

Inside Dirt

Henderson County Master Gardener Newsletter

President's Message

by Yvonne Sparks, HCMG



Amanda Pollard who is on their Editorial Staff. I am listing a vocabulary list of gardening terms that may be new or a useful reminder. Here goes:

1. **Annuals, biennials and perennials.** Some plants spring up once and never again, and others bloom over and over. So what's the difference

between an annual, a biennial or a perennial?

- a. An **annual** is a plant that performs its whole life cycle within one year. It germinates, flowers and dies — that's it.
- b. A **perennial**, in contrast, is a plant that lives for more than two years.

(con't on page 4)

Upcoming Meetings:

Effective October 1, 2017, Henderson County Master Gardeners will have it's monthly meetings at the Hart-Morris Conference Center located on the grounds of the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center at 5601 CR 4812 (also signed Peninsula Point Road). The meetings will be October 18 and November 15 beginning at 12:00 pm.

- Sept 20th, 2017
- Oct 18th, 2017
- Nov 16th, 2017

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Over 45 years of gardening, some successful some not, has revealed to me that gardening has a language all it's own. I am still learning new terms even after completing two Master Gardener classes. One website that I receive weekly email is Houzz.com. It is a plethora of ideas and information about interior and exterior environments. This article contains excerpts from a recent email I received from Houzz.com. The author is

Fall is Prime Time for Butternut Squash

by Paula Winter, HCMG



Butternut squash is one of the most versatile fall vegetables. It can be roasted, sautéed, toasted, puréed for soups, or mashed and used in casseroles, breads, and muffins. It fits just as well in sweet dishes as it does in savory ones.



The hardest part of cooking butternut squash is peeling it. The skin is very hard and the risk of accidentally cutting a finger while trying to cut through the skin scares some people into buying it already cut, which compromises the taste.

But there is a solution: microwaving the squash before peeling it. Microwaving loosens and softens the skin, making it easier to peel. An added bonus is that it also cooks it slightly, which

decreases cooking time later. Here is how to do it:

- 1) Poke holes all over the squash with a fork.
- 2) Slice off the top and bottom of the squash.
- 3) Microwave for at least 3 ½ minutes.
- 4) Let the squash cool a little and then peel it with a vegetable peeler or knife.
- 5) Cut the squash open and scoop out the pulp and seeds.
- 6) Chop the squash into cubes or slices, depending on what you are going to do with it.

Now, what to do with it? On page 7 is a recipe that combines butternut squash with sage, another wonderful fall flavor!

Henderson County Master Gardener Member Meeting Dates

September 20th	Starting with seeds (Jeanne Brown & Jean)
October 18th	Potluck, Plant Swap, Seed Exchange
November 15th	Native Plants & Wildlife (Cole Boys) Officer Elections

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Joe Pye Weed

by Peter Cole, HCMG

Hello fellow Master Gardeners. Just recently I was given the opportunity to write a research article on a plant that my family was planting in our garden. This plant was Joe-Pye weed. Joe-Pye weed is a wildflower, it's a perennial, and even has been used as a medical herb.



Eupatorium purpureum, more commonly known as Joe-Pye weed, is a perennial plant native to most of the U.S. It comes in many varieties, some tall, and some short. The more common varieties can grow 3-7 feet tall, and 2-4 feet wide. While the dwarf plants stay around 3 feet tall, and 2 feet wide.

The leaves of the Joe-Pye weed plant grow in whorls around the stem. Where the leaves are attached the stem is purple while it is otherwise green. The flowers, which bloom in the late summer, are compound, meaning they are made up of smaller florets and bracts. The flowers are made up of 5-8 florets, that range from a dusty rose to mauve color, making it great for attracting

pollinators.

Sadly, Joe-Pye weed is not tolerant of dry, hot areas. So, it is not native to Texas. Joe-Pye weed prefers partial shade, but if given enough water will do well in full sun. Since Joe-Pye weed is a perennial it will die back every winter, so cut the dead growth back so new will have an easier time. Older plants can be divided and replanted every spring. As soon as the center dies the plant can be dug up, and the dead growth cut off. Then the new growth can be divided and replanted.

