

the Inside Dirt

Henderson County Master Gardener Association



TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

President's Message

Gardening in the July and August heat

Regardless of the amount of rain that has benefited area lakes and ponds, July and August typically turn East Texas into a hot, dry "blast furnace". Heat and water become the main focus of garden maintenance. The plants that thrived in spring are waning. There are, however, good choices for summer plantings in July. Among these are a group of hardy annuals like portulaca, fan flower, Angelonia Serena, Mexican heather, and various sunflowers. Even summer-tough annuals need about an inch of water per week. Spreading that water over a twice-weekly irrigation schedule is best. Skip Richter, the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Agent who was our keynote speaker at this year's Spring Conference, favors using the "digging test" to determine how long to water. His suggestion is to run your irrigation for a specified time. Times will vary depending on the type of irrigation method you have. Check a rain gauge or straight-sided can to measure the amount of water collected. Then, wait 30 minutes. Dig a hole to see how deep the soil is wet. The approximate

amounts of water collected in your rain gauge or straight-sided can to wet various soils to an optimum 12 inches deep is:

Sand-1 inch

Loam-1.5-2 inches

Clay-2.5 inches

August brings even more challenges to the home garden. Rainwater harvesting is free and the best water your plants can have. Every inch of rain that falls on the footprint of a 1000 square foot home will allow more than 600 gallons of water to be captured. The A&M website: rainwaterharvesting.tamu.edu has free information on how to create your own rainwater harvesting system. Another water-wise idea is to use "evapotranspiration" or "ET" as a guide for watering lawns. ET measures the amount of water that evaporates and moves out of the leaves of the plant. That amount is based on several factors like temperature, solar radiation, wind speed, and humidity. The website texaset.tamu.edu can be used to find a

HCMG Monthly Meetings:

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

Meeting Dates:

July 15, 2015

August 19, 2015

September 16, 2015

weather station near you or a part of the state with similar weather patterns. This site will help you determine how much water your lawn has used in the last days or weeks. That information, plus any rainfall, will help you determine how often you should water.

If you are interested in fall vegetable garden, July and August are the months to begin that process. Early July is a great time to have the soil of your vegetable plot tested. The AgriLife Extension Office has free soil testing bags and information available. Vegetables that can be transplanted in July include eggplant (7/15-8/1) and peppers (7/1-8/1). Crops that can be started from seed include Lima beans (7/15 – 8/15), cantaloupes (7/15 – 8/1), southern peas (7/1 – 8/1), pumpkin (7/1 – 8/1), summer squash (7/15 – 8/15), winter squash (7/1 – 7/15), and watermelon (7/1 – 8/1). Starting in mid August plant broccoli plants, Brussel sprouts, cabbage plants, Chinese cabbage, carrots, cauliflower plants, Swiss chard, collards, kale, English peas, Irish potatoes, and summer squash.

OFFICERS

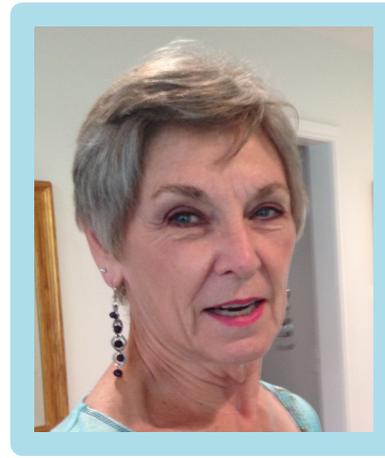
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From our Members: LaTrecia Jeffcott

Our 11.6 acres is located 2 1/2 miles north of Walton in Van Zandt County. From January through May this year we measured between 35 and 37.6 inches of rain depending on the gauge recorded. If I remember correctly, Rick Hirsch, Henderson County AgriLife Agent, told us in Master Gardener class that average annual rainfall in this part of East Texas is 44". We have been here 12 years and this is the first year we will surely meet or exceed that 44 inches. There were days my three dogs thought I was putting them out in their normally grass-covered side-yard, to engage in the wading pool. When the heavy rains began I had planted white and red onions, new potatoes, green beans, 4 kinds of tomatoes, squash, lettuce, cabbage, Swiss Chard, beets, and carrots. As the rain continued week after week I expected things to turn yellow, or die. Instead, most everything seemed to get more lush. The yard grass has never been so thick or so green. I did harvest the onions as they began to look water logged. In the last bit of rain the potato vines collapsed over night. I still have not dug them but I am confident there are small potatoes to be had. The iris, bluebonnets, day lilies, morning glories, honey suckle, trumpet vines, ginger, Mexican Petunias all thrived, as the zinnias and black eyed Susans



began to pop up. The lesson I came away with is that I am guilty of under watering through the dry spring and summer seasons. The worst affect here is the abundant crop of mosquitoes. However, nature seems to have a plan - the frogs too are plentiful.

