

# the Inside Dirt

Henderson County Master Gardener Association



## President's Message

Spring is a busy time for gardeners in Henderson County. In the midst of making plans for planting your vegetable gardens or improving your landscape design, be sure to set aside time for the 2015 Henderson County Master Gardener's (HCMG) Spring Conference. The conference is Thursday, March 19 and will be held at the First United Methodist Church in Athens. The doors open at 5:00PM for a Silent Auction. There will be many items on which to bid! The auction will be followed by dinner and our featured speaker, Skip Richter. His topic, "Smarter Gardening the Easy Way", should be helpful for all Henderson County residents. If you are interested in having a relaxing garden or nutritious backyard grocery, but life is too hectic, or you are unable physically to do the yard work you enjoyed in the past, this conference is for you.

Skip has been with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service for 24 years, serving in Montgomery, Travis and Harris counties, where he currently serves as a Texas AgriLife Extension Agent in Horticulture. He is an enthusiastic student and teacher of natural gardening



Only in Texas!

techniques. He helped develop the Extension's "Don't Bag It" yard waste recycling programs, the "Composting for Kids" educational web page, and the Grow Green environmental education program, which educated Austin residents on landscaping practices that protect water quality. This entertaining, dynamic speaker is also a contributing editor for Texas Gardener Magazine.

HCMG holds two fundraisers each year, the Spring Conference, March 19 and our Plant Sale, which, this year, will be Saturday, April 25. The Plant Sale will be held at the Athens Senior Citizens Center. The funds raised at these two events enable HCMG to hold various free horticulture programs throughout the year. In the past these programs have included our Summer Series of Workshops, a Vegetable Workshop, and various booth events during

## 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:

**March 11, 2015**

**April 15, 2015**

which visitors can get information about many different gardening topics. The funds raised also support our two projects in Athens. The Children's Garden at South Athens Elementary School allows preschool through third grade students to experience the wonders of growing and eating their own vegetables. They also learn the importance of giving back to the community by donating the harvested vegetables to the local food pantry. At the garden the students enjoy learning about flowers in the butterfly garden and the insects that call the garden home. This special program won First Place in the medium-sized association level last year at the Texas Master Gardener Association (TMGA) State Conference. The other project supported by our fundraising is the HCMG DREAM Garden which is a Texas cottage garden located on the grounds of the East Texas Arboretum. This garden gives visitors valuable information of the types of plants that thrive in our area of east Texas. This garden project was a prior honoree at the TMGA state level.

We hope to see you at many of our events this year.

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Henderson County Master Gardeners  
2015 Spring Conference  
March 19, 2015

First United  
Methodist Church  
225 Lover's Lane  
Athens, TX  
5:00 pm Doors Open

"Smarter  
Gardening  
the Easy  
Way"



Featuring  
Skip Richter

Radio/TV Gardening Expert  
Texas A&M YouTube Star  
"Texas Monthly Gardener"  
Columnist  
Noted gardening author

Tickets  
available for \$20  
from a Master  
Gardener or call  
AgriLife Office at  
903-675-6130



# What's Happening in the Dream Garden?

by

Margaret Dansby

I first read about the “Peggy Martin Rose” in the “Southern Living Magazine”. The story is that this old rose was one of two plants surviving in 20 feet of salt water in the garden of Peggy Martin after the destruction of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 in the Plaquemines Parish a few miles across the Mississippi River from New Orleans. (The other plant was a crinum) It was named Peggy Martin because of the place it was found and my research could not find the original name.

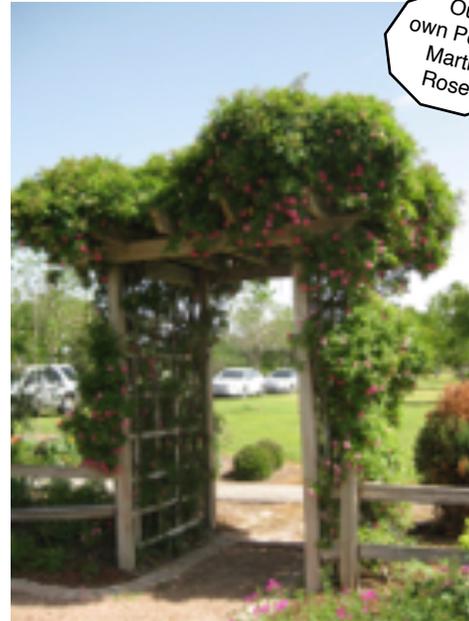
Dr. Bill Welch gathered cuttings and then shared cuttings of this rose with 6 growers. Each of these growers has pledged to donate \$1 per plant sold to assist in garden restoration projects in New Orleans.

