

# the Inside Dirt

Henderson County Master Gardener Association



## President's Message

Ten HCMGA members travelled to Belton, Texas April 16-18. At the Awards Banquet, the HCMGA was awarded the following state awards for Medium-sized associations:

2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Search for Excellence (SFE) Award for Written Education: Weekly Gardening articles for the Chandler-Brownsboro Statesman

2<sup>nd</sup> Place: SFE Award for Education Program: Vegetable Workshop

1<sup>st</sup> Place: Outstanding Individual Master Gardener: Marie Hancock

1<sup>st</sup> Place: Outstanding Master Gardener Association

I would like to thank all the HCMGA members for the 6,492 volunteer hours

reported for 2014. Our awards would not have been possible without each of you contributing in whatever way you could to make our goal of educating the citizens of Henderson County about best horticultural practices for our area of Texas. Marie Hancock was truly an inspiration in her dedication to HCMGA. Lydia Holley, who wrote most of the articles for the newspaper, richly deserves thanks for her part in making sure articles were timely and of interest to citizens in the county. The Athens Daily Review has requested that Lydia submit her articles to them as well. What an endorsement for her great work.

In addition, a special thank you goes to the individuals who wrote the applications and the Master Gardeners who proofed and edited those applications.

## 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:

**May 20, 2015**

**June 17, 2015**

## OFFICERS

President:	Judy Haldeman
Vice President of Program & Administration:	Sherry Bitz
Vice President of Member & Community Education:	Cherie Tanneberger
Secretary:	Marylee Haldeman
Treasurer:	LaTrecia Jeffcott
Historian:	Bob Erickson
Advisor:	Rick Hirsch Texas AgriLife Extension Service Agent

### Summer Series Programs

**June 25, 2015:** 6:00 pm, East Texas Arboretum, Athens - Summer in the Garden: Dream of Blossoms, Butterflies and Bees

**July** (Date, time and location TBD): Preparing for the Fall Vegetable Garden

**August 1, 2015:** 10:00 am, Athens (location TBD) - The Herb Ladies are coming! Ellis County Master Gardeners, Susan Clark and Arlene Hamilton, will present the Foods and Flavors of the Mediterranean. The herbs that thrive in southern Europe are the same herbs that are well suited to the soils and climate of our local area. Taste and experience the herbs and wonderful vegetables that also love the Texas heat.

### Committee Chairs:

Newsletter/Editor:	Yvonne Sparks
Volunteer Coordinator:	Marie Hancock
Publicity:	Lydia Holley
Membership:	Nancy Martin
Nominating:	Robyn Stack
Audit:	Linda Schafer
By-Laws:	Sherry Bitz
Intern Coordinator:	Yvonne Sparks
Dream Garden:	Margaret Dansby Linda Benton
Children's Garden:	Marie Hancock Bill Hancock
Newspaper:	Lydia Holley
Website:	Wayne Stafford
Plant Sale:	Jean Brewton
Member's Hours:	Margaret Rands
Hospitality:	Karla Odom

# Summer in the Garden: Dream of Blossoms, Butterflies and Bees

By  
Cherie Tannebegers

Henderson County Master Gardeners invite you to their Dream Garden on Thursday, June 25, at 6:00 p.m. at the East Texas Arboretum, 1601 Patterson Rd. Athens, TX 75751 (Hwy 175 inside Loop 7). Free and open to the public. Door prizes.

Explore the abundance of Texas native plants, perennials and adapted plants as well as talk to butterfly, bee and composting experts:

- **Summer Color:** Master Gardeners Linda Benton, Margaret Dansby and others will be in the garden to identify the many plants that grow best in the summer heat of east Texas. Learn when to plant, what to plant and where to plant for summer color.



- **Want Butterflies in Your Garden?:** Wayne Stafford, a Master Gardener and local butterfly expert, will show you the best nectar and host plants to attract butterflies to your garden.
- **Bees in Your Backyard:** East Texas Beekeeper Association members, Sheri and Willy Robson, will be at the Arboretum beehive to talk about the importance of bees in the garden as well identify the

most suitable bee forage plants for our area. See bees at work in the demonstration beehive.

- **Composting Made Easy:** Master Gardener and home composter, Bob Erickson, will be at the Dream Garden compost area to describe the fundamentals of composting. Learn how to use weeds from one season to nourish your garden in the next season.



