

Inside Dirt

Henderson County Master Gardener Newsletter



*Upcoming Meetings:
Meetings are held at noon
on the third Wednesday of
the month at the
East Texas Arboretum
1601 Patterson Rd,
Athens TX*



President's Message

by Yvonne Sparks, HCMG

Yea! Spring is just around the corner even though the groundhog said we were in for six more weeks of winter. Ha Ha Ha...he doesn't live in Texas. With March and April here, Master Gardeners are in their busiest times of the year.

Beginning on March 4th, Master Gardeners will participate in the KAB event at the Henderson County Fair Grounds. It is during this event many MGs will present a variety of short classes on gardening related topics.

On March 30, the 2017 Spring Conference will be at the Hart-Morris Conservation Center located at the East Texas Fisheries. This is HCMGA primary fundraiser. The speaker this year is Amy Stewart. She is a New York Times best selling author. Amy delivers an entertaining presentation and shares her knowledge of "Wicked Plants".

In April, the HCMGA put the final preparations for the Annual Plant Sale. Currently, MGs are propagating a variety of indoor and outdoor plants available for sale. MGs grow most of these plants in their own gardens and in the TVCC greenhouse. Shoppers may find that one exotic plant they have been looking for. The plant sale is April 22 at the Senior Citizen's Center located at the Henderson County Fair Grounds. Doors open at 9 am and conclude at 2 pm.

These fundraising events enable the HCMGA to provide free educational events throughout the year. That is our mission...to provide community service and educational opportunities in Henderson County.

*March 8, 2017
April 19, 2017
May 17, 2017*

Inside :

President's Note	1
Save the Date	2
A Walk with Nina Ellis	3
Amy Stewart Books	4
Propogation	6
MP3	7
Garden Tidbits	8
Keep Athens Beautiful	9
Consult with an MG	10
Children's Garden	11

Save the Dates:

- March 8th HCMG Meeting : Spring Conference Working Meeting
 - March 30th ** Spring Conference at Hart-Morrison Conservation Center
 - April 19th HCMG Meeting : Nancy Martin - Keyhole Gardening
 - April 22 ** Plant Sale @ The Senior Citizen Building
- ** Denotes open to the public!
So hope to see you there!

Homegrown Herb Garden with Ann McCormick the Herb 'n Cowgirl

- ▶ Thursday, July 27, 2017 Location: Cedar Creek Library
- ▶ 6:00pm - 7:00pm 410 E Cedar Creek Parkway
- ▶ Seven Points, TX 75143

▶ Come hear Ann discuss her book and how it will help home chefs get their herb gardens started and help home gardeners get a taste of what's possible when they cook with homegrown herbs. Books will be available for purchase and Ann will autograph after the event.

▶ A life-long gardener, she has devoted her time since 1998 to writing and speaking about her favorite subject. Ann is a columnist for Herb Quarterly and a feature writer for The Dallas Morning News. The Herb 'n Cowgirl also shares her love of herbs and her gardening techniques as a speaker and media guest.

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- | | |
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Walk with Me by Nina Ellis (MG Emeritus)



All winter long I have walked early each morning thru my garden and wondered if it would ever return to the beauty I remember of past springs. On Ash Wednesday the Lent lilies (*narcissus pseudonarcissus*) showed their blooms right on time just as they have done for centuries. All of our hybrid trumpet daffodils have their origin with this wild trumpet daffodil. It has been said the Lent Lily has been in cultivation since the 1500's, returning reliably to bloom in the garden year after year. These bulbs are sometimes found commercially but are best gotten from a friend. If you wish to grow



them in your garden remember they need to bake in the dry soil of summer so please don't plant them in an area with a sprinkler system as they will surely rot. If the blossoms of Lent Lilies are left to mature they set viable seed to increase their beauty every year. Two days later the Campernelles (*N. xodorus*) are bursting into bloom with their bright yellow two inch blossoms. Campernelles are a natural hybrid between the true jonquilla, a tiny yellow blossom with incredible sweet scent, and the Lent Lily. As with hybrids in general, they do not set seed but multiply by division. If you have these treasures in your garden you must remember not to mow until the foliage is nearly brown. They may be unsightly for a few weeks but I feel that is a small price to pay for the joy of seeing them bloom on a cold and dreary

in that they have a cluster of white blossoms with a yellow center and are blessed with a sweet fragrance as opposed to paperwhites (*narcissus papyraceus*) white center and unpleasant scent. You will not find these reliable bloomers in catalogs only in the garden of a friend.

