

# THE FORT BEND GARDENER



HORTICULTURE IN FORT BEND COUNTY

WINTER 2015

TEXAS A&M  
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## Contributions from:

**Aggie Horticulture®** 



FORT BEND COUNTY  
*Master Gardeners*

**Fort Bend  
Beekeepers  
Assoc.** 

T E X A S  
*Master  
Naturalist* 

## Contributing Editor

**Barbara Buckley**  
Director of Communications  
Fort Bend Master Gardeners

## Fort Bend County Pecan Growers Show Up Big Time!

By Boone Holladay,  
County Extension Agent-Horticulture

We would like to spend a minute to congratulate local producers for their county and regional award winning pecans! The 2014 Fort Bend County pecan show was held December 6<sup>th</sup> in Rosenberg. The Fort Bend County Orchard Production Committee held the event in conjunction with the Texas East Region Pecan Show. Award winners from this show will move up to the state competition, which will be held in July.

Winners from the Fort Bend County Pecan Show included Pete Pavlovsky- first place Cape Fear and Desirable; Bill Archer- first place GraCross, Mahan, Maramec, Other Variety, Variety Seedling, and Forkert, second place Choctaw and Success, and third place Choctaw; Michael Weston- first place grand champion Podsednik, first place reserve champion Caddo, and first place Stuart and Cheyenne; Malcolm Zurek- second place Podsednik; Charles Filip- third place Podsednik; Reggie Ware- first place Shoshoni and Choctaw; Joe Stegint- first place Pawnee, and second place Variety Seedling and Stuart; Gloria Scheel- third place Stuart; Bill Birdwell- first place reserve champion Success; Becky Escobar- second place reserve champion Natives, third place Variety Seedling, and third place Natives; Kelly Kehrer- second place Caddo; John Cotterell- second place Desirable; Bernie Brezina- first place grand champion Kiowa; Bryan Boshart- first place grand champion Natives and first place Lightest Pecan; Kay Czach- second place Lightest Pecan; and Johnnie Biehunko- third place Lightest Pecan.

Representative winners from Fort Bend in the East Region Pecan Show included Pete Pavlovsky- third place Cape Fear; Bill Archer- second place GraCross and Maramec; Bryan Boshart- first place Lightest Pecan; Michael Weston- second place Podsednik; Malcolm Zurek- third place Podsednik; Reggie Ware- first place Shoshoni; Joe Stegint- second place Stuart; and Bill Birdwell- first place Success. These individuals qualified for and will compete in the Texas State Pecan Show, held in conjunction with the Texas Pecan Growers Association Conference & Trade Show held this year in Frisco, Texas. This event will be held at the Embassy Suites in Frisco July 12<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup>, 2015. For conference information contact Texas Pecan Growers Association at (979) 846-3285 or visit their website at <http://www.tpga.org/>. Great work folks and good luck at state!

We'd also like to recognize the support of Fort Bend County Farm Bureau, the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, and the numerous local businesses that contributed to the event. Their generous support helped to make the pecan show a huge success in 2014. Thank you.

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## USDA Observes Kick Off of the International Year of Soils

Adapted from a Press Release by Justin Fritscher,  
U.S. Department of Agriculture



The US Department of Agriculture released an article to announce the 2015 International Year of Soils.

This designation comes from the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization which spearheaded the adoption of a resolution by the UN General Assembly. A world wide effort to highlight the importance of healthy soils for food security, ecosystem functions and resilient farms, ranches and urban areas.

There are four things we as humans cannot live without: Air, Sunlight, Water and Soil. According to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, "Healthy soil is the foundation that ensures working farms and ranches become more productive, resilient to climate change and better prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century,"

As the population of the world increases, the agriculture land base shrinks, the climate changes and extreme weather events are evident, the nations of the world are focusing their collective attention to the primary resource essential to food production-the soil. A global effort is being launched in 2015 to provide an understanding of the importance of the role of soil for food security and essential ecosystem functions.

"Most people don't realize that just beneath our feet lies a diverse, complex, life-giving ecosystem that sustains our entire existence," said Jason Weller, chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). "We are helping producers unlock the power of soil health as part of an important and very successful national campaign. Our campaign demonstrates our renewed commitment to soil conservation and soil health."

While the focus of this resolution is on large scale rural farms and ranches, the urban homeowner will also benefit from information regarding conserva-

tion and soil improvement. Conservation efforts can be adopted to improve and maintain healthy soil whether you have a small urban lot with only a few plants in the landscape around your home or several acres with large perennial beds, vegetable gardens, and/or fruit trees, all plants need healthy soil to survive.