Joe-Pye weed was named after an Indian by the same name. He lived in New England, and would use this weed to cure fevers. Folklore says the Colonists in America would use this weed to treat typhus fevers. It has also been said that the Indians would use Joe-Pye weed to treat kidney stones, and other ailments involving the urinary



tract.

I hope that you learned something from this article, and that you go out and plant Joe-Pye weed. Have fun gardening!



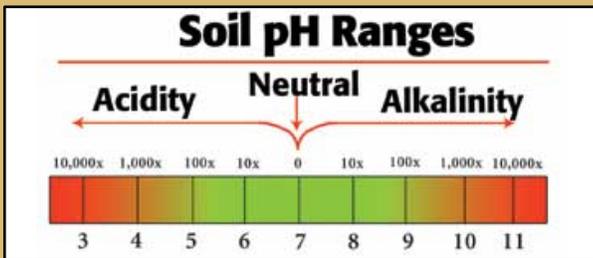
President's Message (con't)

by Yvonne Sparks, HCMG

c. **Biennials** are a little more complicated — they stick around for two years but usually don't flower until the second year. The first year, they typically have only foliage.

2. **Self-seeding.** Since annuals last only one year and biennials two, you may think that planting them is a waste of time. Rest assured that some annuals are self-seeders — they scatter seeds around the garden, which then grow without fuss. The great thing is that the new plants will continue this cycle. Besides annual and biennial self-seeders, there are some perennials that perform this useful task too. Purple-blooming Verbena bonariensis, is a good example.

3. **Acidic and alkaline soil.** Water and sunshine aren't the only things your plants need to grow — they also require



nutrients, which they can get from the soil. Whether or not your plants get the right amount and type of nutrients will depend on the **pH value** of your soil. You can test this easily by using a kit from your local garden center, and the type of soil you have will determine what you should and shouldn't plant. A pH value below 7 signifies an acidic soil, while a pH value above 7 indicates an alkaline soil. If the value is exactly 7, your soil is neutral. Some plants like acidic soil,

while others prefer alkaline, so pay attention to this when you're designing your garden.

4. **Taking cuttings.** Want to make some plants for free? One of the easiest ways to do this is by taking cuttings. A general guideline to get you started is to first cut off a length of stem



about 3 to 6 inches long. Remove the lower leaves so that you have a length of stem to plant in soil. If you like, you can dip this part in a rooting hormone, which will help it to take root. Pot up your stem in a moist potting mix that includes sand, perlite or vermiculite, then wrap it loosely in plastic or cover it with a cloche. Your starts should have adequate sunlight, but not direct. It usually takes a month or two for the plant to be ready to plant outside. Normally keeping these plants inside until they can develop their roots is helpful.

5. **Deadheading.** An easy way to keep plants looking good and to encourage new blooms is to deadhead them. It's a quick process that simply involves removing



faded or dead flowers to direct energy back into the plant to make new flowers. Using your finger and thumb to snap off the dead bloom can usually do it. If the stem is tough,

you can use scissors or shears to cut it. The [Royal Horticultural Society](#) advises removing the flower's stalk as well for tidiness.

6. **Staking.** Have you ever seen a gorgeous flower rise up in a bed and then sadly flop over as soon as the rain falls? Tall plants can't always stay upright without help, and this is where staking comes in. The term simply refers to a method of supporting long, top-heavy plants. The way you stake will depend on your budget, style and expertise.



There are nifty curved wire frames available that you can easily poke into the soil around your plants or, at the other extreme, you can construct

a complex grid from branches and twine. Whichever method you use, it's a pretty crucial job if you want to avoid snapped stems.