The Peggy Martin rose, also known as the Hurricane Katrina Rose, is a vigorous climber that can easily reach 15 plus feet. It bears clusters of pink shaded flowers that occur from spring to fall and it is promoted as a thornless rose.

When I visited King’s Nursery in Tenaha, looking for special plants for our Master Gardener’s “Dream Garden”, I was again introduced enthusiastically by Aubrey King to this Peggy Martin Rose and its story.

Immediately, I recognized that this rose met 2 of my goals for our Dream Garden, beauty and fragrance. So a gullible lover of a good story and a beautiful plant, I brought this rose and its story.

We now have 2 Peggy Martin Roses growing on our front arbor to welcome each passing visitor with its flowing green vines, fragrance and the beauty of pink clusters of roses. Enjoy!



## Dream Garden Note:

There was an article in Country World reporting that there is an aggressive new ant called the “tawny crazy ant”. This ant came into the Houston area about 10 years ago and is causing great concern among Texas A&M AgriLife horticulturalists and needs to be reported if seen in our area.

The ant is a tropical in nature and is attracted to electrical circuits, much like fire ants. These ants like a lot of other ants, protect and tend aphids and other insects that produce honeydew that they eat. This can be damaging to homes as well as to all crops especially the pecan and citrus trees.



The way to recognize this ant is they don’t trail like other ants, but move in all kinds of directions and they have a defense against fire ant venom. Hopefully our colder winter will slow these persistent ants down.

# Fresh ideas for your Spring lawn and garden experience!

## Master Gardeners 2015 Community Programs Kick-Off

By Cherie L. Tanneberger

On Saturday, March 7, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., we invite you to talk to Henderson County Master Gardeners and get your gardening questions answered.

We will be in our information booth at the 10<sup>th</sup> Keep Athens Beautiful (KAB) Home and Garden Event to be held this year at the Henderson County Regional Fair Park Complex on Hwy. 31 East. Admission is free and open to the public from 9:00 a.m. until 4 p.m. This annual KAB event is an exciting and fun event for families including an activity area just for kids!

To celebrate the new event location and format, Master Gardeners are presenting a series of free programs throughout the day. Program attendees may register for door prizes. The program schedule and directions to the programs area are at the Master Gardener booth in the Senior Citizens Center building on the Fairground Complex.

### **Master Gardener Program Schedule:**

- 9:30 a.m. Simple Backyard Worm Farming  
Bill and Marie Hancock, Henderson County Master Gardeners
- 10:30 a.m. Soil Preparation is the Foundation of the Garden  
Barbara Gosnell, Owner of Gopher Knoll Farm
- 11:30 a.m. Proper Soil Testing  
Ted Haldeman, Henderson County Master Gardener 2015 Intern
- 12:30 p.m. Lawn Maintenance Tips  
Nick Rosenberg, Owner of Rosenberg's Outdoor Design, Athens
- 1:30 p.m. Square Foot Gardening Basics  
Veronica Geddie, Certified Square Foot Gardening Instructor  
Owner of Geddie's Feed and Seed, Athens
- 2:30 pm Take the Mystery Out of Growing From Seeds  
Bob Erickson, Henderson County Master Gardener

.....

Also new this year! The KAB organization is presenting lawn mower races! The Lone Star Mower Racing Association will produce a show that is fast, fun, and family friendly. Tickets for the lawn mower races event (10 am until 2 pm) are \$5 each. Ticket holders will have a photo op with the racers and their mowers after the races.



Being an avid golfer means commitment to play and practice, which does not leave a lot of time for gardening. The following are some tips from Randy Lemon, the co-host of GardenLine on KTRH radio.

#### Checklist for March:

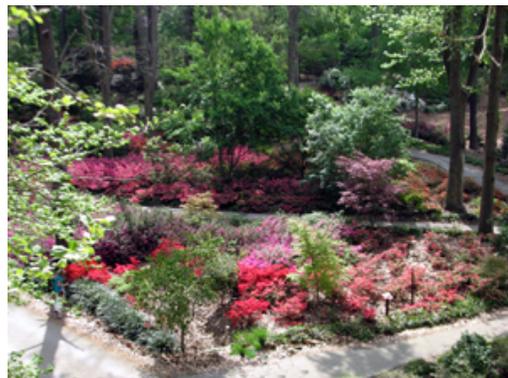
- Prune back spring-flowering shrubs once the blooming cycle is finished
- Replace/replenish mulching material in flower beds and shrub borders
- Start a weekly rose regiment with fungicide to control black spot and powdery mildew
- “Scalp” your lawn if you didn’t do it in February; this removes winter stubble and opens the roots to sunshine and oxygen
- Remove any dead, damaged or freeze damaged limbs from trees and shrubs
- Buy “Containerized” trees and shrubs this time of year
- Feed your pecan trees if you did not do so in February
- Prune and feed climbing roses
- Buy lawn fertilizer for April feeding

