. Scott and I enjoy it too much! This is also something that you can put on your personal Facebook page. Thank you to Linda Stoneking for managing the volunteers.

The Lawn and Garden Show is just around the corner on March 25. It takes a village for Roxanne Dunegan to get this one done. Lots of volunteer hours are available. Sign-ups are starting now. Roxanne's planning and execution have made this another event that many people look forward to. It is so much fun and reaches so much of the community.

Please don't forget to glance at the Projects tab on our HLMGA website. So many projects will be looking for volunteers as the weather warms up. Those veggies don't grow by themselves.

When you see our new Associates at the monthly meeting, please take the time to welcome them and ask if they have any questions. If you don't know the answer, no worries. Get their name and pass the question on to someone in the know. They will contact them and answer their questions. First impressions are everything!

Thank you all for your patience through the presidential transition. Carolyn Stephens is a hard act to follow, for sure! When you see her, please personally tell her thank you so much for what she has done and continues to do for HLMGA.

Terri Winter

Find the latest HLMGA news online!

burnetcountyhighlandlakesmastergardener.org

 facebook.com/HighlandLakesMasterGardeners

The "Dig It" News is a publication of the Highland Lakes Master Gardener Association – written by gardeners, for gardeners! Please send all content for publication to editor Gail Braymen at gebfoto@gmail.com. Deadline is the 28th of the month for the following month's issue. The "Dig It" News is published every month except February and August.

Awarded First Place in the Texas Master Gardeners Search for Excellence Awards Program



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Tuesday, March 14, 2023 • 2 p.m.
Burnet County AgriLife Extension Office
 607 N. Vanderveer, Burnet, Texas
ATTENDANCE IN PERSON AND VIA ZOOM*
PROGRAM:
Historic Trees of Texas
 Presented by Wade Hibler, retired AgriLife Extension agent
**Watch your email for Zoom details.*

MARCH 2023

From the MG Membership Committee

MARCH 1 — “GROW: Gardening Rooted in Occupational Wellness” with Christina Bittle, Doctoral Student in Occupational Therapy at UT Health, San Antonio, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m., (1 hr credit), “a dementia-friendly gardening project” at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: free. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

MARCH 2 — “Foraging for Arrangements” with Chelsea Crisler, San Antonio Botanical Garden, 6–8 p.m. (2 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$60 (includes vase and flowers to take home). Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

MARCH 3 — “How to be a Vine Tamer” with Trish Fullerton. Trish also plans to share some tips on growing grapes and making wine during the Kingsland Garden Club meeting in the Kingsland Library Meeting Room. Meeting at 1 p.m., presentation at 1:30 p.m.

MARCH 4 — “WaterSaver Landscape Design School” with Gardening Volunteers of South Texas, (four sessions of speakers), 9 a.m.–12 p.m., (3 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$35 (includes four books used in class). Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

Spring 2023 Gardening Seminar GARDEN FIESTA

MARCH 8

8:30 a.m.–4 p.m.

New Braunfels Civic/Convention Center
375 S.Castell Ave, New Braunfels

Earn 4 hrs credit by attending all four classes. Fee: \$65. Pre-registration required at comalmg.org/cm-g-2023-spring-seminar.

“Water Optimization for Landscaping” with Becky Bowling

“Ethnobotany of Native Plants” with Maeve Bassett

“Landscaping Fiesta with Herbs” with Grace Emery

“Some Like It Hot: Plants for Blazing Summer Color” with Skip Richter

MARCH 8 — “GROW: Gardening Rooted in Occupational Wellness” with Christina Bittle, Doctoral Student in Occupational Therapy at UT Health, San Antonio, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m., (1 hr credit), “a dementia-friendly gardening project” at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: free. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

MARCH 8 — “Composting Workshop” with Bexar County Master Gardeners, 10 a.m.–12 p.m., (2 hrs. credit). Fee: free. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

MARCH 8 — “Orchids and the Botany of Freedom – Lecture and Book Signing by Author Erica Hannickel” with Erica Hannickel, 6:30–7:30 p.m., (1 hr credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio, Fee: free. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

SERIES:

“Get Growing With Plant Propagation”

with Dr. Alice Le Duc

MARCH 11, 18, 25 & APRIL 1

10 a.m.–12 p.m. each day

LBJ Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave, Austin

Earn 8 hrs credit by attending all four classes. Fee: \$120. Pre-registration required at wildflower.org/learn/adults.

MARCH 11 — “Foraging for Native Edibles” with Eric Knight, LBJ Wildflower Center, (Repeat), 9–11 a.m. (2 hrs credit), at the LBJ Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave, Austin. Fee: \$25. Pre-registration required at wildflower.org/learn/adults.

MARCH 11 — “Integrated Pest Management” with Sara Hilgers, 1–3 p.m. (2 hr credit), at the LBJ Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave, Austin. Fee: \$45. Pre-registration required at wildflower.org/learn/adults.

MARCH 11 — “Mycology 102” with SamtheFungi, 10–11:30 a.m. (1.5 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, San Antonio, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$15. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

MARCH 11 — “Mycology 103” with SamtheFungi, 12–1:30 p.m. (1.5 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$20. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

MARCH 15 — “GROW: Gardening Rooted in Occupational Wellness” with Christina Bittle, Doctoral Student in Occupational Therapy at UT Health, San Antonio, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m., (1 hr credit), “a dementia-friendly gardening project” at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: free. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

MARCH 18 — “Protecting our Trees in the Highland Lakes: Creating an Urban Forest” with Alison Baylis, 1 p.m. (1 hr credit), at the Marble Falls Library. Fee: free. Spon-

sored by the Native Plant Society of Texas.