7. **Hardening off.** If you've been growing seedlings indoors or in a [greenhouse](#), it will be difficult for them to suddenly face the elements outside. They'll need a period of adjustment, or hardening off — two to three weeks (or longer if the initial growing conditions were very warm) where the plants are gradually exposed to harsher conditions to get them used to growing outdoors.

8. **Pinching.** For a plant that's full and bushy, it's a good idea to encourage it to grow multiple stems rather than just one long one. You can do this by using a technique called pinching, where you prune the main stem back to just above a couple of leaf nodes (the joints in a stem where a leaf starts to grow). Use your thumb and finger to pinch the tender stem off as close to the leaf nodes as possible, which should force it to

grow a couple of new stems and result in a fuller plants. Beginning gardeners need to know it's critical to expose seedlings to wind and sun gradually over a few days to give them time to adapt.

9. **Microclimate.** Different spots in your yard can support very different plants. You need select the right plant in the right spot. The climate of a small area that differs from the climate of the surrounding area is called a **microclimate**. Local climates can vary greatly based on such factors topography, elevation, moisture, wind, soil, and vegetation. A courtyard or south or west facing area next to your house may have an entirely different climate than the north or east areas of your home. In addition, if the area is located close to brick wall that receives all day sun and consequently heat will affect plants differently that a wall that is in shade for most of the day. Look around your home to see how many microclimates you have and plan your landscape around that.

10. **Green Manure:** A crop that is grown and then incorporated into the soil to increase soil fertility or organic matter content. Usually turned over into the soil a few weeks

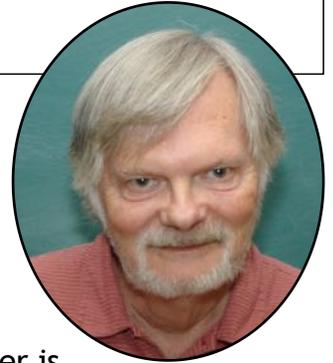


before new planting begins. A mulching lawn mower will add green manure to your lawn. It is important to not allow thatch to collect in your lawn.

This is far from a complete list, just a few select terms that I hope are helpful.

Fall Gardening

Robert Erickson, HCMG



Thinking about a fall garden typically brings a mix of hopefulness and frustration to gardeners. We hope that we can get a nice crop of fresh vegetables for the winter that is about to start but we are frustrated because it is hot, dry, and difficult to prepare the garden again in August. As a result, many people put off doing a fall garden until the conditions are too late. That is sad.



The key to planning a fall garden is twofold: keep it simple and think backwards. Whether you garden in the spring or fall, the core work remains the same. The soil must be loosened, organic matter must be added along with proper nutrients, and water must be applied. The difference of course, is that you do this “heavy” work in the cool of the early spring but in the heat of the summer for a fall garden.

Thinking simple and backwards means that you have to plan differently. In our area, the magic date to start from is November 15; that is our average first freeze/frost date. For vegetables, everything must mature and bear fruit before that date or it may not happen at all. Therefore, you must select plants or seeds that will mature before that date. If a plant takes 60 days to mature, then it must be in the ground by September 15. If it

takes longer, then back the planting date to allow ample time for the plant to mature. If it doesn’t freeze by the date, every freeze-free day after that is a gift.

Another key fact to remember is that all plants have a season. Fall is actually a very good time to sow seeds directly in the ground. This is because the soil is warm. The optimal temperature for seed germination is usually 65 degrees or higher. That is why seed starting in the spring must be done in a greenhouse or warmer area. Planting seeds in the warmth of August may be hot work but germination rates will be higher and faster than in spring. This leads to the question of which varieties of vegetables should you consider planting.