Next the large trumpet modern hybrids will come into bloom. In my garden the large trumpet daffodils that have proved themselves reliable bloomers year after year are: Sir Watkin (yellow petals/orange trumpet), Ice Follies (white petals/frilly yellow trumpet), Carlton (yellow petals/yellow trumpet) and a long lived stand of the true King Alfred (yellow petals and the longest bright yellow trumpet of all daffodils. The King Alfred is no longer available commercially due to a viral infection. If you have a stand in your garden, treasure them! As with all spring blooming bulbs leave them with their foliage so they may store up energy for next year's blooms. As Greg Grant will tell you "you may mow in May".

February morning. The *narcissus pseudonarcissus* and the campernelles were growing on this property over 50 years ago when we purchased it. They have been divided and shared with gardeners for many years, thanks to an unknown gardener. What a great legacy she/he left us! Coming into bloom at the same time are the *Narcissus tazetta italicus*. These blooms resemble paperwhites



When you attend the Henderson County Master Gardener's Spring Plant Sale you may find some of these treasures for your garden.



Today as I take my garden walk I notice down by the driveway the heirloom flowering quince is bursting with reddish orange blooms. The winter honeysuckle is alive with bees. Under the majestic oak tree the hardy cyclamen (*cyclamen heterfolia*) has made a solid mat of marbled green leaves, promising that soon the grass will be dotted with tiny pink blossoms. My walk completed, I come to the dooryard garden that is filled with the blue blossoms of Star Flower (*Ipheion uniflorum*) creating a blue carpet for Carlton daffodils, Campernelles, *narcissus Golden Dawn* and Spring Snowflakes (*leucojum species*). Spring has truly arrived!

Buy Amy Stewart Books!

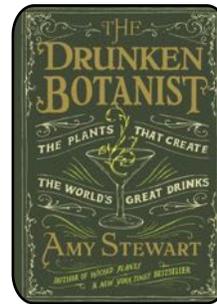
by Lydia Holley , HCMG



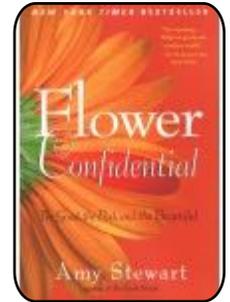
Own your own copy of Amy Stewart's books! Nationally-known, best-selling author Amy Stewart is the featured speaker at the HCMGA Spring Conference. Amy has written four gardening books that have made the New York Times' Best Sellers list. That means she consistently writes books that are well written, highly entertaining, and

make alcohol. From barley,

agave, sugarcane, and corn to the more unusual fermentations of herbs, flowers, trees, fruit and even fungi, you will enjoy this fun and informational read. \$20



Flower Confidential (paperback) Takes you all over the world exploring how florist's flowers come to us in such a perfect state. Learn about the field workers, hybridizers, geneticists and

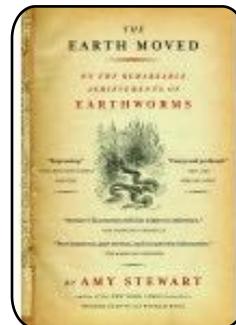
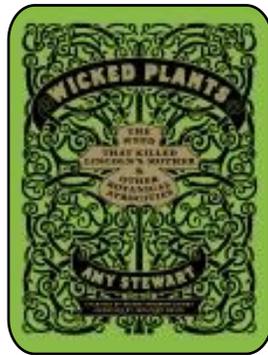


others that are working to bring the perfect flower to a florist near you. \$14

appealing to a wide audience.