MARCH 18 — “Family Garden Workshop: Petal Pressing” with Botanical Garden Programs Team, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. (1.5 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, San Antonio. Fee: \$15. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

MARCH 21 — “Spring Gardening Basics” with Kelly Tarla, 2 p.m. (1 hr credit), at Burnet County AgriLife building in Burnet.

MARCH 22 — “GROW: Gardening Rooted in Occupational Wellness” with Christina Bittle, Doctoral Student in Occupational Therapy at UT Health, San Antonio, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m., (1 hr credit), “a dementia-friendly gardening project” at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: free. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

MARCH 23 — “Ask Me About...Gardening 101” with Gardening Volunteers of South Texas, (repeat), 6–8 p.m. (2 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$15. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

MARCH 29 — “GROW: Gardening Rooted in Occupational Wellness” with Christina Bittle, Doctoral Student in Occupational Therapy at UT Health, San Antonio, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m., (1 hr credit), “a dementia-friendly gardening

SERIES: “Easy Spring Gardening”

with Leslie Uppinghouse

MARCH 25 & APRIL 1

9:30–11 a.m. each day

LBJ Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave, Austin

Earn 3 hrs credit by attending both classes. Fee: \$45.

Pre-registration required at wildflower.org/learn/adults.

project” at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: free. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

MARCH 31 & APRIL 1 — “Learn To Burn” with Allen Ersch, Private Prescribed Burn Manager. “Learn how to properly and safely burn brush piles.” March 31 at AgriLife Building in Burnet, 1–3 p.m. (2 hrs credit) and April 1 at Mike Watson’s Place (first 20 who sign up) (hours on site). Fee: \$15. Pre-registration required at Burnet County AgriLife Office: 512-756-5463.

APRIL 1 — “Native Plant Landscape Certification Program – Level I Class” with Highland Lakes Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas, 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. (7 hrs credit), at the Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery Education Building. Contact Melanie Huff for registration: amelhuff77@gmail.com.

HIGHLIGHT ON ONLINE CE

MARCH 13 — Hosted by the Illinois Prairie Chapter of Wild Ones, Kim Eierman is presenting a talk based on her book, *The Pollinator Victory Garden: Win the War on Pollinator Decline with Ecological Gardening*, at 7 pm. Kim’s presentation will cover best practices for pollinators to help reduce their dramatic population declines in recent years. Kim notes that pollinators are responsible for the reproduction of 80 percent of all flowering plants, and at least 30 percent of the food that we eat. Unfortunately, many landscapes offer little in the way of appropriate habitat and forage for these essential animals. With simple strategies, we can attract and support not just bees, but an array of pollinators that have different requirements.

Kim Eierman is the Founder of EcoBeneficial LLC. She is an environmental horticulturist and ecological landscape designer specializing in native plants. Based in New York, Kim teaches at the New York Botanical Garden, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, The Native Plant Center, Rutgers Home Gardeners School and several other institutions. In addition to being a Certified Horticulturist through the American Society for Horticultural Science, Kim is an Accredited Organic Landcare Professional, a Steering Committee member of The Native Plant

Center and a member of The Ecological Landscape Alliance and Garden Communicators International.

To register for the free webinar and get 1.5 hours credit for Master Gardener continuing education, go to us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYqduitrD0oEtNb3SuOKK-6_3HyA1GV-Hd7. Fill out the form and click the Register button. In a minute or so, you’ll get an email from Zoom containing the link for the presentation.

According to their website at wildones.org, Wild Ones is the only national not-for-profit educational organization with a mission to promote environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities. Founded in 1980, Wild Ones serves as a resource for private individuals, schools, commercial property owners and community decision makers as they move toward ethical choices in land use and in the redefinition of current guidelines and ordinances affecting our landscapes. Upcoming Wild Ones sponsored webinars and other events can be found at wildones.org/events.

For other online CE opportunities, go to burnetcountyhighlandlakesmastergardener.org/library-of-at-resources, enter the member password, and select the current list of webinars.



GREENHOUSE

Come Buy Us!

These plants and many, many more will be available for purchase on March 6 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Burnet Middle School greenhouse located off 3rd Street behind the school. All plants have been grown by kids taking greenhouse and floral design classes, and all proceeds go

to support their programs. An outstanding team of Master Gardeners has been working with the students throughout the school year and will be helping with the sale. We will offer high quality plants at low prices and a lot of gratitude for your support of this amazing project. 🌱



Story and photos by Carolyn Crouchet

Garden Hacks

Been gardening more than a day? Then chances are you have lots of tips and tricks to grow healthier plants, fight pests and generally make gardening easier and more productive. Send your Garden Hacks to Gail Braymen at gebfoto@gmail.com.

Use toilet paper cardboard rolls as seed-starting containers. Make a couple cuts at one end and fold flaps of cardboard over. Set in a high rim container. Fill with seed starter and start growing!

~ Lu Schoen



2023 Green Thumb series starts this month in Burnet

Spring has sprung! Are you thinking about getting out in your yard or garden, but don't know what to do or when to do it? If so, come and hear Kelly Tarla, Burnet County AgriLife extension agent, talk about Spring Gardening Basics. No experience required!

The program will be Tuesday, March 21, at 2 p.m. in the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office Auditorium



at 607 N. Vandever St. in Burnet. It is free and open to the public. Hope to see you there! 

Call for Content!

The Dig It News is written for gardeners, by gardeners... and that means we need to hear from YOU! You may send material at any time to Gail Braymen at gebfoto@gmail.com, but the deadline for the next issue (April) is March 28. You can send content as the text of an email or in a document – whatever works best for you. Cell phone pictures are fine, and photos are welcomed with all types of submissions. Here's a list of submission categories, but please don't feel limited – if a topic interests you, chances are it will interest other HLMGA members!