A few facts about the role of soil in our environment:

- ◆ Topsoil is the most productive layer
- ◆ Five tons of topsoil spread over an acre is only as thick as a dime
- ◆ Soil supplies water and nutrients for plants
- ◆ Most of our food comes from soil
- ◆ Erosion of soil clogs rivers and lakes
- ◆ Soil is extremely effective at wastewater treatment
- ◆ Soil is alive with Organisms
  - ◇ Thousands of types of bacteria live in soil
  - ◇ 15 tons of soil per acre pass through earthworms each year
  - ◇ Supply organic matter back into soil
  - ◇ Mix the soil
  - ◇ Erosion control by holding soil in place

"International Year of Soils provides an opportunity for everyone to learn about the critical role soil conservation and improved soil health play in the economic and environmental sustainability of agriculture," Weller said.

Working with the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) and other partners, NRCS will be showcasing the importance of soil with monthly themes created by SSSA:

**January:** Soils Sustain Life

**February:** Soils Support Urban Life

**March:** Soils Support Agriculture

**April:** Soils Clean and Capture Water

**May:** Soils Support Buildings/Infrastructure

**June:** Soils Support Recreation

**July:** Soils Are Living

**August:** Soils Support Health

**September:** Soils Protect the Natural Environment

**October:** Soils and Products We Use

**November:** Soils and Climate

**December:** Soils, Culture and People

Visit [NRCS's soil health](#) or [International Year of Soils](#)

## New Year's Resolution: An Irrigation Audit

By Lisa Rogers  
Fort Bend County Master Gardener

It's that time of year when we're all making New Year's Resolutions. Most of these resolutions have to do with making healthy lifestyle changes. By February most of us will be discouraged because we couldn't resist that piece of chocolate or that coke. And, well the gym was just too crowded in January! Why not make a resolution to routinely audit your irrigation system instead? The benefits of routine irrigation audits could include saving money, water conservation, healthier landscapes and a sense of pride and accomplishment.



An irrigation audit includes three activities; Inspection, Performance Test and Controller Adjustments. The inspection involves walking your landscape zones and making notes of any problem areas. Things to look for are soggy landscapes or standing water, and dead or dry areas in the turf or landscape. Next, you will turn on your irrigation system to test mode. This setting will run each zone for 2 minutes, which allows enough time to walk through each zone during operation. If your controller does not have a test mode you can manually run through the zones. At each zone look for broken, missing or sunken heads and misaligned spray patterns. Also look for insufficient or excessive operating pressure. Large water droplets and insufficient stream length, or throw, indicates low water pressure while excessive misting that evaporates quickly indicates high water pressure.

Performance testing of your irrigation system is done to determine precipitation rate and distribution uniformity. A Catch Can Test (CCT) is the best way to check performance. For the CCT you will need 1-2 dozen commercially available catch cans or tuna/cat food cans and a ruler. Begin with Zone 1 by turning on the Irrigation System and mark all of the sprinkler heads. Then place catch cans in a grid-like pattern throughout the zone every 3-5 ft. Document on a piece of paper the placement of all the catch cans. Turn on Zone 1. Keep track of time. After measurable amount of water has fallen measure the water depth in tenths of inches and record these values and how long (in minutes) the zone operated. Repeat the procedure for each zone. Using the data from the CCT the precipitation rate for each zone can be determined using the following equation:  $\text{Precipitation rate} = (\text{average catch can water depth} / \text{test run time}) \times 60$ . The precipitation rate per zone will be in inches per hour. You can use this data to make changes in your controller settings. If you have a rain sensor don't forget to check for proper functioning by manually pouring water over sensor and making sure the controller responds by shutting down irrigation.

The last part of an irrigation audit involves making adjustments in your controller settings. It is the goal to run your irrigation system to meet your landscape needs in the most efficient manner. To do this make run time adjustments seasonally. Lawns typically need 1-2 inches of water per week during the summer months with less during spring and fall. If you don't have a rain sensor you will need to manually turn your system off during periods of measurable rainfall. Run your irrigation during the early morning hours before the sun and wind will cause evaporation rates to increase. If you have runoff during irrigation cycles set your controller to "Cycle & Soak" or manually run your system for shorter times but more often to control runoff.

At a minimum, make a resolution to audit your irrigation system 4 times per year at the change of seasons. Don't forget to correct problem areas you find during your audit. Then sit and relax without guilt and with some chocolate when you fulfill your resolution and reap the savings from conservation of water and enjoy your view!