The Henderson County Master Gardener Dream Garden began as a trial garden for "EarthKind Roses". At the end of the test it was converted into a "Texas Cottage Garden." The garden changes as the seasons change. The rainy spring weather has produced an abundance and variety of TX natives, perennials and adapted plants throughout the garden. Bees and butterflies love the colorful nectar flowers. Come to visit, enjoy and learn. The Dream Garden - **D**emonstrate, **R**esearch, **E**ducate, **A**pply, **M**aintain - offers you the best of summer gardening in east Texas.

More info: 903-675-6130 or email [hendersonCMGA@gmail.com](mailto:hendersonCMGA@gmail.com).

# Sustainable Garden for a Green Life

by Yvonne Sparks

It's hard being green and no one knows that more than Kermit the Frog. He loves being green. That's why he makes no bones about it and that is why so many people love Kermit. If all gardeners thought about "green" as much as Kermit does, our environment would make a drastic improvement.

A main component of being green is sustainability. This concept in our landscapes embrace landscapes that support good environmental practices and conservation of our natural resources. Other terms that are often interchangeable with sustainability are *xeriscape*, *native landscaping* and *environmentally friendly landscape*. The drought conditions in Texas in the past 5 years have given gardeners an opportunity to rethink the way they view landscaping. Many communities and gardeners think that to incorporate sustainable gardens into our home landscaping plans means it is not very attractive.



Sustainability in the garden is resilient and flexible where beauty and function coexist in an eco-friendly environment. The following tips were recently published in the [Dallas Morning News](#) and provide a way for gardeners to incorporate into their gardens:



- **Water more effectively.** Oscillating sprinklers lose substantial amounts of water to evaporation. When designing an irrigation plan for your lawn and garden, use drip irrigation or soaker hoses to conserve water. When using sprinklers, monitor where and how they are distributing the spray. Keep the spray away from sidewalks, driveways and streets. In addition, keep the spray low to minimize the effects of wind and thus increasing evaporation before it reaches the plants or lawn. A sustainable garden can conserve water and prevent pollution.
- **Mulch flower and plant beds.** Mulch is best known for helping flower and plant bed retain moisture, but mulch also prevents the growth of weeds. Preventing weed growth means your water is going to plants and flowers and not to greedy and unsightly weeds. Eliminating weeds reduces your use of potentially harmful pesticides to curtail the growth of weeds.

- **Develop a compost pile.** Gardeners can make their own compost piles at home, providing valuable minerals and nutrients for their lawn and flower beds without having to rely on store-bought amendments.
- **Plant native plants.** Choose native plants that are fully capable of thriving in your local climate. Non-native plants are likely to need excessive watering and other less sustainable attention that native plants do not need. The right plant in a home garden can attract wildlife and reduce the energy use of a home.
- **Plant with a plan.** Plant trees around your property in locations that can reduce your reliance on air conditioning in warmer months. Trees that are planted in a place where it will help shade a common areas inside your home so rooms are comfortable without air conditioning all day long. Consider planting deciduous trees that will shed their leaves when the weather gets cold ensuring that sunlight you want to keep out in the summer can get in and warm up the house in the winter, reducing the amount of energy needed to heat your home.
- **Create permeable surfaces that allow water to penetrate into the soil.** Design a patio using brick pavers set into sod rather than solid concrete pad. Permeable surfaces reduce water runoff.
- **Reduce the size of the lawn area gradually by expanding planting beds.** By doing this gradually, the home owner will reduce the time, money and water needed to maintain the grass. This will cut down on your carbon footprint.
- **Maintain the landscape by being proactive.** Remove weeds that compete for water and nutrients. Prune broken and dead branches as they harbor plant pests and diseases.
- **Enjoy your landscape.** In many cases, this is the only exposure to the outdoors we have on a regular basis.

Sustainable gardening requires planning and dedication. The long-term impact it has will benefit generations to come as well as provide health benefits to the gardener while providing activity and pleasure for a lifetime.



The Texas A&M AgriLife website lists these additional tips for sustainability in your garden:

- **Improve the health of the soil.** Healthy soil, containing lots of organic matter in the form of compost, allows soil to more efficient in absorbing and retaining water. Due to its sponge-like quality, organic-rich soil is able to hold a lot of water and then release it slowly.