- **Articles** - Stories about people, projects, plants, places or anything else you think would interest readers. Those of you with specialized training or knowledge are especially invited to share your expertise with the rest of us! Photos are a plus. (BONUS: time spent writing articles counts as volunteer time!)
- **Photos / What's Growing On** - Share pictures of plants, projects, people, you name it. Please include a brief description of what is in the photo and identify any people.
- **Gardener's X-change** - Please include your email address and/or phone number so folks know how to contact you.
- **Q&A with the HLMGA** - Send gardening questions you have, or answer questions published in a previous issue.
- **Garden Hacks** - Share your best tips and tricks.
- **Recommended Reading** - Send the titles of your favorite gardening books.
- **Links & Apps** - Share your favorite online gardening links and applications.
- **Recipes** - Because who doesn't like to enjoy the fruits – and veggies – of their labor?

OAKS NURSING CENTER Courtyard UPDATE



TOP: Debbie Taylor is our rose expert.

ABOVE: SHERALYN NOBLES digs up Maximilian sunflowers to be transplanted.

Story and photos by
Donna Cagle

Prior to planting, the hard physical labor comes first.

At The Oaks Courtyard, we have been busy getting beds ready for spring planting. A couple of days were spent selecting and moving limestone bricks from a slag pile to the Oaks and another couple of days amending the soil for two new bedding areas. Many

thanks to my husband for his truck and his muscle, to our neighbor Eric Nothnagel who let us rummage through and take limestone bricks free of charge, and to David Waldo for use of The Garden's rototiller.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Hopefully, everything will be ready to meet our goal of transplanting the babies in March: Showy milkweed, Butterfly milkweed, Talayote milkweed, as well as Lemon Bee Balm and Cypress vine started from seed. Yellow Cosmos-Klondyke Mix and Sunflowers, sown directly, will round out the initial planting.



This is one of our loads of limestone brick.

Debbie Taylor is our rose expert, and Sheralyn Nobles helped to transplant Maximilian sunflowers to a better area. Dana Tiller is my partner in this project, and it's fun to watch the dream take shape!

For those interested in how to amend heavy clay soil, there is information in the Master Gardener's Handbook, as well as this online source: aggie-hort.tamu.edu/newsletters/hortupdate/hortupdate_archives/2003/nov03/Expdshale.html.

For flower beds with sticky or gumbo-type soil, Dr. Steve George of the Texas Cooperative Extension recommends putting down 3 inches of expanded shale on top of the area, and tilling it in 6 to 8 inches deep. Also add 3 inches of finished, plant-based compost, which results in a 6-inch raised bed. Crown the bed to further improve water drainage. Dr. George also remarks:

"Based on a two-year research study and six years of field trials, I feel that expanded shale will open up and aerate heavy, sticky clay soils faster than any material that I have ever tested. Due to its porous nature, it provides aeration from within the shale particles and, in poorly aerated clay soils, resulted in a more extensive and healthier root system than did other treatments being tested...Even though I dearly love finished, plant-based compost, if I were limited to only one application of one soil amendment with which to open up heavy clay soils, I would take expanded shale and never look back!"

I will add this: it's harder than it sounds, and we'll let you know how it works!

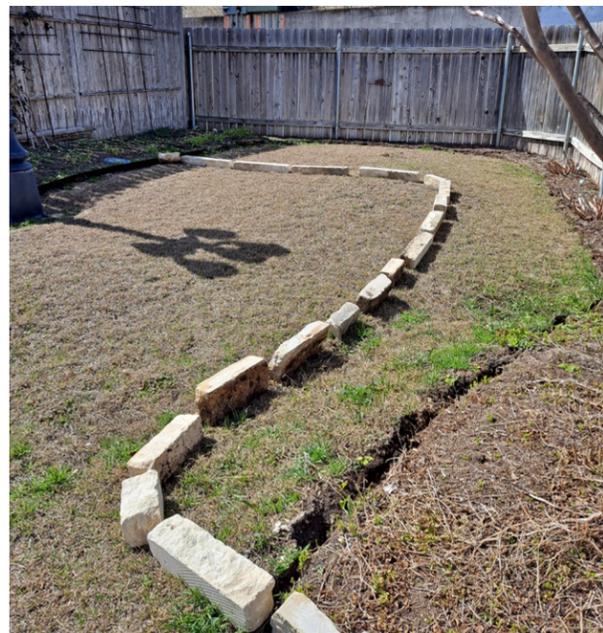
Anyone who is interested in helping at The Oaks, you can email me at dgtcagle@gmail.com. Check us out on the Master Gardener projects page. 🧰



TOP: The new bedding area is prepped.

ABOVE: This is the first pass with the rototiller.

RIGHT: This is after the fourth and final tilling with compost.






**23RD ANNUAL HILL COUNTRY
LAWN & GARDEN SHOW**
 SATURDAY, MARCH 25, 2023
 10AM - 4PM
AGRILIFE AUDITORIUM
607 N. VANDEVEER, BURNET

SPONSORED BY HIGHLAND LAKES MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

WIDE VARIETY OF VENDORS! PLANT SALE, ACTIVITIES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY! SILENT AUCTION, HANDMADE QUILT DONATION CHANCES, GARDENING HOW-TO DEMONSTRATIONS, & MORE!

ROXANNE DUNEGAN • SHOW CHAIR • ROXDUNEGAN@GMAIL.COM



What's growing, blooming and producing in YOUR garden? Show it off in What's Growing On! Send pictures of your plants and projects, plus a little information, to Gail Braymen at gebfoto@gmail.com.



