

the Inside Dirt

Henderson County Master Gardener Association



President's Message

The decline in bee populations, both native and domesticated, along with the decline of other pollinators is a subject that has been discussed often in the last several years. In June of last year, President Obama released a Presidential Memorandum creating a Pollinator Task Force to promote the health of honey bees and other pollinators. Regardless of one's political persuasion, as Master Gardeners we should be interested in any program that is designed to help save this important part of our natural world. As I wrote in an earlier article, honey bee pollination alone adds more than \$15 billion in value to agricultural crops each year in the United States. In May

of the year the task force released its report*.



As a part of that report, the US Department of Transportation and US Fish and Wildlife Service will help rehabilitate butterfly habitats along Interstate 35 from Duluth, Minnesota to the Texas-Mexico border.

Here, in Texas, we have enjoyed the results of Lady Bird Johnson's efforts to have our

highway right-of-ways seeded with wild flowers. The federal program will help agencies coordinate similar efforts to rehabilitate prairie vegetation and provide spring and summer breeding habitats along the “flyway”. The Fish and Wildlife Service has allocated \$3.2 million specifically for Monarch conservation and will prioritize projects near the corridor. What helps the monarchs will surely help other pollinators as well.

The Federal government controls or owns more than 41 million acres of land. Of the 429,000 “building assets”, the task force has guidelines for transitioning to more native landscaping. The Department of Interior and the US Department of Agriculture will lead the efforts to establish a reserve of native seed mixes to use on post-fire rehabilitation and restoration activities. Creation of a native seed strategy and reserve will build on the “Native Plant Materials Development Program” passed by Congress in 2001. That program involved having the Bureau of Land Management and the US Forest Service establish a stable and economic supply of appropriate native plant materials.

Of the five broad categories of the Task Force goal of increasing and improving pollinator habitats, two involve native landscaping and seed

saving. The Henderson County Master Gardener program has long focused on many of those issues. We have members who have given talks on native plants, butterflies, composting, etc. As we move into fall with our annual plant and seed exchange, I hope you will begin now saving seeds to pass along. Each of us has a role to play in insuring our pollinators find a friendly spot in our own gardens. And, we can continue our efforts to grow plants for our annual plant sale.

*For those interested in reading the 64 page Task Report results, it can be found at whitehouse.gov

HCMGs at the East Texas Arboretum Fall Festival

"Save the Date" of Saturday, October 10, to visit with MGs and see the Fall color in our Texas cottage garden. MGs will share fall gardening tips and answer your questions at the East Texas Arboretum Fall Festival in Athens, Sat, Oct 10, 9 am - 3 pm. Rain or shine.

Watch your email for additional program details. Want other Master Gardener info? Call [903-675-6130](tel:903-675-6130) or email hendersoncmga@gmail.com.

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:

September 16, 2015

October 21, 2015

November 18, 2015

December 10, 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

Master Gardener Meeting Programs

September 16, 2015: Jean Brewton, "Fall Plant Propagation" and Seed Exchange

October 21, 2015: Tour of Karla's Garden & Annual Plant Swap

November 18, 2015: Lydia Holley, "Planning for Winter Garden Beauty"

December 10, 2015: Holiday Party and Year End Celebration

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

Garden Workers with Eight Legs

By Marylee Haldeman

There are many names for these beautiful spiders: Black-and-Yellow Argiope is their proper name, yellow garden spider, golden garden spider, orb-weaver and the writing spider just to name a few. Tiny and fragile they are very difficult to see when first emerging from the egg sacs which may contain 400 to 1,400 spiderlings. Once they establish a web and begin to snare food, they grow rather quickly with some reaching the size of a woman's thumb. They are busy, beneficial predators eating mosquitoes, June bugs, butterflies, moths, wasps, bees, caterpillars, etc. They seem to be somewhat inactive at night while early in the morning they repair their webs and assume the central position on the back side of the web.



Two years ago I had a female that deposited two egg sacs on the ceiling of my front porch the previous Fall. In late Spring when the days were warm and the nights were no longer cold, they gradually emerged and clung to the warm bricks, moving very little.

After reading about them on several websites I discovered the large yellow and black ones with the long black legs are the females. They live

about a year, and produce one to several egg sacs before dying. The males are extremely small with similar markings, but are a reddish brown with similar brown legs. When the females are ready for breeding, the males show up in their web, produce a long string-like line in her web and strum it to get her attention. So, if you see a garden spider with a zig-zag web center with a solid string-like feature nearby, you'll know that a male has come "courting".