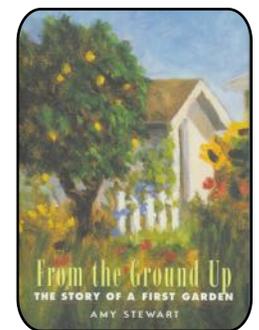
Amy's books are as follows:

Wicked Plants: The Weed that Killed Lincoln's Mother and other Botanical Atrocities Paralysis, strangulation or sudden death are just a few of the defenses of certain plants. Learn about history, medicine, science and legend in this book that will make you look at your plants with care and caution. \$19



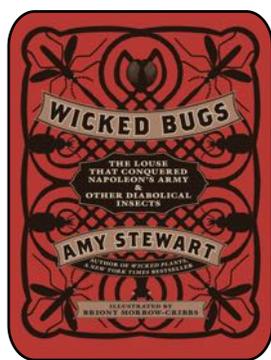
The Earth Moved: On the Remarkable Achievements of Earthworms (paperback) Do you know what's in your soil? The earthworm is working there, ploughing the land, aerating the soil, and leaving their castings for fertilizer. Learn about their

value as well as the different types of earthworms, from the red wigglers known by most vermicomposters to the giant Australian worm that reaches 10 ft long. \$13



From the Ground Up: The Story of a First Garden Do you remember your first garden? Read about Amy's journey of putting in her first garden, from humorous stories to joyous delights.

Mistakes are made, and tips and solutions are told. Going through four seasons, Amy emerges as an enthusiastic gardener with a luxuriant garden. \$19



Wicked Bugs: The Louse that Conquered Napoleon's Army and other Diabolical Insects This book talks about all those insects that wreak havoc on us humans. Hornets, flies, millipedes, beetles, scorpions, spiders, and other bugs are highlighted for the ways they have hurt us and how some have changed history.

Warning: one reviewer stated this may not be a good book for young children. \$19

The Drunken Botanist We use plants for many things, one of which is to

Please note:

If you order Amy's books prior to the Spring Conference, you will receive a \$1 discount per book. Whoop, whoop! There will be no delivery by mail, but you may pick up and pay for the books at the Ag office (3rd floor, Courthouse). Or, if you know a Henderson County Master Gardener, you may ask them to personally deliver your books. If you want the discount and plan to be at the Spring Conference, order prior to March 30, and we can have them ready and waiting for you when you arrive to hear Amy speak at the Spring Conference. Get them now before we run out!



I grow plants for many reasons : to please my soul, to challenge the elements or to challenge my patience, for novelty or for nostalgia, but mostly for the joy in seeing them grow.

David Hobson



Thank you so much to Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative Charitable FOundation for giving a grant to the Henderson County Master Gardeners. This grant is a result of their Round Up campaign where their customers choose to round up to the nearest dollar on their monthly bills. That rounding up allows TVEC to give back to the community and this is one of those ways! Thank you!

Propagation 101

Did you inherit your mother's prize begonia and would like to pass it on to your children and grandchildren? Or do you have lots of area to landscape and a limited budget for plants. Or you just want to learn more on how to make 10 plants from one!



The Master Gardener plant specialist course, March 24-25, at the Sheraton Hotel in Arlington gives you two full days of hands-on learning a variety of propagation techniques:

- Seeds
- Air layering
- Stem cutting
- Soft & semi hardwood cuttings
- Root cutting
- Bulb chipping
- Division
- Simple layering
- Tree grafting



And more! You will come home with many starter plants.

Propagation specialists will teach the course. Registration is limited to two MGs per county.

Cost is \$225 which includes lectures, hands-on instruction sessions, field trip, propagation equipment, propagation book, thumb drive with resource materials, one dinner, two lunches and



new enthusiasm for propagating a variety of plants.

The registration form is available on the Texas Master Garden website, txmg.org. Click on the Specialist Training link on the home page and then choose Training Opportunities. Information includes the class schedule and topics. Deadline to register for the propagation course is March 1.

Participants are encouraged to stay at the Sheraton Hotel, the host hotel. The hotel has given us an excellent price and as classes begin at 8 a.m. each day, no commute is involved. Just off the major highway I-30, it is easy to access.