TIP OF THE MONTH: Feed Azalea and Camellia plants once they finish blooming, then again in 6 weeks. Feed Roses once every month from now until the end of September

#### Checklist for April:

- When selecting annual transplants, look for short, compact plants
- Look for uncommon plants during the month of April; nursery stock is always best
- Plant spring annuals now
- Re-pot overgrown plants
- Change your mower to it’s highest setting from now on
- Add iron/sulfur additives to plants with yellowing leaves on new growth
- Control fleas with insecticides like Dursban and Diazinon
- Feed outdoor tropical plants, like Hibiscus and Bougainvilleas with tropical plant food
- Plant perennials
- Plant Caladium bulbs once soil temperature is finally above 70°

TIP OF THE MONTH: Apply your 3-1-2 ratio lawn fertilizer during the first week of April. DO NOT USE "weed & feed" formulations.



Stephen F. Austin State University Mast Arboretum in Nacogdoches, TX. A beautiful display of Azaleas and Camellias



## Rick Hirsch

### Texas Agrilife Extension Agent

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

Regardless of the soil in your garden, it can be improved by adding organic matter. This is one of the keys to successful EARTHKIND™ vegetable gardening.

If your soil is heavy clay, the addition of organic matter improves both drainage and aeration and also allows better root development. Liberal amounts of organic matter help sandy soil hold water and nutrients.

Where do you get organic matter? This magical stuff which improves soil and serves as a food source for soil fungi and bacteria comes in the form of peat moss, compost, hay, grass clippings, barnyard fertilizer, shredded bark, leaves or even shredded newspapers.

When adding organic matter to soil, supply enough to physically change the soil structure. Ideally, at least one-third of the final soil mix should be some type of organic material. To accomplish this, spread a 2 to 4 inch layer of organic material over the garden surface and till it in a depth of at least 6 to 10 inches. Apply the recommended rate of fertilizer over the garden surface at the same time, and till it in along with the organic material.

Some gardeners prefer a shovel or spading form to the rototiller for working garden soil, but many look for

an easier way to handle this choice. For gardeners with rototillers or those who are considering renting or buying one, here are some tips to make the tilling job much easier:

- Tilling the garden will be easier if you leave an untilled row between passes. Wide turns are easier to make with a tiller than “about faces”. Also, the machine won’t pull itself and you toward the next row, which it tends to do if you come close to overlapping rows.
- When tilling heavy clay soils or breaking ground for a new garden, reduce the tiller’s engine speed so that it turns the soil more thoroughly with less bucking and bouncing.
- When tilling ground for the first time, don’t try to work it to the maximum depth in the first pass. <http://smith-tx.tamu.edu> The first time around, set the brake stake to half the desired depth. Then set it for a full depth and go over the ground a second time.
- Till only when the soil is slightly dry and friable. Tilling when it’s too wet leaves large clods that become rock-hard when dry. Mud clumps clinging to tiller blades upset its balance, causing undue wear on you and the tiller.

If you haven't had much luck with gardening efforts in the past, your soil may be the problem. Tight, heavy, poorly drained soils are common in many areas of Texas. With good management practices and the addition of liberal amounts of organic matter, many of these soils can be improved so that they grow satisfactory vegetables. But if you are interested in a quick, highly productive vegetable garden, consider constructing a raised garden. Raised gardens are often the simplest solution to a difficult soil problem.

This system has many advantages. Vegetable yields are increased because the depth of topsoil is increased. <mailto:jll076@tamu.edu> Raised gardens filled with a good soil or soil mix drain faster and warm up quicker. Water usually soaks in rather than running off and soil compaction is eliminated or reduced.

Weeds, soil insects and soil-borne diseases are more easily controlled since recommended treatments are more effective in raised gardens.

Raised gardens do not have to be expensive. Construct frames of railroad ties, bricks, flagstones or other materials. Small raised bed gardens may even be constructed from 2 x 8's or 2 x 10's.



## Become a Sponsor of our 2015 Spring Conference.

This conference raises funds for Henderson County Master Gardeners to provide quality programs throughout the year for residents of Henderson County. The conference speaker is Skip Richter who will be making a presentation titled, "Smarter Gardening the Easy Way!". He is a renown author, radio talk host, YouTube star and expert on working smarter not harder in your garden.