Our volunteer arugula patch survived the winter, and now the plants are going to seed and providing food for hungry insects, including a Northern Cloudywing butterfly and a honey bee.

~ Gail Braymen

Lester and Cris prepare and plant seed trays.



Problems of The King's Garden and World are being solved.



Ingrid watches while Mary performs open bark surgery.

THE KING'S GARDEN

UPDATE



Lester goes to harvest our last cabbage.

A couple heartbeats ago, I was opening Christmas presents with Sissy and my son. Tomorrow, we are going to plant four beds of broccoli and cabbage. Next week, we plant potatoes. Two more heartbeats and we pass the last spring frost date (we hope) and the rest of the vegetable cornucopia needs to be planted and established before the summer heat. 'Cept okra, that is.



The rate of new projects at The King's Garden and home is comparable to falling at the rate of 32 feet per second squared (32 ft/s²), while the time to do them lessens.

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STORY BY
HANK ROMINSKI

PHOTOS BY
COLLEEN "SISSY" ROMINSKI



Garlic, carrots, bok choy and radishes



Sissy looks for a lost contact lens.



Many hands make light work.

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I may have to go back to full-time employment for a rest. NOT!

Our volunteers continue to prepare beds for seeds and seedlings that will be food distributed at the Share the Harvest Pantry. We are staying ahead of those unwanted plants also known as weeds. The pollinator and flower gardens are being tidied so that the spring explosion of flowers is shown in its best light.

There is not much else to report. There are no mega-harvest photos. We don't have any interesting close-ups of plants or their flowers to share. What we do have are photos of our busy volunteers doing things. In some of the photos, we weren't sure what was actually occurring, so we made up some captions. Can you determine which are real, and which are fabricated? Only the Shadow knows.



Doug says to look at this



Hank prefers to look at that.

Volunteers show up at The King's Garden every Monday, Wednesday and Friday starting about 9 a.m. and leave when they need. The last volunteer is there until 11-11:30 or sometimes later. Contact Hank

Rominski (860-575-8098) for more information or if you want to visit or volunteer at The King's Garden. Put "3333 Route 1431 Kingsland TX" in your GPS and it should direct you to the right place.



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Lyn Mefford shared these photos from a recent work day at the Burnet Middle School greenhouse.



Luedecke Lessons

By Bill and Martelle Luedecke

Keep your souls and soles in your garden! Remember the True Master Gardener: Jesus said, "I am the vine; my Father is the Gardener." John 15:1



Bean Business

When it comes to growing beans, the birds think that first sproutling with the seed still intact is yummy, too. So, start your seeds inside before you move them out to the garden.

Bean, broad bean and bush bean plants like being around: broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, corn, marjoram and potatoes. Please do not plant your beans in the vicinity of onions, garlic, fennel or chives. (They go well together in the cooking pot, but not in the garden.)

You can start your seeds now inside, and then after the last freeze (perhaps mid-March) move them outside. Wouldn't it be nice if after the last freeze the clouds spelled out: this was the actual last freeze?

Plant bush beans 1 inch deep. Plant pole beans 1 inch deep around a pole, with three or four beans around each pole.

Depending on when our last freeze is, you may need to thin the sprouts before you put them in your garden. Beans prefer to be planted in moist soil so that they germinate quickly. As with most vegetables, beans need well-drained soil and lots of sunlight. Once your beans are established in your garden, be careful when you are weeding. Bean roots grow close to the surface of the soil.

Have questions or comments?

Contact Bill Luedecke at bill@texasland.net or Martelle Luedecke at Luedeckephoto@gmail.com.



Grocery List

Not sure how to choose which vegetables to plant this Spring, or how to decide how much space to give each vegetable or herb? Here's an idea. Do you have a running grocery list on your refrigerator, dry erase board or a notepad? Use these to learn which vegetables are your staples. How often do you buy potatoes, corn, tomatoes or green beans for instance? Convert your grocery list to your very own produce section in your garden. If possible, stagger your plantings so that you don't yield all your vegetables in one week.



Photos courtesy Texas A&M University

Mosquitos

Before the mosquitos start to hatch, use these plants to help keep them away: Basil, Chrysanthemums, garlic, lemon grass, lavender and marigolds. You can border your backyard and garden with these plants for a wonderful smelling, beautiful and hopefully mosquito free spring and summer.

Master Gardeners road trip to Plantastic Seminar

By Susan Young

Eight of our veggie-loving associates went to Fredericksburg Feb. 24 to attend the Plantastic Gardening Seminar provided by the Gillespie County AgriLife Extension Office.

The day-long seminar included a keynote presentation and breakout sessions with topics including basic gardening, hands-on irrigation, tomatoes, vermiculture, composting, melons, container gardening, and pests and varmints. Presenters were Beth McMahon, Gillespie County Horticulture Agent, and Hill Country Master Gardeners. It was a fun and beneficial day!