Mangaged Pollinator Protection Plan

by Peter Cole, HCMG



What is an MP3? In my essay I intend to answer the what, why, where, and how of MP3s all over the US. My name is Peter Cole. I am the East Texas Beekeepers Association 2017 ambassador. I have been beekeeping two years, my family has been beekeeping for three. I live on a hobby farm with three cows, four goats, four cats, and chickens.

MP3s, managed pollinator protection plans were put into effect in 2014 and are means to strengthen communication between beekeepers, growers, land owners and pesticide applicators. MP3s protect any sort of managed pollinators, honey bees, Alfalfa leafcutter bees, some species of bumble bees, orchard bees, and mason bees. MP3s support the mitigation of pesticide exposure on bees and other managed pollinators. MP3s have been developed in seven different states; twenty-nine state plans are being reviewed and the remaining seventeen states are trying to develop a pollinator protection plan or aren't planning to start one. The primary purpose of the MP3 is to establish a systematic and comprehensive method for beekeepers, growers, pesticide applicators, and landowners to communicate in a way that allows all parties to operate successfully within the state. It is the intent that such open communication will lead to practices that both lower potential pesticide exposure to bees and allow for effective management of various pests. MP3s are sets of recommendations for practices benefiting the protection of managed pollinators allowing both crop production and bee keeping to thrive. MP3s account for the wide variation in authorities across the states and territories by providing each jurisdiction, ability to develop their own plan based on their agricultural systems and regulations.

Texas's managed pollinator protection plan has yet to be developed. However, seven states including, Florida, Mississippi, and Tennessee have completed plans. Their plans include public stakeholder meetings, annual surveys to determine MP3 effectiveness, mapping systems, and state hive registration. So far states with completed plans have had two to five stakeholder meetings and plan to have more. Fourteen different states are using

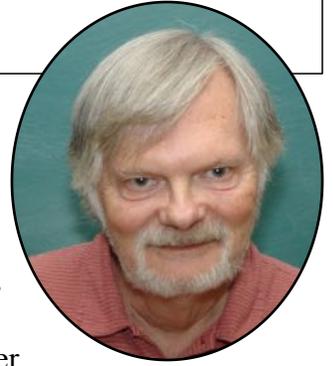
the program Driftwatch™ as a source of mapping growers, beekeepers, and nurseries to locate for sprayers to locate and contact before spraying. Some states are taking part in annual bee loss surveys to determine if managed pollinator protection plans are actually helping the bees.

Pollination increases the seed yield in: sunflower seeds by seventy-nine percent, cotton seeds by eighteen percent, mustard seeds by fifty-five percent, and safflower seeds by sixty-four percent. More pollinators means more seeds, more seeds could mean more plants. And with pollinators declining we need MP3s. MP3s are important to the survival of managed bee colonies and indirectly pollinators in general. Since the 1940s, bees have declined 50% that's a big problem. Mortality for the honey bee includes; stress from being commercially truck around. Small hive beetles and varroa mites are a major pest to honey bees, coupled with the diseases they carry into a hive. Honey bee mortality is also caused by a lack of genetic diversity, and pesticides. The main reason bees have declined so much is from one or two of these it's a group effort known as CCD (colony collapse disorder) Colony collapse disorder is where maybe a hive has stress from the recent trip to the almond orchards weakening it, then while the hive is weak Varroa mites invade carrying with them multiple diseases, then wax moths come in, this is not one but many. I did not mention pesticides, which are another factor of CCD. The MP3 plans try to cut out pesticides, which would essentially lower bee mortality.

A lot of states have yet to start a plan but when they do I'm sure the bee population might not decline as drastically. It's been proven that the more pollinators there are means more seed yield so pollinators are extremely important to our survival. Beekeepers across the United States lost 44 percent of their honey bee colonies during the year spanning April 2015 to April 2016. So the threat is real if don't do anything we might lose honey bees and might not be able to get them back. If we lost honey bees we would have only four years left to live.