Garden spiders are not aggressive but will bite if harassed. Their venom is not considered poisonous, but is compared to a bee or wasp sting although not as toxic or painful. The men that occasionally do yard work for me have been duly introduced to both of my garden spiders and told to stay away from them and to do nothing to hurt their webs. It did not take a lot of convincing.

So enjoy your yellow garden spiders; they are here to help us!

Summer Workshop Series Wrap-up

by
Cherie Tanneberger

The 2015 HCMG Summer Series has come to an end. Total attendance at our three programs was close to 300 and included visitors from Henderson and surrounding counties, several Master Gardener groups and local garden clubs.

Many Henderson County Master Gardeners and 2015 Interns worked an incredible number of volunteer hours to plan, prepare and execute each program and then shared their horticulture knowledge at each event.

We believe our programs were successful as most of our attendees completed program surveys that contained both high praise and thoughtful suggestions which will guide us in future program planning.

Summer Series #1 began with a casual tour and exploration of the abundance of Texas native plants, perennials and adapted plants in the HCMG Dream Garden located in the East Texas Arboretum. Other information stations highlighted beekeeping, composting and butterfly/beneficial insects.

HCMGs Linda Benton and Margaret Dansby are the Dream Garden guiding lights who are in the garden every Monday morning working with HCMGs and Interns to plant, divide, propagate, weed and water. Attendees received horticulture information at the HCMG booth. East Texas Beekeepers Assoc. members Sheri Robson, Willy Robson, Janelle Cole and sons Peter and Jacob, were on hand to discuss the value of bees to our gardens and gave tours of the Arboretum demonstration hive.



HCMG Bob Erickson made composting easy for a crowd of interested visitors. HCMG Wayne Stafford had a “string” presentation of his beautiful photos of butterflies and beneficial insects. His was a very popular stop on the garden tour.



Summer Series #2 focused on preparing for the fall vegetable garden. We were privileged to have **Dr. Joe Masabni, Texas A&M Extension Vegetable Specialist**, as our primary program presenter. He provided tips and great handouts on selecting the most productive East Texas fall vegetable varieties; soil preparation; weed/insect control in cool weather; and, harvesting guidelines.

We also had local farmers providing specialized information on organic and



raised bed gardening (Mike Mugavero, Athens Organic); unique heirloom vegetable & herb varieties (Barbara Gosnell, Gopher Knoll Farm); family farming and growing vegetables organically (Jennifer Chandler, Chandler Family Farm). HCMG 2015 Intern, Ted Haldeman, and HCMG Bob Erickson manned the soil testing/composting info tables. HCMG Susan Stokes provided informative handouts on starting vegetables from seed and had a demonstration table showing how seeds grow in various soil mediums.

Summer Series #3 was our most popular and well attended program. Ellis County Master Gardeners, Susan Clark and Arlene Hamilton, provided a lively presentation on growing and

using herbs.

Attendees learned which herbs grow best in East Texas as well as how to mix up a variety of



herbal blends to enhance our favorite recipes. We also received their best tips for harvesting, roasting, drying and preparing a variety of vegetables and herbs. HCMGs worked tirelessly throughout the program to plate the variety of finger foods provided by the speakers. Handouts of recipes were shared by Susan and Arlene. Several HCMGs prepared the rosemary shortbread savory cookies that were a part of the tasting. Door prizes were donated by HCMGs and a local nursery, Cedar Creek Plants.



We appreciate all who volunteered for and attended the 2015 Summer Series programs. If you want to talk to Henderson County Master Gardeners at your local community fair or festival, email your request to hendersoncmga@gmail.com



Harvesting Seeds from Your Garden

by Yvonne Sparks

The process of saving seeds for future harvest is a process that has been done for over ten thousand years. The seed saving practice has been especially crucial in recent years while many plants have become endangered. In the last century, 94% of seed varieties have been lost.

Every year, the Henderson County Master Gardeners, have a seed exchange among its members. Read further to learn all about how to save seeds. Initially, gardeners need to know the types of plants and seeds planted in the garden.

