

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*

*January 20, 2016
February 17, 2016
March 16, 2016*

President's Message

Going Native
by Lydia Holley



It was discouraging. After building our home, I realized that not only did I have red, heavy clay soil, but it had been compacted from machinery, and dug when wet. Additionally, a base of sand had been added on top, making things even worse.

Amending would help, but I still needed some really tough plants. Looking around the nursery center, I chose a crossvine (*Bignonia caprioleta*) solely because of two little words that were printed on the plant label: native plant.

Even in horrible soil conditions, my crossvine has thrived, growing up

the side of my garage, blooming profusely each spring. In winter, its evergreen leaves continue to add beauty. I can't imagine my garden without it.

Crossvine is native to East Texas and several southeastern states. It attracts hummingbirds and grows in a variety of conditions from clay to sand, dry to moist soils, and in sun to part shade. This past spring, a pair of House Finches nested in mine.

Is your soil less than ideal? Do you feel native plants could enhance your garden? (cont p.4)

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Welcome 2016 Officers

President :	Lydia Holley
VP Program & Administration	Yvonne Sparks
VP Member & Community Education	Linda Schafer
Secretary	Terri Bevans
Treasurer	Susan Stokes
Historian	Cherie Tanneberger



Dream Garden News

As always there is lot of work going on at the dream garden at the East Texas Arboretum! Any Monday morning you will find a group of dedicated master gardeners working tirelessly to prune back overgrowth, dead head a number plants, move other plants, and even add new items to the landscape!



If you take a walk out there now, you will find many plants have exhausted themselves and are now in the seed stage of their lives. Most are dormant for the winter as the temperatures have started dropping and the days are shorter.

The dream garden is open to the public every day from dawn until dusk, as is the rest of the East Texas Arboretum. The master gardeners meet on Mondays from about 8am until noon, and invite everyone to join them anytime during that time frame.

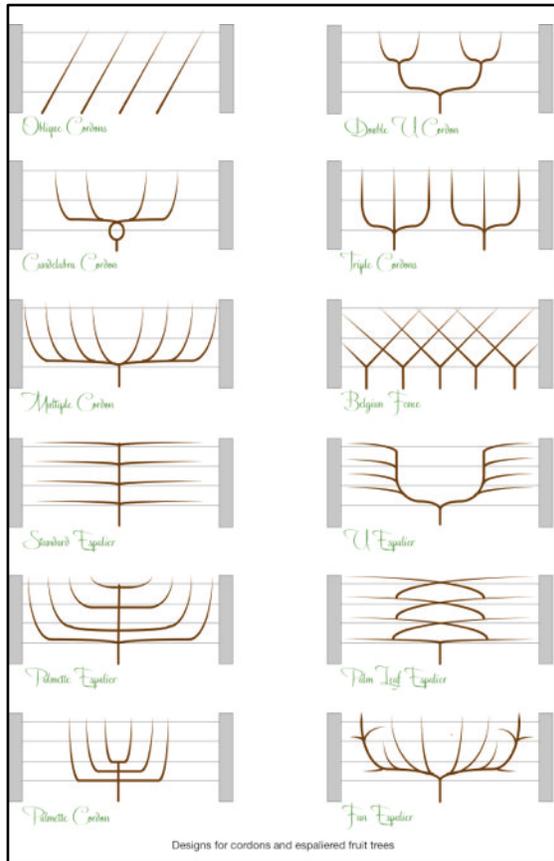
If you come out, make sure to communicate what you enjoy doing on the garden! Margret Dansbey is the point of contact, and they would love to put you to work in the area you enjoy working!!

Don't forget, there is a short coffee break too, so if you want to bring a snack to share you are welcome to!

Hope to see you out enjoying or helping at the Dream Garden soon!!