Master Gardener Meeting Programs

July 15th - Beverly Guthrie, an East Texas Master Naturalist, will be presenting "Wildscaping in your garden!"

August 19th - Mike Mugavero, Athens Organic, will be presenting "Preparing and planting fall gardens."



Summer Workshop Series Continues!

by
Cherie Tanneberger

Fall Vegetable Production "Science and Sense"

Thursday, July 16, 2015

Henderson County Master Gardeners invite you to begin planning your fall vegetable garden as Rick Hirsch, HC Agricultural Extension Agent, shares the "Science and Sense" of fall vegetable production. The program will be Thursday, July 16, 6:00 pm, at the Cain Center, 915 S. Palestine, Athens. Admission is free and open to the public. Door prizes will be awarded following the presentation.

Doors open at 5:30 pm so you can visit with local gardeners and farmers about organic and raised bed gardening (Athens Organic); unique heirloom vegetable & herb varieties (Barbara Gosnell, Gopher Knoll Farm); organic family farming (Jennifer Chandler, Chandler Family Farm); and, other gardening methods.



This "science and sense" program will provide the best available/new info for 2015 weather conditions with a goal to improve your fall gardening experience. Rick's best fall gardening tip is: "For a successful fall garden, you can't wait until fall to get started. Soil preparation, fertilizing and planting will have to be done in the heat of the summer."

Rick Hirsch has served as the HC Agricultural Extension Agent since June 1992. He shares his horticulture knowledge through local radio programs and area newspaper columns. He received the Texas Farm Bureau's 2003 Excellence in Journalism Award. In 2012, Rick was recognized as the Texas & Southwestern Cattle Association's County Agent of the Year. His personal store of horticulture knowledge is invaluable to master and home gardeners as well as the farmers and ranchers of Henderson County. Join us as we welcome Rick for an entertaining and informative program that will help you to better enjoy the planning and "picking" of your fall garden. More info: 903-675-6130 or hendersoncmga@gmail.com.

Taste & Learn the "Foods and Flavors of the Mediterranean"

Saturday, August 1, 2015

The Herb Ladies are coming to Athens! Taste and learn the "Foods and Flavors of the Mediterranean" with guest speakers, Ellis County Master Gardeners, Susan Clark and Arlene Hamilton. We'll take a journey through those wonderful herbs and vegetables that thrive in the Mediterranean area and also love the Texas heat! The program will be Saturday, August 1, 10:00 am, Cain Center, 915 S. Palestine, Athens. Admission is free and open to the public. Door prizes will be awarded at the end of

the presentation.



Susan shares how to harvest, roast, dry and prepare tomatoes. Her fabulous roasted tomato sauce will be combined with a variety of herbs and served as an assortment of bruschettas. In addition to preparing, she will discuss variations on the basic tomato sauce such as making a marinara and the vegetables most suited for Texas.

Arlene will be mixing up a variety of herbal blends for your sampling. She'll discuss fresh vs. dried, harvesting and preserving. Learn how to make Herbes de Provence, Bouquet Garni, and Fine Herbes Blend. Sample them in butter, cheese spread and combined with other ingredients on crostini. Using more vegetables that love Texas you can sample Eggplant Caponata or Squash and Zucchini Antipasto.

Arlene Hamilton is a Class of 2000 Texas Master Gardener and was named Outstanding Individual Master Gardener in Texas for 2003. She is a member of the Herb Society of America and the Greater Fort Worth Herb Society. Arlene is a Texas Rainwater Harvesting Specialist and captures over 1400 gallons of rainwater in backyard tanks to use in her herb and vegetable gardens and wildlife habitat area.

Susan Clark has been an Ellis County Master Gardener (ECMGA) since 2010 and is also a certified Vegetable Specialist. She has been interested in

gardening for many years, a love she picked up from her mother. Susan has taught many classes on herbs, vegetables, and vermicomposting. She currently serves as president of the ECMGA as well as editor of their E-Garden Newsletter.

Join us as we take a tasty journey through the "Foods and Flavors of the Mediterranean".

More info: 903-675-6130 or hendersoncmga@gmail.com.

Garden Hoses Need Love Too!

by
Marylee Haldeman

We learn about the correct storage of hoses from firefighters. Their hoses are not rubber or plastic like ours. Firefighters stretch them out to allow for drying after each use.