Plantastic Gardening Seminar participants are, left to right: Bobby Whitmire, Lori Whitmire, Dana Tiller, Jana Barner, Susan Young, Ann McClanahan and Deiliah Miller. Not pictured is Darlene Little. Photo by Leo Young

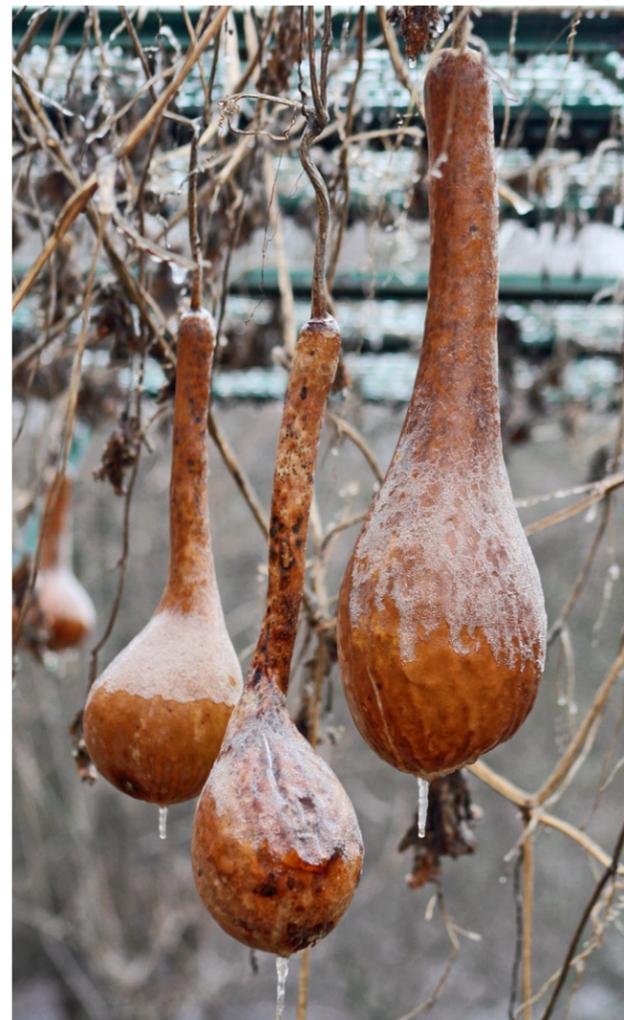


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From our yard — the first bluebonnet blossoms and our Carolina Jessamine, which seems to be very attractive to the native bees.

~ Lyn Mefford



Iced lemonade

When life gives this photographer a lemon of a weather system, she makes the most of it

The winter of 2023 has been pretty mild so far. The freezing temperatures at the beginning of February weren't too much of a problem for us in Kingsland. One might say that they were a bit of a blessing by knocking down the bad bug population. My condolences to those with ice accumulation that damaged trees and property.

The freezing rain, is a bit of lemonade to the avid photographer. Sissy made a point of being outside during different times of the day capturing those special angles of the sun through the icicles. It is one of only a few things that we enjoy about the freezing temperatures here.

The photo of the bluebonnet plant covered in ice causes one to ponder just how tough these plants can be. My sense of admiration usually begins each year when I see them growing in the asphalt on the side of the road. This year it is earlier. The plants in our yard not only survived being covered with ice, but also seemed to thrive because of the hardship. As we wander about the back property, Bluebonnet Hill has extended its range throughout our whole back yard. I can't wait to see how it will soon turn blue.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Story by
Hank Rominski

Photos by
Colleen "Sissy" Rominski



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
Bluebonnet, gourds,
leaf and twig, Mother of
Millions

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Does anyone know the difference between a greenhouse and a hoop house? The official definition refers to the permanence of the greenhouse versus the temporary nature of a hoop house. The Hank-and-Sissy-approved definition of the difference is different. To us, things are planted in the ground in a hoop house, and in containers in a greenhouse. The permanence of the structure doesn't apply cause I ain't moving that darn hoop house again.

We run portable electric heaters in the hoop house when the temperature is expected to dip into the low 40s and open the doors and lift up the sides during the day when the inside temperature exceeds 90 F. The higher temperature at night has contributed to an earlier harvest of our greens and more rapid growth of the cabbage and kohlrabi. You can see the difference between inside and outside plants in a few of the pictures.

We have another successful year keeping our Mother of Millions patch alive. Each fall, I put up a PVC pipe frame and cover it with tarps to keep them from freezing. We really enjoy the dense, vibrant red bell flowers that almost look tropical. They start to flower sometime in later December and, if all goes well, will continue on to the hot weather in the middle of March. The effort is small to enjoy them for a little over a quarter of a year.



Measuring up:
Hoop house-grown vs. outdoor-grown



Hoop house cabbage



Outdoor cabbage



Hoop house spinach



Outdoor spinach



Big hoop house-grown leaves of mustard, bok choy, spinach and lettuce



Verdin pigging out on peanut butter suet

Our wildlife photos include a Red Admiral butterfly on bok choy flowers, a Verdin eating suet and a Carolina Wren singing opera. We love to hear these tiny birds sing their hearts out with such a pretty and LOUD song that never ceases to amaze and entertain.

In closing, I would like to stress the importance of planting bok choy. Not only is it a tasty edible green, but the flowers are a great food source for the bees and butterflies and me. They are especially important since we can keep them flowering during the lean times of the year. We almost always have some plants in different phases of growth in our backyard.



Red Admiral on Bok Choy

Carolina Wren singing Rigoletto



links & apps

Share links to your favorite online gardening sites and applications. Please send your links to Gail Braymen at gebfoto@gmail.com.

[Audubon.org/native-plants](https://www.audubon.org/native-plants)

Native plants are the most important factor in helping the birds, since only native plants play host to the insects birds need. Native plants need little water except when incredibly young and do not need pesticides. So please, whether you have a small city lot or a farm/ranch, make a resolution to do more in the next year, even if you just make a small start. On this site you can enter your zip code for a list of about 300 suitable plants just for your area. Not only will it give you a list of native plants, but you can also filter for particular species of birds. *Shared by Bill and Martelle Luedecke*



What's growing, blooming and producing in YOUR garden? Show it off in What's Growing On! Send pictures of your plants and projects, plus a little information, to Gail Braymen at gebfoto@gmail.com.