Small Space Garden Ideas for Fruit Production

By Kathi Murphy-Boley {2015 Master Gardener Intern}



Nowadays, folks are wanting good homegrown fruits and vegetables but are often confined for garden space. One age-old idea is to espalier fruit trees such as apple, pear, or fig here in Texas. An espalier system can provide an effective way of producing a large volume of high quality fruit in a limited area by increasing the fruiting spurs and making access to the fruit during harvest easier.

garden whether against a garden wall or a fence line, near an arbor or beside a structure. One thing all have in common is the need for a support structure while training. Three basic espalier styles include 1) the Cordon, a traditional form growing horizontally for a distance as a single cordon “rope” or a multicordon forming three (3) tiers; 2) the Candelabra forming its shape of multi-“candles” stemming off a single horizontal base; and 3) the Belgian Fence forming a lattice-like appearance using three or more trees to create overlapping “V”s.



To enjoy a successful espalier project as with all gardening start with a design plan noting size and location. Next select an appropriate and healthy tree, choose the right soil and water source. Keep your pruning shears near and enjoy training your special tree.

The art of espalier originated in Europe

Besides helping to manage garden space espalier can add elegance and intrigue to your garden throughout the seasons.

in the 16th century but remains popular today. Espalier is not the same as topiary as espalier forms the skeleton of the tree while topiary concerns only the silhouette. Different espalier designs dictate their placement in the

Spinach and Strawberry Salad by Gail Chock



- 1 pkg or bunch fresh spinach
- 1 box fresh strawberries
- 1/2 c. almond slices - toasted

DRESSING

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1/8 c. sugar | 2 Tbsp sesame seed |
| 1 1/2 tsp. finely chopped onion | 1 Tbsp. poppy seeds |
| 1/4 tsp. Worcestershire sauce | 1/2 tsp. paprika |
| 1/2 c. olive oil | 1/4 c. apple cider vinegar |

To make dressing, put all ingredients in a clean glass jar and shake. Refrigerate until serving time. To toast almonds, bake in a preheated oven 350 degrees on a pie plate for about 10 minutes or until golden. Cool and store in a glass jar.

Wash and dry spinach, remove stems, place in a pretty salad bowl. Slice or quarter strawberries and add to spinach. When ready to serve, drizzle dressing over salad, toss, then sprinkle with toasted almonds.



Variation: Pile onto individual plates, add sliced cucumber, and 1/2 c. fresh shrimp, drizzle with dressing and sprinkle with almonds. Good with cantaloupe too.

Children's Garden Report Card

by Peter Cole {2015 Master Gardener Intern}

Winter has finally arrived in the Children's Garden at South Athens Elementary, we can feel it. A few weeks ago the Master Gardeners were not able to start on time due to chilly morning temperatures. Once the kids came outside there was a lot of work to do, pulling all the summer plants that died after the cooler temperatures. The Pre-K class took some fresh broccoli from the garden so they could add it to their homemade vegetable soup and we heard rave reviews the following week!



This week we enjoyed some warmer temps while the kids learned about perennials, annuals, and bi-annuals. Many of the kids sampled some kale leaves and observed a giant radish plant that has gone to seed. We also saw

several small heads of cauliflower growing. And despite cooler temperatures we spied a couple small caterpillars!!

I have been helping at the Children's Garden the past few years, and last year took over planning the lessons and teaching every other week. This year we switched to an A & B schedule allowing more students to visit the garden each

week. Now, I teach the A weeks and Frank & Susan Stokes teach the B week.

I have really enjoyed teaching the children at South Athens, because I think it is fun, and they get excited when they see me each week!! My brothers and I also lead them through the garden after our lesson. We try to point out important things going on each week, like butterfly life cycle stages, harmful bugs, and new plant growth. The kids always love to find our friendly Garden Spider. Last week we had to tell the kids that she was gone, and since she left her legs behind we can only assume that she was lunch for a hungry bird! :(

We would love to have your help in the garden anytime you can come out!! You do not have to be an expert on anything, just a willingness to talk to the kids and share what you do know!

In January & February we will be teaching about cool weather plants, Native Texas plants, bee & butterfly friendly plants. We will also be planning our spring garden and getting the ground ready for new plants!