## Richmond City Hall Park Goes Earth-Kind

By Peggy d'Hemecourt, Fort Bend County Master Gardener

Community volunteers and Fort Bend County Master Gardeners created an Earth-Kind landscape at the park adjacent to Richmond City Hall on November 15<sup>th</sup>. The installation occurred on Keep Richmond Beautiful National Planting Day and celebrated the value of restoring ecological balance and creating greener, more beautiful communities.

Earth-Kind landscaping, developed by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, uses research-proven techniques to create a horticultural system based on real-world effectiveness and environmental responsibility. Earth-Kind landscaping encourages water conservation, energy conservation, reduction of fertilizer and pesticide use, and reduction of yard waste entering landfills.

Community volunteers and Fort Bend County Master Gardeners transformed the gardens in the park by first removing all of the plant material. Finished compost was added to the planting areas to improve soil fertility, structure, moisture retention, and drainage. Spray head irrigation was converted to drip irrigation which will reduce irrigation water evaporation and runoff and will prevent plant disease and damage by keeping irrigation water off of the plant foliage. New plants were selected based on their heat, drought, and

pest tolerance and on their soil and fertility requirements. All are native or well-adapted plants that will not only be attractive but also thrive with little maintenance. Native organic mulch was added to retain soil moisture and discourage weeds. The mulch will also serve as continuous source of organic matter and nutrients to the soil as it decomposes.

Richmond Mayor Evalyn Moore said, "One of the biggest challenges in a growing community is to learn how to leverage limited resources. The Historic Richmond Association, coupled with its Keep Richmond Beautiful affiliate, has really contributed to bringing

many of our community groups together to focus our efforts on beautifying one of our City's landmarks, the City Hall Park. This collaboration between the City, HRA, KRB, Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, and our many private partners was a wondrous sight. What a way to get the holiday season started!"

Earth-Kind landscaping principles are easy to adopt in any landscape. Learn more by taking the Earth-Kind Challenge by visiting <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind>.





## Mark Your Calendar and Save These Dates

February 5: Vegetable Conference

February 7: Annual Rose Pruning Clinic

February 26: Preview Program-Vegetable-Herb  
Plant Sale

February 28: Vegetable-Herb Plant Sale

March 7: Successful Organic Gardens & Lawns

Visit: <http://www.fbmng.com> or  
<http://fortbend.agrilife.org/horticulture/> for details

## Backyard Basics:

### *Getting the Most from Your Garden*

February 21— The Food Garden

March 14—Preserving Tomatoes

March 26—Pickling & Pressure Canning

April 11—Freezing & Drying

For more information to  
<http://fortbend.agrilife.org/horticulture/>.

“ ONE OF THE PLEASURES  
OF BEING A GARDENER  
COMES FROM THE ENJOY-  
MENT YOU GET LOOKING  
AT OTHER PEOPLE’S  
YARDS.”

— Thalassa Cruso

## Seasonal Garden Checklist: Jan./Feb.

By Dr. William C. Welch,

Professor & Extension Landscape Specialist  
Landscape Horticulturist

- Make flower and vegetable garden plans now before the rush of spring planting. Time spent in arm-chair gardening will pay off in improved plant selection.

- Sow seeds in flats or containers to get a jump on plant growth before hot weather arrives. Petunias, begonias, and impatiens should be sown in early January. Warm temperature plants, such as tomatoes, peppers, marigolds, and periwinkles, should be sown in late January or early February.

- Apply a light application of fertilizer to established pansy plantings. Use one-half pound of ammonium sulfate per 100 square feet of bed area. Repeat the application every 4 to 6 weeks, depending on rainfall. Dried blood meal is also an excellent source of fertilizer for pansies.

- Prepare beds and garden area for spring plants.

- Check junipers and other narrow-leaf evergreens for bagworm pouches. The insect eggs overwinter in the pouch, and start the cycle again by emerging in the spring to begin feeding on the foliage. Hand removal and burning of the pouches are ways of reducing the potential damage next spring.

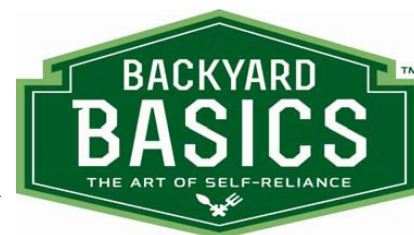
- The life of the plant received as a Christmas gift can be prolonged with proper care. Keep the soil moist, but provide drainage so that excess moisture can flow from the pot. Keep the plant out of range of heating ducts and away from heating units. Keep in a cool room at night, preferably at 60 to 65 degrees F.

- Don't fertilize newly set out trees or shrubs until after they have started to grow, and then only very lightly the first year.