Our garden hoses need to be coiled in as wide a circle as practical - the narrower or smaller the diameter coil the more likely it will crimp. If possible straighten the hose out and allow it to drain completely. Proper maintenance will extend the life of your garden hoses.



15 Inexpensive Gardening Tips

1. Make your own garden markers using stones you found outside. Paint smooth rocks and label with a Sharpie marker.
 2. OR use plastic forks you have laying around. Label the handles of plastic forks with a Sharpie and poke it in the ground next to your sowed seeds or small seedlings.
 3. Soak your seeds in warm water 24 hours before sowing.
 4. Make your own self-cleaning & self-sharpening garden tool holder. Fill a container/pot with "sandbox sand". Insert your tools into the sand to store them while cleaning and sharpening them.
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5. Use coffee grounds to keep pests far away from your precious plants. It also enriches the soil.
 6. Create a handy makeshift watering can by punching several holes into the lid of your gallon milk jug. After rinsing out the jug, fill with water to have an inexpensive, portable watering can.
 7. Organize unplanted seeds in the sleeves of an old photo album.
 8. Use an old cardboard drink holder for starting seeds. Those cardboard 4-pack drink holders along with a toilet paper tube make excellent containers to start seeds.
 9. Grow green onions from fresh ones. Buy some fresh ones at the grocery store and make more out of them! Cut off the bottoms and lay them out somewhere to dry. Then plant them a few days later and they'll sprout!
 10. Turn leftover wine bottles upside down along the edge of a flower bed to create a unique edge along your flowerbeds.
 11. Make ties for your tomato plants out of an old t-shirt by cutting that stained shirt into strips.
 12. Use leftover beer from your party to kill slugs. Stale, hot beer would kill anyone!
 13. Pop herbs in the freezer to keep them fresh longer. Cut up herbs and place in ice cube trays. Add water or olive oil and freeze until you need fresh herbs for your culinary creations.
 14. Turn a long-handled tool into a measuring stick! Lay a long-handled garden tool on the ground, and next to it place a tape measure. Using a permanent marker, write inch and foot marks on the handle. When you need to space plants a certain distance apart (from just an inch to several feet) you'll already have a measuring device in your hand.
 15. Use your old boots to make a unique mounted garden
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TOMATO PIE

From Gail Chock

INGREDIENTS:

2 tablespoons of olive oil
2 medium sweet onion, thinly sliced
Salt and Pepper
1 box of Ritz Crackers
2 28 oz. cans of diced tomatoes
undrained or 6 cups of fresh tomatoes

2 cups of mayonnaise
1 ½ cups of grated extra sharp
cheddar cheese
1 cup of grated parmesan cheese
3 tablespoons of chopped fresh basil

DIRECTIONS:

- Preheat oven to 350
- Grease 13x9 baking dish with olive oil or butter
- Heat the 2 T of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat, add onions and cook until soft
- Add salt and pepper.
- Crush 2 sleeves of Ritz Crackers by hand or in a food processor. Reserve ½ cup of crumbs for topping.
- Place half of the remaining crumbs in bottom of baking dish.
- Pour 1 can of diced tomatoes with juice over the crumbs.
- Layer half of the sautéed onions on top of the tomatoes and repeat with another layer of tomatoes and another layer of the onions.
- Sprinkle the remaining half of the crumbs over the tomato mixture.
- In a bowl, combine the mayonnaise, cheddar cheese, Parmesan cheese and basil. Spread the mixture over the top of the layers and sprinkle the reserved ½ cup cracker crumbs on top.
- Bake 30-40 minutes until the top is golden brown.

Winter Hardy Bromeliads? Are you Crazy?

By Marylee Haldeman

This Bromeliad was simply forgotten this past winter. It stayed on my east-facing porch, was never watered or cared for at all. In Spring of this year I noticed it was still green, and so I started watering it; and it started putting out lots of new growth. Good Heavens!

It's ALIVE!





Rick Hirsch

Henderson County Agricultural Extension Agent

Visit our web page at <http://henderson.agrilife.org/>.

THE MOSQUITOS ARE COMING!

Anticipating a significant increase in the state's mosquito population, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service entomologists are offering tips on how we can help slow mosquito breeding in backyards and protect from being bitten.

"Mosquito populations are booming throughout the state and will likely not go away anytime soon after all our rains and flooding," said Dr. Mike Merchant, AgriLife Extension urban entomologist in Dallas. "Not all of the mosquitoes swarming us right now are likely to carry disease, but West Nile virus-infected mosquitoes are beginning to show up in traps."