President's Article Con't from p. 1

You will not want to miss this year's Henderson County Master Gardener Spring Conference. On Thursday, March 31, at First United Methodist Church, Athens, Dr. David Creech will present "The Natives are Restless," a talk about native plants you can use in your own garden. He will also auction off a few select native plants. Tickets are just \$25 and include dinner. I am looking forward to hearing Dr. Creech. I want to learn more about native plants and maybe even find a few more to add to my garden.

Of course, not all natives can take the harsh conditions that faced my crossvine. But natives are worth growing even in the best conditions. According to the National Park Service, there are many advantages to using native plants including: long root systems, decreased water needed for maintenance, little long term maintenance, and food and habitat provided to wildlife. I hope you will join us in learning more about "going native".



2016 Spring Conference Plans Revealed...

by Yvonne Sparks



The 2016 Spring Conference will be on March 31, 2016 at the First United Methodist Church in Athens. The keynote speaker will be Dr. David Creech. He is Director of the Stephen F. Austin Gardens and the Pineywoods Native Plant Center located on the SFA campus. His topic is "The Natives are Restless." This presentation will include describing what natives are, how to plant native plants, how to use native plants in landscaping, and the "best of the best" Southern natives.

the East Texas Arboretum, free summer programs in various locations in the county and continuing education programs for recertifying Master Gardeners.

This year the Spring Conference will include a silent auction of many items donated by businesses and individuals from the area and a live auction of native plants conducted by the speaker, Dr. Creech. A delicious meal from a local vendor is included in the ticket price of \$25. The conference will begin at 5:30 pm with the silent auction with dinner and speaker to follow.



The Spring Conference is an annual event by the Henderson County Master Gardeners to provide an interesting and knowledgeable speaker for the community. Proceeds from the conference are used to offer programs and educational opportunities in Henderson County. This includes sponsoring the Children's Garden at South Athens Elementary, the Dream Garden at

Tickets are one sale NOW @ \$25 - available from any Master Gardener in Henderon county - or call 903-675-6130 for more info.

Dr. David Creech

Dr. Dave Creech, Regent's Professor and Professor Emeritus, has been at Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas



since September, 1978. Dr. Creech received his BS in Horticulture from Texas A and M University in 1970, a MS in Horticulture from Colorado State University in 1972, and he returned to TAMU and was awarded the PhD in 1978.

Dr. Creech is semi-retired and currently directs SFA Gardens, a 68-acre on campus horticultural resource. SFA Gardens includes 1) the 10-acre SFA Mast Arboretum, an on-campus resource that has enjoyed steady growth, development, utilization and visitation since its inception in 1985. 2) the 8-acre "Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden", which opened in 2000. This high pine canopy garden features over a mile of trails, 6000+ azaleas, over 200 varieties of Japanese maples, camellias and hydrangeas, plus numerous other special collections, 3) the 42-acre SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center, only the third garden affiliated with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas (co directed with Dr. James C. Kroll), and 4) the 8-acre Gayla Mize Garden, a new garden under development since 2011.

Pocket Gophers

Message From Rick

Rich Hirsch is the Henderson County Extension Agent.



Pocket gophers are burrowing rodents which live almost entirely underground. Gophers are well adapted to their underground existence, with stout forelegs and strong curved claws for digging. They have prominent, yellow incisor teeth and large, fur-lined external cheek pouches in which food is carried. Pocket gophers have poor eyesight, but their other senses are acute. Their tails are sensitive and are used as feelers when the animals travel backward in their burrows.

Pocket gophers are rarely seen because they spend most of their lives in underground tunnel systems. Their presence in an area is indicated by the characteristic mounds they create. Pocket gophers should not be confused with moles, which are insectivorous and sometimes construct tunnels and mounds resembling those made by pocket gophers.