If you are interested in being a sponsor for the 2015 Spring Conference, contact Cherie Tanneberger at 832-247-6491 or Judy Haldeman at 903-479-1178. Sponsorships are available at \$125, \$60, \$40, and \$20 levels. Each sponsorship level includes different types of recognition for your business.

If you would like to donate an item(s) for the silent auction, contact Cecelia Bowles at 903-681-4414.

All sponsors and silent auction donors will be recognized in the Spring Conference program and a Power Point presentation that will run throughout the Silent Auction and dinner. Sponsorships and silent auctions donations must be submitted by March 11, 2015 to be included in the program and Power Point presentation. If you are unable to be a sponsor, we would be interested in your support next year. Your support is greatly appreciated!

Report Card  
from the  
Children's Garden  
by  
Bill & Marie Hancock

It's Weeding and Planting Time!

The children have only been able to come out to the garden two times since the Christmas break. On January 29<sup>th</sup> we harvested some beautiful broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kale, and Swiss Chard. The children were able to sample all of the fresh vegetables right out of their garden. Then it was watch out weeds, here come the children! Before the morning was over they had a beautiful weed free garden.

After a few cold or rainy Thursdays, the children were able to plant three rows of potatoes on February 12<sup>th</sup>. When given a trowel, one of the younger children asked if he needed to dig down to the other side of the earth to plant his potato. We think he was relieved when we told him only a few inches. Next we will be planting some onions and another row or two of potatoes.

The Master Gardeners and all the staff and children at South Elementary School want to thank Mr. and Mrs. Geddie, owners of "Geddie Feed and Seed", for their generous donation of the seed potatoes and the onions. We do appreciate their generosity.



Mrs. Keown's kindergarteners brave the cold weather to plant their potatoes.



Mrs. Gentry's Pre-K class is very proud of their work in the garden.



Mr. Bill, is this the right way to plant potatoes?



Cherie Tanneberger shows students the eyes of the potatoes.

## Community Programs for 2015

### Talk to Master Gardeners at upcoming local events:

**Saturday, March 28, 2015** - Athens Organic Spring Festival; 9:00 am-3:00 pm; 3730 State Highway 31 E, Athens, Texas

**Saturday, April 4, 2015** - Athens Farmer's Market Season Opening Weekend; 8:00 am - 1:00 pm; Old Market Square, Athens, Texas

Watch this space for other free Master Gardener events such as our **Summer Series** of programs on a variety of horticulture topics provided by gardening experts. These events are presented throughout the county.

Henderson County Master Gardeners are available to staff an information booth at your local community fair or festival. Contact VP of Member and Community Programs, Cherie L. Tanneberger, cell 832-247-6491 or email your request to [hendersoncmga@gmail.com](mailto:hendersoncmga@gmail.com).

**Henderson County Master Gardeners:** Volunteers are needed for the KAB event MG information booth and programs area. Contact Cherie Tanneberger to get in on the fun. The booth events are very informal and attract wide variety of people with whom to share the Master Gardener experience.

### Cream Cheese Banana Nut Bread

From: Comfortfood.com

#### Ingredients:

1 ½ cups walnuts, chopped and toasted	½ cup brown sugar	½ tsp baking powder
¾ cup butter, softened	2 large eggs	½ tsp baking soda
1-8 oz. pkg cream cheese, softened	1 tsp vanilla extract	½ tsp salt
1 ½ cup white sugar	3 cups all purpose flour	4 medium bananas, mushed



#### Directions:

- Pre heat oven to 350° F and grease two bread pans.
- Toast the walnuts in a dry skillet over medium heat 3-5 minutes until fragrant; remove from heat and let cool
- Put the butter and cream cheese into a large bowl and mix until blended and creamy
- Add the sugars, and beat well to combine.
- Add vanilla; blend well
- Add the eggs one at a time, beating after each one to blend
- In a separate bowl, sift together the dry ingredients; add to the wet mixture and mix at a low speed, until just blended
- Stir in the bananas and walnuts
- Scrape dough evenly into well-greased bread pans, and bake for about 1 hour, or until a toothpick in the middle comes out clean.
- Cool bread on wire rack for about 15 minutes, then remove from pans and allow to cool an additional 30 minutes before slicing, to avoid excessive crumbling

# The Plant Sale is Coming!

## The Plant Sale is Coming!

April 25  
9:00-2:00

by Lydia Holley

Rain or shine, the Henderson County Master Gardeners will host their annual Plant Sale on Saturday, April 25th, 2015. The sale is scheduled from 9:00 am - 2:00 pm at the Henderson County Senior Citizens Center, 3356 State Hwy 31E, Athens, TX. This building is adjacent to the Henderson County Regional Fair Park (rodeo arena). The sale will feature a variety of plants that perform well in Texas. Plants include trees, shrubs, bulbs, perennials, annuals, natives, heirlooms, vegetables, and herbs.