Several desirable plants just won’t work for fall gardens. Onions, garlic, and potatoes have a growing cycle of about six months. You can plant them in the fall but won’t be able to harvest them until late spring or early summer. Leafy plants like lettuce, cabbage, herbs, chard, kale,

and the like do well in fall gardens and usually have a fairly short growing period to harvest. Root crops like beets, turnips, carrots, and radishes also do fairly well in the fall. One thing to check with



these plants is their frost tolerance. Some are fairly intolerant and may die quickly at the first frost. (Con’t on page 7)

Butternut Squash with Shallots and Sage

by Paula Winter, HCMG



Ingredients

2 tablespoons olive oil
 3 shallots, halved lengthwise, then cut crosswise into 1/4-inch-thick slices (3/4 cup)
 1 (1 3/4-lb) butternut squash, peeled, halved lengthwise, seeded, and cut into 1/2-inch cubes (4 cups)
 1/2 cup reduced-sodium chicken broth or water
 1 tablespoon packed brown sugar
 1/2 teaspoon finely chopped fresh sage
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Preparation

Heat oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet over moderate heat until hot but not smoking, then cook shallots and squash, stirring, until shallots are softened, about 5 minutes.

Add broth, brown sugar, sage, and salt, stirring until sugar is dissolved. Simmer, covered, stirring occasionally, until squash is tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in vinegar, pepper, and salt to taste.



Fall Gardening (con't)

Robert Erickson, HCMG

Others are heartier and will survive a frost better.

Frost tolerance is a very important consideration for fall gardens. As a result, non-tolerant varieties for popular vegetables should be carefully evaluated. Bush or determinate tomatoes, beans, peas, and peppers should be considered rather than pole or indeterminate varieties. These plants will grow smaller and quicker and when they produce their fruit, all of the fruit comes at the same time. This helps insure a large harvest hopefully before the first freeze hits and stops all further growth.

One last item to consider in planning a fall garden is to decide what you are going to do with a good harvest of vegetables. A nice

harvest of beans or tomatoes means you have a lot of food available right now but you have to be prepared to preserve it in some way. Drying, freezing, and canning are some of the traditional ways of preserving things for winter use but some vegetables are not well suited to these techniques. As a result, it is better to plant fewer of these crops rather than have a cornucopia of leaves that will wither in a week or ten days. Plant plenty of those things that you can preserve but be smart about planting those things that won't last.





'GARDENING THE EASY WAY'

The Henderson County Texas Master Gardeners invite you to attend our free fall conference and learn how to garden the easy way. We have two expert speakers that will discuss Texas native plants as well as gardening for those with physical limitations. Speakers:

Greg Grant, County Extension Agent-Horticulture for Smith County. Greg is an award-winning horticulturist, author, conservationist, and lives in Tyler. Greg will discuss the use of **Texas native plants**.

David Gary, Master Gardener on Wheels. David is a USAF Vietnam veteran and a dedicated volunteer at the Dallas Arboretum. David will speak on **gardening techniques for those with physical limitations**.



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October 26, 2017

**Interested in
gardening?**

**Have you wanted to
find ways to make
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www.henderson-co-tx-mg.org

Autumn Plans

by Lydia Holley HCMG



Ah, autumn. The season when you can breathe a sigh of relief. Summer is over, and we gardeners can now get back to what we love - working in the garden. First thing needed is an assessment. What worked for you this summer? Do you need to replace some plants, add some plants, or start a new planting bed? Now is the time to take action.

In my garden, I have big plans. I have around 50 plants in pots waiting to be planted. I have been assessing my garden, square inch by square inch, evaluating the plantings and design. I am making plans to completely rework my vegetable beds. I am also wanting to prepare three additional areas for planting where there is only grass and weeds now. Although two areas are not large, the third area is significant. My family is beyond concerned about my mental health with the talk of adding to my garden, as it is large enough right now. But, this third area should make mowing easier, so I believe that little voice in my head that says it should pay off in the long run with time and frustration saved.

My 50 potted plants, all either propagated by me in 2016, or purchased on sale throughout the year, have been watered regularly, patiently waiting for planting time.



Autumn is the perfect time to plant trees and shrubs in Texas. You can plant anytime the soil temperature is over 40 degrees, which in Texas may extend into late October or November, possibly beyond, depending upon the year.