This wild pansy is the first pop of color in my garden from the wildflower seed mix I scattered in the fall.

~ Donna Cagle

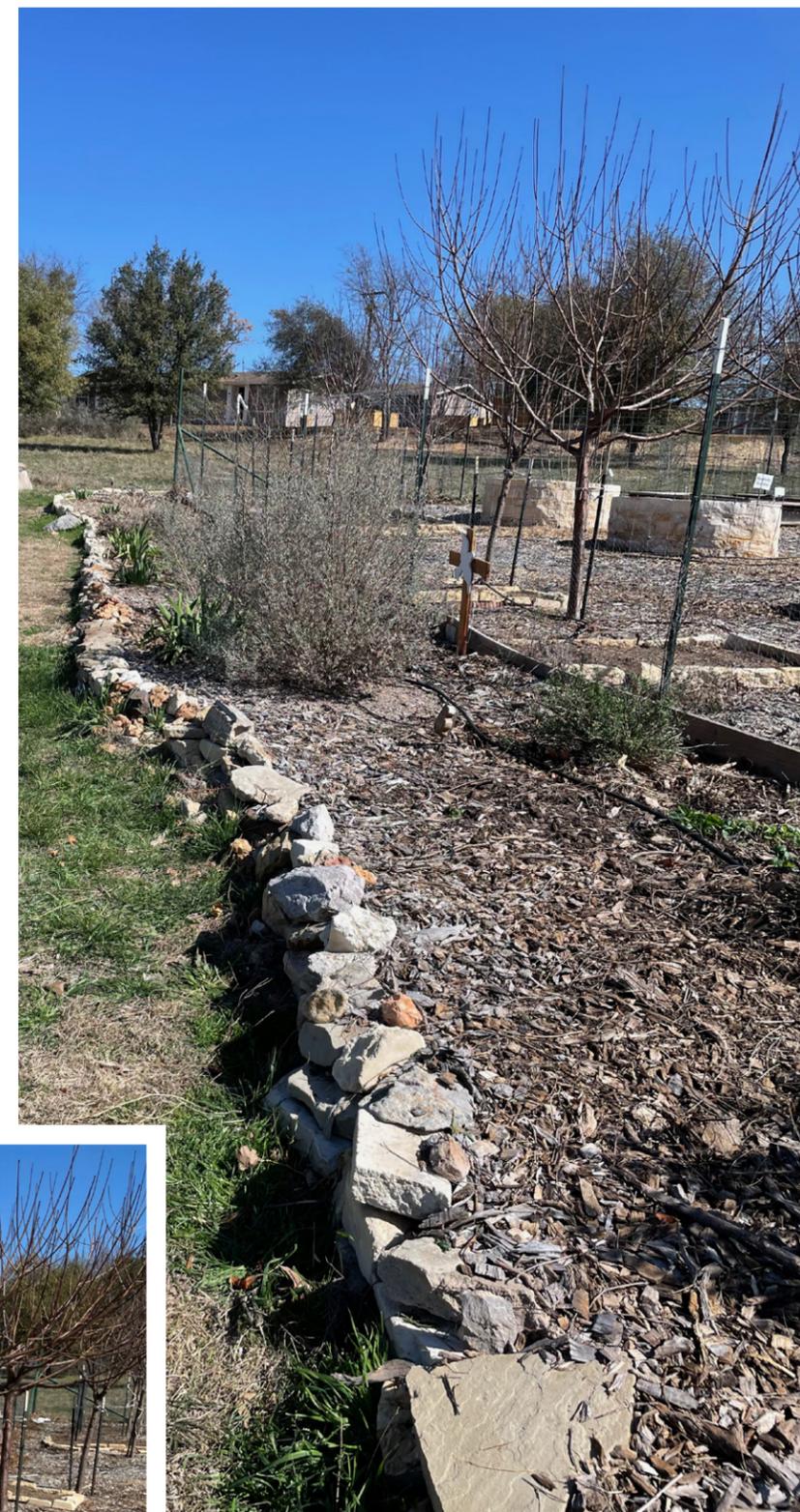


Members of the 2023 Certification Class make short work of the spring clean of the beautification area in front of The Garden

barrels and amended the same, and trimmed the entire beautification bed in front of The Garden. Thanks, Class of 2023, you are awesome.

We hope everyone who took seeds for creating transplants has them well underway. Sometime in early to mid-March we will ask for those to be brought to The Garden and we will have a planting party, which is always fun. Details on an exact date for this event will come later.

As always, we are in The Garden every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8 a.m. This is a great time of year to be gardening, as everything is coming alive. Feel free to join us in this well-meaning project. 🌱



ABOVE LEFT: Folks talk gardening. The entire group showed a great deal of interest in all that is The Garden

ABOVE: This is the end result of the prepping of the beautification area.

LEFT: Many hands sort the beautification area out in preparation for spring.

UPDATE The Garden



We're doing something right because we've got bluebonnets coming up all over the garden.

In mid-February temps were in the 80s. It might have felt nice then, but what does it portend for the summer?

We are active in The Garden, prepping for a fantastic year! We have our onions, leeks and radishes in the ground and doing nicely. The bit of rain we have seen in recent weeks has filled our rainwater tank, so that is

what we are using, and the plants seem to love it.

We had a big day on Feb. 22 when the 2023 certification class came for a visit. We provided a tour and history lesson on our current location and then put them to work. Wow! You can get a lot done with 30-plus sets of willing hands. They planted all our potatoes, topped off our blue

Story and photo by David Waldo



CREATURE FEATURE

By Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist

Insect Life Cycles

Insect life cycles can be broken down into two major categories: incomplete and complete. Incomplete can then be further broken into three varying types.