Garden Tidbits for Your Information

Robert Erickson, HCMG



Hay versus Straw

You frequently find discussions about using hay or straw for various gardening projects including mulching, composting, building structures, and so forth. I guess that most people assume that hay and straw are basically the same or at least similar enough to be used interchangeably. Guess what? You can read dozens of articles on the subject and end up very confused about what to use and when.

Without opening a dozen cans of worms, here is the basic difference between hay and straw. Hay is primarily mowed and baled grass and plant leaves. Straw, on the other hand, is usually the residual stalk of a grain plant after harvesting. In short, hay is leafy and intended as animal feed; straw is the sturdier part of the plant and is used more often as a structural material.

So what does this mean in practical terms for the gardener? Hay generally has more nutrients in it and may be more suitable for compost to increase its

nutrient level. On the other hand, it may also have mature seeds in it that will germinate and grow in the compost pile or garden if applied directly. Straw tends to have fewer seeds since it is gathered after the harvest is complete but has fewer nutrients. Both will eventually compost but the straw will probably take longer to decompose. Straw will also add more fibrous bulk to the eventual compost. As a result, straw is probably better to use as mulch and building raised beds and other small structures because it will hold together longer. Having said that, both are used for all applications.

One of the major downsides to this discussion is that we do not have much grain growing in this area and the availability of straw is fairly thin and expensive. Hay on the other hand, is readily available locally. Therefore, use your best judgment on what to use for your garden.

Why try to explain miracles to kids when you can just have them plant a garden.

Robert Brault

Check us out online :

<http://www.facebook.com/HCMastergardener>

or

<http://henderson-co-tx-mg.org>

* Keep up with our calendar of talks around the county! *



HCMG Free Presentations!**Henderson County Master Gardeners
2017 Free Community Programs Kick-Off**

On Saturday, March 4, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., we invite you to talk to Henderson County Master Gardeners and get your gardening questions answered.

Henderson County Master Gardeners will be in our information booth at the 12th Keep Athens Beautiful (KAB) Backyard Farm Home and Garden Event to be held this year at the Henderson County Regional Fair Park Complex on 3356 State Hwy. 31 East, Athens. Admission is free and open to the public from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. This annual KAB event is an exciting and fun event for families including an activity area just for kids!

The Henderson County Master Gardeners will also present a series of free programs throughout the day. These free programs will be located at the “Store” building at the Fair Park Complex next to the Arena. Program attendees can register for door prizes, ask gardening questions, and enjoy a new garden related experience. **The program schedule and directions to the programs area can be found at the Master Gardener booth in the Coliseum building on the Fair Park Complex.**

Master Gardener Program Schedule (Free and Open to Public):**10:00 a.m. Strawberries**

Shannon Greene, Henderson County Master Gardener

**11:00 a.m. Crazy Magic in the Kitchen and Garden –
Condiments, Mixes and Rubs That Are Fun and Save Money**
Bob Erickson, Henderson County Master Gardener

12:00 p.m. Water Gardens

Yvonne Sparks, Henderson County Master Gardener

**01:00 p.m. Decorative Arrangements with
Natural Materials from Your Garden**

Marylee Haldeman, Henderson County Master Gardener

Check our website – henderson-co-tx-mg.org - for other free Master Gardener events such as our **Summer Series of programs on a variety of horticulture topics provided by gardening experts.**

Want to talk to Henderson County Master Gardeners at your local community fair or festival? Contact VP of Member and Community Programs, Linda Schafer, cell 210-846-7231 or email your request to hendersoncmga@gmail.com.

Win a 45-Minute Consultation with a Master Gardener

by Sara Drummond HCMG

Have gardening questions?

Want to try something new in your garden?

Ask a Master Gardener!

Throughout the year, Master Gardeners make presentations to groups and briefly answer individual's questions at Booth Events. How nice it would be to have a Master Gardener's full attention all to yourself for an extended amount of time. What a great way to learn about something new for your garden and get your questions answered.

Right now, you have a chance to make that happen.