Now is the also the time to put in a fall vegetable garden. Even if you are new to growing vegetables, or do not want a large vegetable garden, try lettuce. Many lettuces will not be fazed by a light frost, and you can easily cover them when a hard freeze comes through. Many years, you can eat lettuce straight from your garden all winter long. I like planting red lettuce along with green ones. Not only do I appreciate the variety on my plate, I think they look beautiful growing together. Lettuces are easily grown from seed, and can be directly



seeded into the soil.

If you, too, are interested in extending your planting beds or starting a new one, autumn is the perfect time to use the lasagne method to kill weeds and prepare the soil for planting in the spring. Although it takes time for a bed to be ready for planting this way, it is certainly a lot easier than double digging. This is the method I will be using for those three new planting beds in my own garden.

Oh, yes, I have lots of plans for autumn! I hope I do not run out of autumn before I get it all done!

Fall Gardening Program at McDade's Nursery

by Cherie Tanneberger HCMG

On Saturday, August 19, at McDade's Nursery, Tool, Henderson County Master Gardener (HCMG), Bob Erickson, presented a "Fall Gardening: Vegetables, Trees and Shrubs" program. Bob's informative presentation was attended by just over 30 gardeners and 12 HCMG volunteers. After Bob's program, HCMGs Lydia Holley and Lynn Stroud shared tips and handouts on fall tree and shrub planting. HCMG Jeanne Brown answered questions on growing heirloom vegetables.



Stephen Gent, owner of McDade's Nursery, provided a \$25 McDade's gift certificate as a door prize. HCMGs thank McDade's for hosting our program and for providing the generous gift certificate. For the program, McDade's also provided a printed list and examples of available fall vegetables, trees, shrubs and seeds as well as printed fall planting guides as handouts. No one walked away empty handed!

The lucky gift certificate winner was Susan Skomma who came all the way from Edom for the fall gardening program (photo left). HCMG President, Yvonne Sparks (photo right), presented the prize. We are happy to note that Susan has signed up for our Fall 2017 Master Gardener class.

2017 Officers

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VP Program & Administration	Jeanne Brown
VP Member & Community Education	Linda Schafer
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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! **



Sweet Autumn Clematis

by Jacob Cole, 2016 HCMG Intern



Many of you have heard of Sweet Autumn Clematis, but I thought I would share some details and more

reasons why you should have this plant in your landscape! It is wide spread for its abundance of delicate white blooms and is becoming increasingly popular for a butterfly and pollinator plant. This plant grows as a vine, can reach about 20-30 feet in height, is generally is very easy to grow, and can become quite prolific.

While it is easy to care for, Sweet Autumn Clematis does require deep thorough water the first year, to encourage a deep root system. The roots prefer to grow in a shady spot, while the tips love the sun. one way of protecting the roots is to cover the base with mulch or leaves. One caution though is that the numerous flowers can create a huge amount of seeds. This can lead to your yard becoming a clematis plantation. Just keep in mind that if properly cared for Sweet Autumn Clematis will beautify your yard wonderfully, but if not



controlled, it will take over your yard.

One of the reasons this plant is so incredible is the sheer number of blooms it produces. On top of that, it smells incredible; so it serves as a great source of food for butterflies, bees, and other nectar feeding insects. Sweet Autumn Clematis also blooms later in the year, when a great source of food is a little harder to find. It also can serve as a cover for a wall or unsightly blemish, while also providing a source of food for the pollinators. Sweet Autumn Clematis is a vine and therefore needs a support system to grow on. Whether that is a trellis, side of house, or even just a post for it to grow around, it will improve the growth of your Clematis.

I think everyone should have Sweet Autumn Clematis in their garden because it is fairly



low maintenance, helps to feed honey bees and other pollinators, and is perennial. Whether you are the pollinator's best friend, or you love a beautiful smelling and looking flower, this plant just can't be beat. And while You may have an invasion if you don't manage it right, it is easy to pull up a few plants. I hope you find Sweet Autumn Clematis as incredible as I do.