Hybrid Seeds –

Hybrid Seeds are bred to be different than their original plant. Maybe they grow bigger or produce more or are more disease resistant. Hybrid seeds cannot be saved since they are different from the original plant.

Organic Seeds –

Organic Seeds are produced without the use of chemicals and toxic fertilizers. They can be hybrid or heirloom but they cannot be genetically modified. If you have heirloom organic seeds you can save them.

Heirloom Seeds –

Heirloom Seeds are seeds that come from plants that have been around for a long time. They are not modified in any way from the original plant. This means you are able to save these seeds because they will grow into the parent plants.

Heirloom Seeds can be harvested from plants and saved until next years planting so new seeds do not have to be purchased. Here are some general tips to successfully harvest seeds:

- ¥ After harvesting, allow the seeds to dry for a few more days. The larger the seed, the longer the drying period. It is a good rule of thumb to let harvested seeds dry for at least a few more days after being removed from the plant.
- ¥ Spread seeds on plates, screens, wax paper, or newspaper in a breezy place for a few days. They should be rotated and spread out during that time.
- ¥ You may dry the seeds in a sun-exposed room, in a non-humid greenhouse or in the sun outside if they are covered or brought in at night to expedite drying.
- ¥ Another equally good drying method is to let the seed heads or stalks dry in open paper bags for one or two weeks; the drying process can be hastened by spreading the seed in a sun-exposed room.
- ¥ Seed should always be stored in cool, dry conditions.
- ¥ Temperatures below freezing will not harm seeds if they have been adequately dried. You may also store them in the freezer to prolong their lives.
- ¥ Sealing most seeds from air, except for beans and peas, which need air circulation, also prolongs the life of the seed.
- ¥ Store seeds in airtight tins, glass jars or plastic containers that can be closed to make them moisture proof.
- ¥ Most sound vegetable seeds, if stored properly, will remain viable for many years, with the exception of short-lived onion, leek, corn and parsnip seed.

Go to the following websites for additional information about specific kinds of seeds:

www.littlehouseliving.com

info@seedsanctuary.com

www.seedalliance.org

www.growrealfood.com



SEPTEMBER 24TH

6:00PM

FALL SEMINAR

Chris and Michelle McNeill own and operate Tanglewood Creek Family Farm in Bonham, Texas - a Certified Naturally Grown farm where they grow nine varieties of gourmet garlic as well as culinary herbs, make a variety of organic skin and haircare products, herbal jellies, herbal vinegars, and herbal teas.

They will cover topics including how to grow garlic in Texas, what varieties grow best in Texas, when to harvest garlic, how to store garlic, where and when to purchase seed garlic, as well as the culinary and medicinal benefits of garlic. In addition, they will briefly discuss their other herbals products and how the many ways that they use herbs on their farm.

East Texas Arboretum

1601 Patterson
Road
Athens, TX

HAVE YOU
CONSIDERED
GROWING
ORGANICS?

HENDERSON
COUNTY
MASTER
GARDNERS

hendersoncmga@gmail.com



Rick Hirsch

Henderson County Agricultural Extension Agent

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

Fall is getting closer. The weather will hopefully be getting cooler and wetter and gardeners will slowly be migrating back outdoors after the heat this summer. Now is a perfect time to plan the addition of a new tree or a grouping of shrubs to the landscape. Or perhaps you have an area in the landscape that needs 'remodeling' or rejuvenating. The fall may be the best season to plant, surpassing even the spring.

Many people prefer January through March for planting, but the fall months of September through December have distinct advantages. Fall planting follows the heat of summer, before a cool winter season, and trees and shrubs planted in the fall use this to good advantage. Plant roots grow anytime the soil temperature is 40 degrees or higher, which may occur all winter in Texas. During the winter months, the roots systems of the fall-planted specimens develop and become established. When spring arrives, this expanded root system can support and take advantage of the full surge of spring growth.

Fall is the optimum time to plant balled and burlapped trees and shrubs. Balled and burlapped plants have ample time to recover from transplanting and proliferate roots before spring growth begins. Remember, however, all bare root plants, including roses and pecan and fruit trees, should be planted in late winter when they are completely dormant.

When buying plants for your landscape, be sure to get healthy, well-grown plants. Always buy from a reputable dealer. Those in

the plant-selling business year-round depend on repeat customers, and only by selling customers quality plants can there be assurance of future business. Beware of plant bargains. They can easily turn out to be real headaches. A bargain is no good if it dies. The price tag, especially the cheapest one, is not the best guide to quality.