Incomplete metamorphosis, also called paurometabolous, has three life stages. The first stage is the egg, which hatches into an immature insect called a nymph. The nymph eats, grows and molts, going through several different nymphal stages called instars. With each successive molt, the nymph grows larger and begins to develop wings. Nymphs look similar to adults in appearance with the exception that they do not have fully developed wings. The final stage is the adult, which has fully developed wings (of course, unless the insect is wingless, e.g., bed bugs). Adult insects seek out

the opposite sex, mate, and females lay eggs to begin the cycle anew. An example of an insect with paurometabolous metamorphosis is a cockroach.

One variation of incomplete metamorphosis is called ametabolous and happens in primitive insect groups. This type of metamorphosis also has three life stages: egg, nymph and adult, but the immatures/nymphs look exactly like the adults except they are smaller in size. Dissection may be needed to tell immatures from adults. An example of an insect with ametabolous metamorphosis is a silverfish.

The second variation of incomplete metamorphosis is called hemimetabolous. Insects with this type of metamorphosis have an immature stage that is aquatic. Again, there are three life stages: egg, nymph and adult. The nymphal stage of hemimetabolous insects lives in water and is called a naiad. The last nymphal instar — or the last stage before the insect molts into an adult — crawls out of the water onto a dry surface so the adult insect can emerge without getting its wings wet. An example of an insect with hemimetabolous metamorphosis is a dragonfly.



Cockroaches, such as this American cockroach, have an incomplete metamorphosis life cycle called paurometabolous. After hatching, the nymphs grow and molt until reaching maturity. Nymphs look similar to adults except for their undeveloped wings.

The second basic category of metamorphosis is called complete, or holometabolous, metamorphosis. Complete metamorphosis has four life stages: egg, larva, pupa and adult. Eggs are laid by fertilized adult females and hatch into the second stage called a larva*. Larva look very different from the adults and often feed on different



Silverfish have an incomplete metamorphosis life cycle called ametabolous. Nymphs look exactly like adults except for being smaller in size.

food sources than adults. Larva often have elongated bodies, no wings, and may or may not have legs. After going through several instars, or larval stages, the insect turns from a larva into a pupa. The pupa is a transformation stage for the insect where it rearranges its body into the adult form.

Sometimes you can see adult features in the pupal stage, but other times the pupa is within a case, as with fly or butterfly** pupa, and you cannot see development. The adult insect emerges from the pupal stage, seeks out a mate for mating, and continues the cycle. 🪳

Terminology

***LARVA** is the general name for immature insects that go through complete metamorphosis. There are more specific names for various types of larva based on what Order they belong to. Larva that are in the Order Lepidoptera and turn into butterflies and moths are referred to as caterpillars, while larva that are in the Order Diptera and turn into flies are called maggots. Also in the Order Diptera, wigglers are the larval stage of mosquitoes (and mosquito pupae are often called tumblers). Larva that turn into beetles, Order Coleoptera, are called grubworms or wireworms (depending upon what type of beetle they turn into).

****CHRYSALIS** is a butterfly pupal case.

Photos courtesy Texas A&M University



Dragonflies have an incomplete metamorphosis life cycle called hemimetabolous. Nymphs live in water, but crawl out of the water onto a dry surface just before molting into adults, so the adult insects can emerge without getting their wings wet.

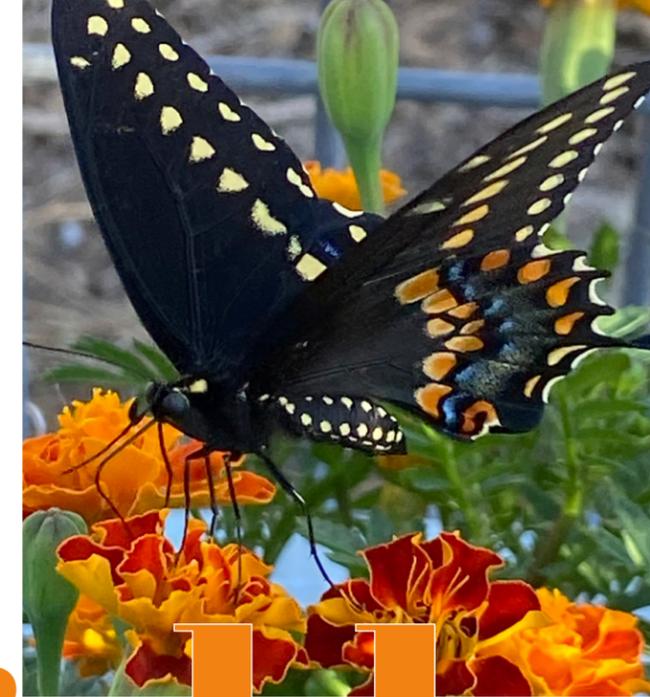
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For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist, at 512-854-9600. Check out Wizzie's blog at urban-ipm.blogspot.com.



*Great companions, yes or no?
I think so!*

Mighty Marigolds



Sometimes a single gardening tip shared in a presentation can be transformational.

Thus it was when I heard a speaker suggest planting marigolds as a companion crop for tomatoes because their smell can ward off insects that enjoy chomping on tomato plants. They also serve as a trap crop, luring other guys away from the fruit we are working so hard to produce.

Well, I like growing flowers, and I am intrigued by the notion of companion planting, so I bought a package of seeds to give it a go. I looked for

the flowers with short petals and relatively open centers, so that pollen and nectar could be easily accessed by the bees or butterflies I hoped to lure. That year I had a great tomato crop with only the occasional tomato hornworm stripping leaves. I had a bounty of cheery blossoms to enjoy when I worked in the garden, spicing up the beds with color. Then fall arrived, and so did the butterflies, and the bees came too! I became a marigold devotee.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

Story and photos by Carolyn Crouchet

OPPOSITE PAGE: Marigolds in the veggie garden? Yes, please!