Master Gardeners are selling raffle tickets to raise money to help fund this year's projects. The prize is a 45-minute consultation with a Master Gardener! There are numerous topics to choose

from.

The location of the consultation will depend on the topic. Someone wanting advice on how to make their landscape more attractive in the winter, for example, may prefer having the consultation on their property. Someone wanting to learn how to create a rainwater harvesting system may prefer the consultation to be at the site of an existing collection system.

The tickets are \$5 a piece or three tickets for \$10. The winning ticket will be drawn March 30th during the Spring Conference. Need not be present to win.

Get a chance to learn something new from an expert – and support a worthy cause.

See your favorite Master Gardener to purchase raffle tickets.

Raffle Consultation Topics

Winner has these topics - and more - to choose from ...

- Solutions for Turf Grass Problems
- Water Garden Design for Easy Care & Maximum Enjoyment
- Beekeeping
- Native Plants - selection & why they are crucial for pollinators
- Creating a Butterfly Garden
- Landscape Design 101
- Garden Tool - Care & Refreshing

- Raised Bed Gardening
- Harvesting Rainwater
- Nutrients & Feeding Your Garden
- Beauty for Your Winter Garden
- Vermicomposting
- Roses - Choosing & Pruning
- Bulbs
- Terrariums
- Creating an Outdoor Room
- Creating Decorative Arrangements with Natural Materials from Your Own Property



South Athens Children's Garden Report

by Janelle Cole HCMG



The Children's Garden is in a bit of limbo. Did you know? The school is building a new Gym, as a result we lost our garden spot. That is the bad news.



The good news? Well our new garden spot is going to be even better!! We are going to install raised beds.

One raised bed to be shared by two classes in a grade. So that when the classes come out to the garden, each will have a bed to work in and around.



We are also excited about using some different techniques to show different gardening options, including handicapped friendly!

Currently we are going into the school twice a month to keep their gardening juices flowing!! In February we taught on the scientific method and asked each class to

predict our potato harvest for May. We then planted potatoes in our blue tubs, and plan to encourage the plants to grow vertically. This is a new



idea for those of us helping in the garden, we hope to increase our potato harvest by doing this!

In March we will be teaching on seeds that are important in the garden and outside the garden for wildlife as well. Peter will be bringing in a seed collection and showing the students a variety of seeds that they might find around their own homes. In April we will invite a variety of speakers to

come in and teach the children about different careers in Agriculture to include commercial landscape design, nursery operations,



and even local farming. The kids love to hear from new speakers, so if you know someone who would like to come to the school to share their career with the children please let us



know through the extension office!

Henderson County Master Gardeners 17th Annual Spring Conference

Wicked Plants

The weed that killed Lincoln's mother & other botanical atrocities

March 30, 2017
hendersoncmga@gmail.com 903-675-6130
Hart-Morrison Conservation Center
5601 CR 4812, Athens, Texas 75752

Featuring Amy Stewart
author of four New York Times Bestsellers,
including *Wicked Plants*

5:30 p.m. Doors Open
6 p.m. Dinner ✿ 7 p.m. Speaker
Ticket Price \$25

Photo by Terrence McNally

Wicked Plants

March 30 • Hart-Morrison Conservation Center

Enjoy dinner and New York Times best-selling author, Amy Stewart, as she delves into the dark side of the plant kingdom.

In her *New York Times* bestseller, *Wicked Plants: The Weed That Killed Lincoln's Mother and Other Botanical Atrocities*, Amy Stewart takes on Mother Nature's most appalling creations.

It's an A to Z of plants that kill, maim, intoxicate and otherwise offend. Drawing on history, medicine, science and legend, Stewart presents tales of bloodcurdling botany that will entertain, alarm and enlighten even the most intrepid gardeners and nature lovers.

Find out which plant killed Abraham Lincoln's mother, which shrub ignited a global war and what plant has killed 90 million people. From strychnine to castor bean, from poison sumac to monkshood, from carnivorous plants to weeds that spontaneously combust, Stewart introduces an unforgettable cast of characters and tells their tales with her own wicked sense of humor.

Seating limited. Advanced purchase of tickets encouraged.