Gophers are solitary animals except during the mating season and when young are being cared for. Otherwise, there is only one gopher in each tunnel system. Pocket gophers dig extensive tunnels or runways that consist of a main tunnel with several short lateral tunnels. A single gopher may have a burrow system that extends as much as 800 feet, covers an acre of ground, and ranges from a few inches to several feet deep. Runways vary from 2 to 5 inches in diameter depending on the gopher species. These runways serve as homes, storehouses and routes for underground searches for food. The shallow runways, 4 to 15 inches below the surface, are used primarily to search for food. The gopher pushes soil from the burrows to the surface with its forefeet and chest, forming a characteristic horseshoe shaped mound

approximately 8 to 24 inches in diameter and 6 inches high. The mounds are at the ends of short, lateral tunnels which branch off the main runway. The surface opening used to expel dirt from the burrow, is plugged by pushing dirt into it. This results in a depression on one side of the mound.

The pocket gopher's diet mainly consists of fleshy roots of various plants, including trees.

Gophers normally eat tubers such as potatoes and peanuts. They also eat green tops and seeds that can be pulled down into their burrows.

Under natural conditions, gophers are beneficial to the soil. It is estimated that in a year, one gopher transports 2½ tons of soil to the ground surface. By bringing subsoil to the surface where it weathers more quickly, gophers contribute to the soil building process. The loosened soil makes the ground more fertile. Air and

water can easily pass through porous soil to plant roots.

Gophers can cause serious damage, when they establish tunnel systems in cultivated farming areas, rangelands, orchards, tree farms and lawns. When there are many gophers they can damage field and pasture crops by eating the crops and by forming mounds which interfere with farm machinery. Gophers reduce the amount of livestock forage available on rangeland by harvesting and burying vegetation. They gnaw or clip the roots of trees, which may kill seedlings or small trees and reduce the vigor of large trees.

Pocket gophers in a lawn, garden or flower bed can destroy plants and produce unsightly mounds. Gophers gnaw through underground plastic water pipes and electrical

Pocket Gopher (con't from p. 6)

and communication cables and interfere with irrigation dikes. A tunnel system in a dam can cause it to erode and wash out. Tunnels under paved highways may cause the pavement to sink.

Control operations should be conducted during the spring and fall when pocket gophers are most active near the surface. Their activity is usually indicated by the presence of fresh mounds of dirt. Control operations in the fall interfere the least with growing crops.

Methods of control include mechanical and chemical means.

In small areas such as yards or gardens, or where there are only a few pocket gophers, trapping is usually satisfactory. Special traps have been

designed to capture gophers. Several different types are available at hardware or farm and ranch supply stores.



Effective control materials for gophers are strychnine-treated grain and zinc phosphide pellets. Toxic baits can be administered by the hand probe method or with a burrow builder. These methods are most efficient for large or heavily infested areas where trapping is not practical. Because the toxic grain is

placed underground, it is relatively safe when used around other wildlife, pets and livestock. However, you should always carefully read and follow pesticide label instructions. Some of these products are classified as “restricted use” and require a certified pesticide applicators license.

Field Sandbur {AKA Grassbur, Stickers}

Virginia Escue (2015 Master Gardener)

Although the growing season for the grass bur/field sandbur has for the most part passed, control is never far from thought. This annoying ‘sticker’ is painful, frustrating, sneaky, time consuming and costly.



Sandbur is a summer annual grassy weed that is especially adapted to dry sandy soil. It starts germinating in late spring, continuing to grow through late summer or early fall until the first hard frost or freeze. If the freeze does not successfully kill it, it may need to be treated as a perennial weed instead.

Sandbur is not usually a problem in a well maintained, healthy lawn especially if the grass is dense enough to prevent the weed from germinating and growing. Otherwise pulling or

digging it up will be necessary, frequent mowing helps prevent the plant from forming seed heads. Chemicals for sandburs can help when it gets out of control.

To be effective, pre-emergent herbicides need to be applied before weed seeds germinate. Where infestation is light, only two applications need be applied six weeks apart, after the initial application. Keep in mind some pre-emergent need to be watered in, not applying enough water is often one of the main reasons for failure.