A plant sale is one of the most enticing events to the gardener. Everyone knows a good plant sale can make a big impact on the beauty of his or her garden. Because the plants offered at the Henderson County Master Gardener's Plant Sale are adapted to a Texas climate, they will appeal to the experienced gardener as well as the novice.

Gardeners will want to arrive early for the best selection. Early bird shoppers

may be lucky enough to acquire a rare plant or two and get the heirloom plants that will be featured. In addition to unique plants a wide selection of more common plants that can become the backbone of your garden, add color throughout a season, or be used as an accent or focal point. The creative gardener could even design an entire garden around the plants being offered.

Henderson County Master Gardener's Plant Sale also offers expert gardening assistance from Master Gardener members to those that are present. They will be available for consultation, try to diagnose plant problems, give information on how to become a Master Gardener, offer soil sample kits, answer questions, or research the answer for you. Don't miss this chance to acquire a few - or an abundance of - new plants for your garden!



# Straw Bale Gardening

by

Betty Pose

As a student in the Master Gardener class of Henderson County in 2014, I have learned and been exposed to many facets of gardening. None has peaked my interest so much as the concept of straw bale gardening. My first exposure to the concept came from my sister, Gloria Henderson, who is a Master Gardener intern in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Gloria lives in Cedar Crest, New Mexico, which is along the eastern base of the Sandia Mountains surrounding Albuquerque. Gardening in this part of the United States can be extremely difficult due to the arid climate and wind. In past years she had attempted some gardening with little success due to the climate, rocky soil and abundance vermin. After making friends of the many Master Gardeners in her area, she learned of this unusual way of gardening in 2014, her novice year as a Master Gardener. She experienced tremendous success. Gloria was able to grow tomatoes, eggplant, peppers and cucumbers. She shared a book written by Joel Karsten titled, Straw Bale Gardens, published by Cool Springs Press. Gloria was kind enough to share these pictures of her first garden for this article.

Straw bale gardening is basically dirt free gardening. Plants are planted directly into the bales of straw. There is no need to till or amend your soil and the added bonus is “no weeding”. The straw bale is not only your container for growing your plants but is also your growing media. The decomposing of your bale provides the nutrients needed for plant growth. Just add water, preferably with a soaker hose and plenty of sunshine, and some inexpensive fertilizer.

In planning my straw bale garden, I am in search of straw bales. Harvested straw bales, such as the kind used to bed livestock, are needed. This type of bale is difficult to find in our area. I am planning a trip to the Fort Worth livestock show to obtain my bales for



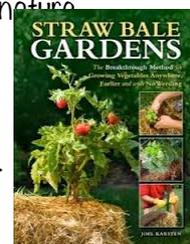
spring planting. Local feed stores tell me that the demand in our area is not high enough to warrant carrying this kind of bale. Fertilizer is also needed. An inexpensive lawn fertilizer that contains at least 20% nitrogen is fine. The nitrogen will activate the bacteria in the bales quickly. Do not use a slow release fertilizer.

I am very interested to see if the straw bale gardens are as good as others claim. In Straw Bale Gardens, the straw bale garden is touted to produce high yields, never require weeding, do not require soil, extend the growing season by weeks, can be conventional or organic and can be anywhere, including balconies and driveways.

My plan is to grow a spring garden followed by a fall garden, and then return the composted straw to my compost bin, completing the cycle of nature.

Acknowledgements:

Straw Bale Gardens by Joel Karsten.  
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Photos courtesy of Gloria Henderson, Master Gardener, Cedar Crest, NM, July 2014.



# INSIDE DIRT this month:

2015 Spring Conference	Page 3
What's Happening in the Dream Garden	Page 4
2015 Master Gardener Community Program Kick-off	Page 5
Easy Gardening for Golfers	Page 6
Report from Rick Hirsch, Texas AgriLife Extension Agent	Page 7
Spring Conference Sponsorships	Page 8
Report Card from Children's Garden	Page 9
Community Programs for 2015	Page 10
The Plant Sale is Coming!	Page 11
Straw Bale Gardening	Page 12

Henderson County Master Gardener Association  
100 East Tyler Street  
Athens, TX 75751-2547