Websites with helpful ideas about becoming a sustainable gardener:

1. [www.proudgreenhome.com](http://www.proudgreenhome.com)
2. [www.hgtv.com](http://www.hgtv.com)



## *Bees in our Gardens and Fields* by *Judy Haldeman*



At the Texas Master Gardener Association State Convention attendees had the opportunity to hear nine different presentations over the course of two days. One of those presenters was Clint Walker, III, who spoke on “Would You Want to Live Here?” Mr. Walker’s family has been involved in bee keeping since 1930. For three generations the Walker family has been involved in commercial bee pollination—from Texas to Colorado to California. Because of the devastating effects of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) the Walker family gave up pollination contracts in 2014 and concentrated solely on honey produced by their 196 bee colonies.

According to the USDA’s Agriculture Research Service, in October 2006 beekeepers started reporting losses of 30%-90% of their hives. The term given to the problem was Colony Collapse Disorder. The main symptom of CCD is very low or no adult honey bees present in the hive. Usually there are no dead honey bees present in the hive itself. The hives, however, do have a live queen and frequently a specific type of virus-transmitting parasite, called Varroa mite, has been found in those hives. The Varroa mite is a blood-sucking parasite that weakens bees and brings diseases into the hive.

Mr. Walker and many beekeepers think a pesticide class called neonicotinoids are responsible for CCD. The neonicotinoids belong to a group of pesticides known as systemic. Systemic pesticides make a plant toxic from the inside out. Some seeds are treated with pesticides before they are planted. As the plant grows, the poison grows with it, killing insects that feed on the plant. Their thought is that when neonicotinoids are also used on plants that bees do pollinate, it renders the honey bees “forgetful” so that they are uninterested in foraging or mating. Another idea is that the neurotoxins affect the immune system of the

bees and make them more susceptible to disease.

Whether or not CCD is caused by neonicotinoids is still being studied by scientists. However all agree that the honey bees are in crisis. The total number of managed honey bee colonies has decreased from close to 6 million in the 1940s to only about 1.8 million today. At the same time, the call for hives to provide pollination services has continued to increase. This means honey bee colonies are being transported over longer distances than ever before, putting stress on the bees. Some scientists think the additional stress on the bees makes them more prone to disease. As a result many bee keepers are thinking about retiring or quitting. This becomes an additional concern since bee pollination is responsible for more than \$15 billion in increased crop value each year. About one mouthful in three in our diet directly or indirectly benefits from honey bee pollination. Commercial production of many specialty crops like almonds and other tree nuts, berries, fruits and vegetables depend on pollination by honey bees. These are the foods that give our diet diversity, flavor, and nutrition.

According to Mr. Walker, the individual gardener has a part to play in bee survival. He believes that all pollinators, not just bees, are under threat. His suggestions are:

1. Plant pollinator zones or gardens.
2. Use only selective pesticides and reduce pesticide use whenever possible.
3. Support diverse habitats.
4. Own and manage honey bees with at least three hives.
5. Buy local honey.

Until scientists have a definitive answer to why CCD happens and a plan to address a solution, we, as gardeners, have a part to play in keeping the honey bees and other pollinators safe in our yards.



*Rick Hirsch*

**Texas Agrilife Extension Agent**

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

## **MANAGING INSECT AND MITE PESTS IN VEGETABLE GARDENS**

Vegetable gardening is an enjoyable pastime. The result of your labors is fresh, home grown produce. Frequently, growing your own vegetables is even less expensive than buying not-so-fresh produce from the market.

However, producing your own vegetables can be challenging. One of the greatest challenges is to successfully control insect pests. Fortunately, there are numerous management alternatives that vegetable gardeners may consider when dealing with insects and other pests. These include cultural, biological and management controls and, last but not least, chemical controls.

There are approximately 30,000 insect species in Texas. Fortunately, fewer than 100 species are routine pests in vegetable gardens. Most insects found in gardens are either incidental or beneficial, contributing to pollination, the balance of nature or recycling of organic matter. A garden with an abundant supply of insects actually may be quite healthy and productive. However, insect pests can reduce the quantity or quality of the vegetables produced and may transmit plant diseases. Consider using control measures when insects threaten the

garden.

Identify the insects in your garden to determine if they are beneficial, incidental or pests. Learn to recognize the pests, and learn to recognize the type of damage associated with pests.