Post-emergent can do a good job of controlling the sandbur when it is young, but as it matures it becomes more difficult to control.



Remember always read the directions and follow all instructions on any herbicides prior to using.



Introducing :The "Dirty Dozen"

2015 Mastergardener Interns



Linda Belssner



Kathi Murphy-Boley



Jeanne Brown



Janelle Cole



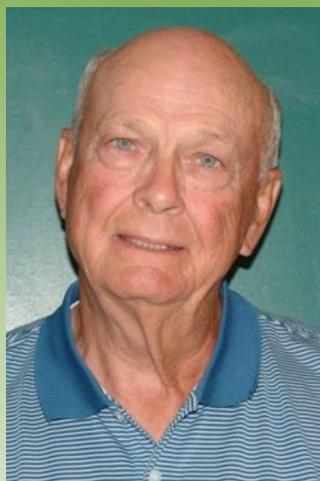
Peter Cole



Sara Drummond



Virginia Escue



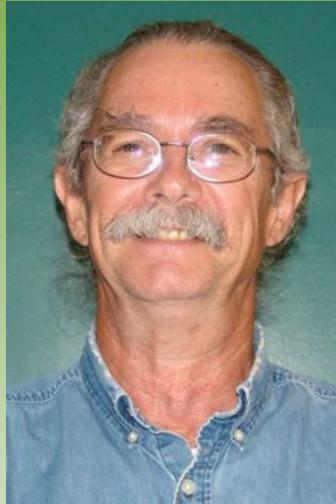
Don Kelly



Martha Rainwater



Charlie Rodriguez



David Seymour

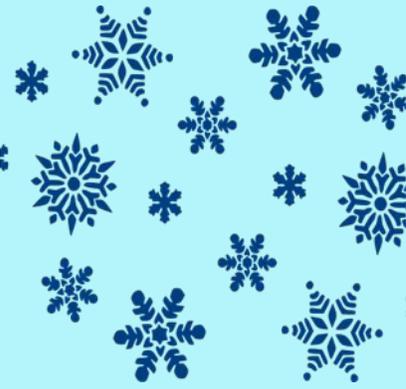


Paula Winter



What should you be doing NOW in East Texas?

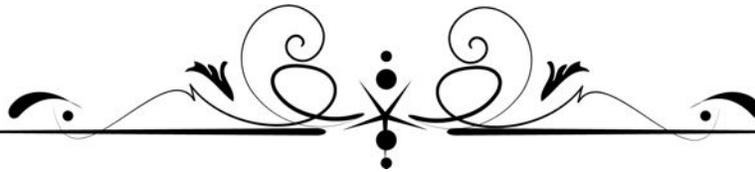
January :



- * Shop now for asparagus, strawberries and fruit trees
- * Cover root crops still in the ground with extra mulch
- * Sow beets, carrots, radish, cress, bok choy and garden peas directly in garden; cover with dark compost to warm the soil
- * Sow seeds of herbs such as dill and parsley
- * Sow seeds of annual flowers anywhere you want them to come up
- * Top dress lawns and garden beds with compost

February

- ♥ Feed soil by applying compost to plantings throughout landscape
- ♥ About Feb 21 plant potatoes
- ♥ Begin sowing seeds of lettuce, collards, and other greens outdoors
- ♥ On Valentines Day prune roses (use clippings to propagate)
- ♥ Prune fruit trees, then spray them at their “pink bud” stage
- ♥ Plant alyssum, hollyhocks, lobelia, larkspur and canterbury bells



Search, Share & Trade Corner

Are you on the hunt for the special seed, or that perfect plant? Let us know and we will add it to the newsletter! Specify what you are looking for, or what you have an abundance of, and we will share it with all our readers!!

Right now **Lois Mallette** is

looking for a **Potato Vine** (Not Sweet Potato Vine) aka **{*Solanum laxum*}**

So email Janelle @ hendersonCMG@gmail.com if you are hunting for a special plant and I will list it here and see if anyone has it! If you have plants your want to share, let me know that too!