All plants have growing requirements. Think about the plant's needs before you invest. Is it adapted to your area's soil? Will it grow in sun or shade? Does it need a wet or dry location? Is it cold hardy? Some nurseries have this type of information on tags beside the plant. If not, ask a nursery professional or the county Extension agent.

'Plan before you plant' is always a good rule of thumb. Whether you are planting a single plant or an entire landscape, plan first, then plant. Good planning is a worthwhile investment of time that will pay off in greater enjoyment of attractive and useful home grounds, and in increasing the value of your home. It's much easier to move plants on paper than to dig them after planting in the wrong place. A plan saves many planting mistakes.

Every plant in the landscape should serve a purpose. Ask yourself if you want a plant for screening, for privacy or for shade. How large will it be five years from now? Plants, like people, grow up. Remember, that a small one-gallon size plant will look entirely different after a few years of growth in your landscape.

August Blooms in the Dream Garden

by

Cherie Tanneberger

It's August in Texas and it's hot, but there's much to see in the HCMG Dream Garden which is located in the East Texas Arboretum. Looking across the garden toward the historic Wofford House you can see the abundance of flowering plants including: butterfly weed, several varieties of yucca, red sage, dusty miller, pink and purple verbena, desert willow, tree morning glory, and orange canna, just to name a few. A birdbath is ready for all birds, butterflies, bees and other beneficial insects that need ready access to water at this time of year. The recent rains have brought up the first bluebonnet leaves which grow in a distinctive star shape of 5 green leaves; the small, red oxblood lilies (also known as school house lilies); a late season bloom of pale pink crinums; and, the early green berries of the Savanna Holley which will turn bright red as colder weather arrives.



Numerous bumble bees are enjoying the pale orange crossvine flowers, vivid blue salvias and brilliant orange/yellow butterfly weed blooms as well as the pink and purple verbena. The orange and yellow cannas are growing tall and are heavy with flowers as are the pink crepe myrtle. The bright orange cosmos love the hot weather as do the dark red zinnias. The yellow candlestick plant is growing tall and its distinctive, brilliant yellow blooms will arrive in a few weeks, just in time for the HCMG booth at the East Texas Arboretum Fall Festival on October 10. We hope you will join us there as we enjoy the wonderful fall color show that comes to our Dream Garden as the weather cools. Every season brings wonderful things to see and enjoy in the Dream Garden.

Back to School in the Children's Garden at South Athens Elementary

by
Bill & Marie Hancock

We had 235 Pre K through fifth graders and thirteen teachers come to their garden this morning. A handful of Master Gardeners and friends have been maintaining the garden every Thursday this summer so it was nice to have the children back in the garden today.

All age groups were attentive to what Peter Cole had to share with them about the parts of plants and the plant parts we eat. They sampled some pickled peppers that Janelle Cole had prepared from peppers harvested in the garden this summer. Susan Stokes planted five different varieties of radishes about a month ago. The children also got to sample radishes.

After dividing the classes into small groups we took walks through the three gardens - vegetable garden, butterfly garden, and container garden. Many of the children are new to South this year so we wanted to show them all around and show them what was growing left over from the spring garden. We noticed some of the little ones were wanting to cry because they missed their mothers but once they started walking



in the garden among the corn, tomato, pepper, cabbage, Swiss chard, kale, and pumpkin plants they forgot all about crying. The pre k and kindergartners who had planted the kernels of corn on May 27th were amazed at the size of the corn plants and all loved walking through the rows of tall plants.

Today half of the students at South came to their garden. Next Thursday the other half of the students will come. This is the first year all the children in the school will be able to learn and work in the garden. We are very excited about this and look forward to meeting all of the teachers and students at South in their garden on Thursdays.



INSIDE DIRT this month:

Master Gardener Meeting Programs	Page 3
Garden Workers with Eight Legs	Page 4
Summer Workshop Series Wrap-up	Page 5
Harvesting Seeds from your Garden	Page 7
HCMG Intern Fall Seminar	Page 8
Report from Rick Hirsch, Texas AgriLife Extension Agent	Page 9
August Blooms in the Dream Garden	Page 10
Back to School in the Children's Garden	Page 11

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