Humans are not the only ones to suffer from mosquito-borne diseases, AgriLife Extension experts noted. Mosquitoes can also be vectors for dog heartworms. An infected mosquito can pass tiny heartworm parasites on to any uninfected dog it bites. Heartworm causes lasting damage to heart, lungs and arteries, and can affect the dog's quality and length of life. In addition, horses are susceptible to several encephalitis diseases, including West Nile virus,

and should be vaccinated every year.

To control mosquitoes effectively and economically, is to understand their basic life cycle and be familiar with the important mosquito types. Mosquitoes can be divided into two groups based on where they lay their eggs. For example, floodwater mosquitoes lay eggs on the ground in low spots, and these eggs hatch when it rains and the low area fills with water.

With the unusually high May rainfall, these mosquitoes are common now and likely to remain so during the duration of the rain. Floodwater mosquitoes are good fliers and can travel many miles from their breeding sites in temporary pools, roadsides and low-lying areas. There is little people can do on their own property to protect themselves from floodwater mosquitoes, other than stay indoors or wear repellent.

We have more control over other mosquitoes that breed in containers and live closer to town. Container breeding mosquitoes include some of the

most significant species that may negatively affect human health, including the common house mosquito. The entomologists referred to what they called “the four D’s” as a general means for people to help manage mosquitoes and protect against bites. These are:

- **Dusk/Dawn** – Avoid being outside when mosquitoes are searching for a blood meal, which is usually in the early morning hours and just before the sun goes down. While some species are daytime biters, most prefer to feed at dusk and dawn.

- **Drain** – Empty standing water from “containers” around your home and work areas, such as buckets, wheelbarrows, kiddie pools, toys, dog bowls, water troughs, tires, bottles, etc. Make improvements that allow standing water to run off following rains.

- **Dress** – If out during mosquito feeding hours, wear long sleeves and pants in plain colors. Avoid attracting them by wearing excessive amounts of perfume or aftershave.

- **Defend** – Any time you go outside for an extended period of time, wear an insect repellent. There are also techniques that can help control larval stage of mosquitoes in water. Mosquito dunks containing insect growth regulators or Bti, the mosquito larva’s bacterial natural enemy, can be used in water that cannot be dumped or drained to reduce

mosquito populations.

Products that apply a surface film or oil on the water can also be used to reduce larval mosquito and pupal populations by preventing them from getting air through their breathing tubes. The use of films or oils should be limited to locations without any other organisms, since it will prevent oxygen to the non-target organisms as well.

The entomologists agreed that repellents with DEET remain the gold standard for protection. DEET has some of the best persistence. However, there are good alternatives to DEET if you aren’t going to be outside very long. The natural repellent, oil of lemon eucalyptus, is a good alternative to DEET for those who prefer an organic product. The most important thing is to find a repellent that works for you and to use it.

Dr. Merchant periodically posts news updates on mosquito activity on his City Bugs website, <http://citybugs.tamu.edu>. He also has developed four short videos on different aspects of mosquito control that can be found at <http://bit.ly/1F8cZkg>.

For more information about where mosquitoes can breed, and how to identify Aedes and other mosquitoes, go to AgriLife Extension’s Mosquito Safari website, <http://mosquitosafari.tamu.edu>.

Harvest Day in the Children's Garden at South Athens Elementary

by
Bill & Marie Hancock

Harvest Day at the children's garden is always a happy day. This year 213 children in first, second, or third grade pulled up a potato plant, found all of the potatoes on their plant and in the ground around their plant, and placed them in a bag. They then went to the scale to find out how many pounds of potatoes their plant produced. Each child then got to take their potatoes home for their parents to help prepare them to eat. They were all smiles when we told them they were taking their potatoes home. We all learned that the many wet, cloudy days after planting the potatoes in February affected the size of the harvest. We only harvested 107 pounds of potatoes this year compared to 283 pounds last year.

The children in a pre-k class and three kindergarten classes watched an adult harvest a few potato plants and then each child got to plant a corn kernel. Hopefully the plants will grow during the summer and be ready for the children to harvest corn at the beginning of the school year in August.



New farmers in Henderson County!



The children left the garden in good shape this year. They weeded and covered the garden with mulch after planting the tomato and pepper plants and the green bean and corn seeds. The Master Gardeners and friends will go once or twice a week to maintain the vegetable, container, and butterfly gardens. We will harvest the vegetables and take them to the Food Pantry throughout the summer.

As we work in the garden this summer, we look forward to the fall to be able to share the garden with the children from pre-k thru the fifth grade because of the changes grade and school alignments within the school district.

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