The Boon and Bane of Fall : Leaves

by Bob Erickson

Many of us love fall; the colors are beautiful and the heat has gone to be replaced with a slight chill in the air. But along with the flannel shirts, there also comes the laundry list of must-dos before winter and the leaves begin to fill up the yard with brown, gold, and red litter. If you have even a single large tree on your property, the annual conflict of whether to leave them or rake them emerges; frequently with conflicting resolution. If you are a gardener, fall is the time to rejoice for the bounty that Mother Nature has given you.



Many people know that mulching the leaves is good for the yard; simply mow and leave the pieces where they fall. Others are aware that chopped up leaves are great additions to the compost bin. A few but not many, know that leaves also make excellent mulch for your flower and vegetable gardens.

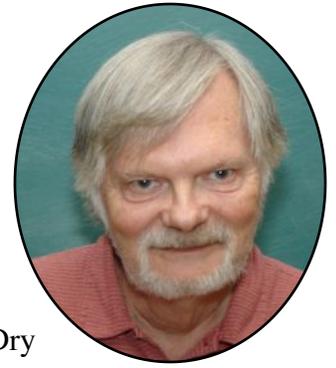
Leaf mulch offers significant benefits to the lawn or garden. The most common benefit is the addition of organic matter to the soil which is the highly recommended treatment for both sandy and clay soils common in Texas. The little known benefit is that leaves also act as a slow release nutrient source for grasses and plants. A New Jersey study of municipally collected leaves showed that they contain a range of .5 to 1.5% nitrogen with an average of 1% along with lesser quantities of phosphorus and potassium. My soil analysis says that I need to add 1 lb of nitrogen per thousand feet of garden area. That means that 100 lbs of leaves (dry) could be my primary source of nitrogen for the lawn or garden. The nutrient benefit of leaves is not usually instantaneous, but is released slowly over time which is very advantageous.



There is one important consideration about taking advantage of fall leaves. That is that whole leaves are very slow and uncooperative in achieving the desired results. Dry leaves readily blow away in the wind and wet leaves clump together creating a matt that neither composts easily nor allows moisture through to the desirable plant roots. A garden shredder can make short work of a large pile of leaves. However, a lawn mower can do just as good a job after several passes over a pile. As a last resort, fill a box or wash tub with leaves and take a string trimmer to it. The broken pieces are less likely to blow away and are more readily accessible to the bacteria and bugs that effectively compost the matter over time.

As with all mulches, the material used (except for artificial ones) is actually compost in the raw. Four inches of natural mulch can be reduced by half or more during a year due to natural composting action from the soil. All of this provides both short and long term benefits to the gardener.

A final note is that the worst thing you can do is to bag leaves and send them to the landfill. Close to fifty percent of landfill waste is compostable waste. That raises the cost of both trash disposal and of proper feeding and caring for your lawn and garden. Put the organic trash back in the garden where it belongs. The first rule of a wise gardener is to use the resources nature gives you first before you take your wallet to the garden store.



Save the Dates:

- January 20th Rick Hirsch will speak on,
"What's New for HCMGA in 2016?"
- February 4th ** East Texas Turf Grass Conference
The Tx Ag Ext Center in Overton, TX
- February 17th Nick Rosenberg will speak on
"Hardscape in the Garden"
- March 31, 2016 ** Spring Conference at
The First United Methodist Church in Athens
- April 23, 2016 ** Plant Sale @ The Senior Citizen Building



** Denotes open to the public!
So hope to see you there!

2016 HCMG Spring Conference Announcement

"The Natives are Restless"

Hear about what is a native, the Best Southern natives,
how to plant them and how to use them

presented by

Dr. David Creech

Director of SFA Gardens and Piney Wood Native Plant Center

March 31, 2016

First United Methodist Church

Athens, Tx

Tickets are on sale \$25, from any
Henderson County Master Gardener.
(Includes dinner and the speaker)