ABOVE: Swallowtail butterfly

LEFT: Monarch butterfly





Growing flowers is my favorite form of pest control.

LEFT: Buckeye butterfly

BELOW: Bumblebee

OPPOSITE PAGE: Tomatoes and marigolds help each other thrive until the first frost.

me, either. But, since I have started planting marigolds, I have decreased the use of organic chemical pest control products. I did notice more hover flies last year and saw ladybugs on the flowers. I hope the tiny parasitic wasps were thriving, too.

Biological pest control via beneficial insects is one of the mechanisms detailed by Kristina Hicks-Hamblin in *The Scientifically Backed Benefits of Companion Planting* at gardenerspath.com/how-to/organic/benefits-companion-planting. In any vegetable garden, the more beneficial insects, the better, and plant biodiversity is the key to attracting them. Growing flowers is my favorite form of pest control.

Best of all, because of the marigolds, I delighted in the companionship of eight species of butterflies drinking nectar while I gardened throughout the summer and into late fall. Even the monarchs came to sip and rest before journeying on. Also, some of our honeybees and even a few bumblebees showed up to feed regularly. This year, I will definitely buy another pack of marigolds seeds to plant, and I might even buy two. 🐝

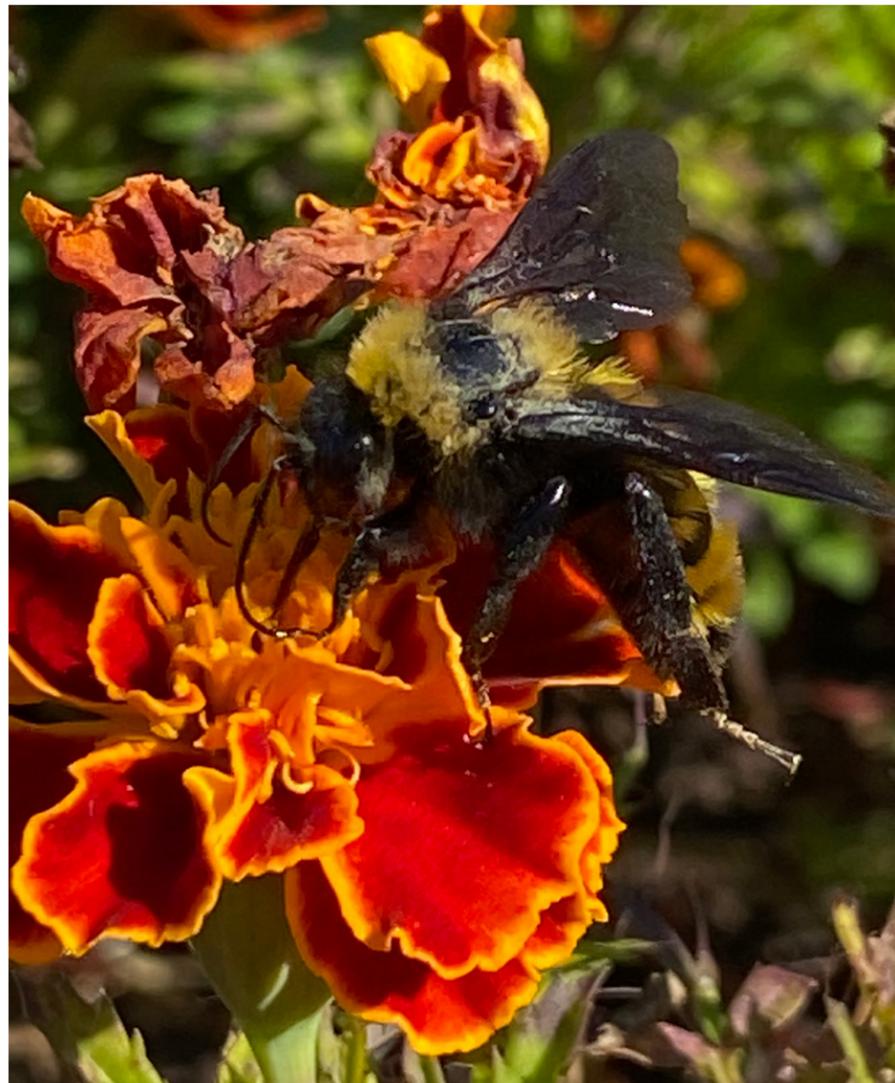


CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

Apparently I am not alone. Gardening blogs tout growing marigolds as companion plants to repel white flies, nematodes, aphids, slugs, potato beetles, flea beetles, Japanese beetles, deer, rabbits and even mosquitoes. The flowers are also lauded for attracting beneficial insects and pollinators. Many of these claims have been tested, and some appear to have validity. Many do not. Growing marigolds as a trap crop for harmful insects is still being tested and results are contradictory. However, in an article entitled *Benefits of Companion Planting Marigolds with Tomatoes*, author Kristen Lofgren cites studies showing that marigolds do repel whiteflies and root-knot nematodes: gardenerspath.com/plants/flowers/marigold-tomato-companion-planting.

Articles abound debunking some of the hyped claims, especially those based on scent-repelling properties. But, there is scientific agreement that marigolds do attract beneficial insects including hover flies, lady bugs and parasitic wasps.

I don't have a problem with root-knot nematodes in my raised vegetable beds and whiteflies are not an issue for



I got some pictures of "bee butts" in my mountain laurel!

~ Lu Schoen (Class of 2023)



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