Insect pests can enter vegetable gardens by walking or flying. Flight allows many insects to have great mobility and their movement in large numbers is possible. Also, certain pests, like aphids and mites, reproduce about once a week under good conditions and their populations can increase rapidly. When pests seem to appear in large numbers almost overnight, they have either moved in or are rapidly reproducing.

As insects grow, they change in size and shape. This process is called metamorphosis. Some insects damage plants in both the immature and adult stages. Because insects change, they may be difficult to identify and the type of damage they cause also may change. Young caterpillars may barely scrape the surface of a leaf when feeding, while the same caterpillar may eat great chunks of leaves when mature.

An insect's mouthparts can be a key to understanding the type of damage caused by

a pest. Insects with sucking mouthparts feed by piercing leaves or fruit. Damage appears as pock marks or mottled leaves. Insects with chewing mouthparts chew holes in plants. If you can recognize the type of feeding, you can select the proper insecticides.

When planting a vegetable garden, anticipate the pests that may occur during the year. Consider all management practices that will help deal with the pests before they become problems. Then, develop a management plan and put it into use before problems occur. Use your past experience as a guide in anticipating pests for the upcoming season.

Integrated pest management, IPM is a philosophy of managing pests using multiple control techniques. IPM balances the goals of economic production and environmental stewardship when implementing control practices. IPM is the overriding strategy for most of production agriculture today and is rapidly being adopted in home gardening as well.

Monitoring or scouting plants for the presence and abundance of pests is an important part of IPM. Most IPM programs reserve the use of insecticides for situations when the pest is present in large numbers and the cost of return on the investment in control practices can be justified.

Many specific insect control practices can be implemented as part of an IPM program; generally the use of insecticides is included as a control option. When alternative control practices are substituted for insecticides, the IPM approach is similar to organic gardening.

Happy Gardening!

## ***Hard Work Makes Plant Sale a Success!***

On April 25, 2015, the Henderson County Master Gardeners held their annual plant sale at the Henderson County Senior Citizens Center. A large variety of plants were available from a lemon tree, a walking iris, a yellow flowering sedum, tomato plants, and herbs and fennel. An unusual plant that we provided was called *Triangularis*.

Thirty-two Master Gardeners were on hand to provide assistance and information about the plants at the sale. The plants were primarily raised and/or propagated by Henderson County Master Gardeners. Many returning customers expressed their desire to purchase more plants from Master Gardeners because plants purchased in previous years had done so well.

The plant sale was a success and plans about how to increase and improve the plant sale next year are underway. A special "thank you" goes out to everyone who visited and purchased plants. Proceeds from the plant sale are used to provide free educational workshops and presentations throughout the year. The annual Summer Series presentation of three separate workshops will begin on June 25th at the East Texas Arboretum in Athens, TX.



## Around Henderson County this Spring!

Springtime in  
the  
Children's Garden  
by  
Bill & Marie Hancock

children had fun one Thursday moving the mulch to the garden. The mulch will help control the weeds, keep the soil cool during the hot summer, conserve the moisture in the ground, and decompose to enrich the soil.

We are very fortunate to have Janelle Cole and two of her four children, Jacob and Peter, helping us in the children's garden this year. Jacob is learning to be a beekeeper with his dad. They have several hives on their farm in Malakoff. Jacob, with the assistance of his brother and mom, taught the children on two consecutive Thursday all about the bees, their jobs in the hives and how they help our gardens. To make it more interesting for the children he brought his tools, clothing, and an empty bee box. The Queen Bee from the East Texas Beekeepers Association will come this week to continue talking about bees and will bring a demonstration hive for the children to see. We are all looking forward to that presentation.

The flowers in the containers and the butterfly garden are producing their beautiful spring colors. They make each Thursday a colorful new adventure for the children.

The cool, wet spring continues to limit our work in the garden. It took the potatoes about a week longer to sprout but are now growing well. The children are helping to look for and eliminate the potato beetles and their bright orange eggs on the underside of the leaves. The onions are standing straight and tall. One class planted some beans that are looking good. Our broccoli, cabbage and kale are bolting and attracting the bees. We will continue to watch them to see how the plants produce their seeds. Shortly we will be planting 36 tomato plants and 36 pepper plants donated by Jeanne Brown of Holder Hill Farm.

Wright Tree Service donated a big load of mulch. The

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