Visit <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/> for more in-depth seasonal updates from Dr. Welch and other Texas A&M Horticulture Department staff.

## Getting back to Backyard Basics!

By Boone Holladay, County Extension Agent - Horticulture



Are you interested in learning more about getting back to homegrown and homemade basics? The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Fort Bend County, and Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, are offering Backyard Basics programs and workshops for the people of our region throughout 2015.

These programs are in response to a growing statewide and national interest from consumers who want to learn more about food, where it comes from and how it is prepared and preserved. Consumers are also showing greater interest in returning to some of those basics more often associated with rural living – many of which have been forgotten or overlooked in the hustle and bustle of today's world. The programs are also a great way for people to reconnect with nature and to save money by recycling or conserving resources, including the water they use for their gardens and landscapes. By growing their own vegetables, people not only get enjoyment from the healthful outdoor activity of gardening, they also know where their food came from and how it was produced.

This year's series of programs offered in Fort Bend County will include:

- February 21st -The Food Garden
- March 14th Preserving Tomatoes
- March 26<sup>th</sup> Pickling & Pressure Canning
- April 11<sup>th</sup> Freezing & Drying
- May 22<sup>nd</sup> Salsa & Relish
- June 20<sup>th</sup> Gardening for the Wild
- July 18<sup>th</sup> Earth-Kind Landscapes
- August 15<sup>th</sup> The Fall Food Garden
- September 12<sup>th</sup> Composting Made Easy
- October 23<sup>rd</sup> Jams & Jellies
- November 14<sup>th</sup> Grilling
- December 5<sup>th</sup> Fruits & Nuts

Each program will be held in the morning at the Fort Bend County Extension Office at 1402 Band Road in Rosenberg. Times and prices vary. For more information on these events and to register, please contact administrative assistant Brandy Rader at [brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu) or (281) 342-3034 or visit <http://fortbend.agrilife.org/backyard-basics>. Also visit us on Facebook at [Fort Bend County Extension](#). Please pass along this information to friends and neighbors. We hope to spread the word and get our communities back to Backyard Basics!

### FORT BEND COUNTY Master Gardeners

#### Preview Program for the Vegetable-Herb Plant

Date: February 26, 2015

Time: 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Location: Bud O'Shieles Community Center,  
1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, TX

### Vegetable-Herb Plant Sale

- Date: February 28, 2015
- Time: 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon (or until sold out)
- Location: In front of the greenhouse, at the Agriculture Center, 1402 Band Road, Rosenberg, Tx 77471

Visit [www.fbmng.com](http://www.fbmng.com) for plant details and directions.

**Bring your wagon, and come early for best selection!!**





From left to right: Boone Holladay, County Extension Agent- Horticulture, Bill Archer, Reggie Ware, Malcolm Zurek, Ray Lehrmann, Vice President of the Orchard Production Committee, and Kelly Kehrer



From left to right: Boone Holladay, County Extension Agent- Horticulture, Bernie Brezina, Michael Weston, and Ray Lehrmann, Vice President of the Orchard Production Committee

## And the Pecan Show Winners Are.....



From left to right: Boone Holladay, County Extension Agent- Horticulture, John Cotterell, Gloria Scheel, Jim Stepp, Bill Birdwell and Ray Lehrmann, Vice President of the Orchard Production Committee



From left to right: Boone Holladay, County Extension Agent- Horticulture, Cliff Bergman, Treasurer for the Orchard Production Committee, Dave Gerstenberger, Secretary for the Orchard Production Committee, Becky Escobar, Bryan Boshart and Ray Lehrmann, Vice President of the Orchard Production Committee



From left to right: Boone Holladay, County Extension Agent- Horticulture, Angie Pavlovsky, Pete Pavlovsky and Ray Lehrmann, Vice President of the Orchard Production Committee



From left to right: Boone Holladay, County Extension Agent- Horticulture, Johnnie Biehunko and Ray Lehrmann, Vice President of the Orchard Production Committee

Front row from left to right: Angie Pavlovsky, John Cotterell, Bernie Brezina, Bryan Boshart, Michael Weston and Bill Birdwell



Back row from left to right: Bill Archer, Dave Gerstenberger, Cliff Bergman, Reggie Ware, Pete Pavlovsky, Malcolm Zurek, Ray Lehrmann, Jim Stepp, Kelly Kehrer, Gloria Scheel, Boone Holladay and Becky Escobar

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service-Fort Bend County  
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Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aids or services are required to contact Texas AgriLife Extension Service at 281.342.3034 five working days prior to the meeting so appropriate arrangements can be made. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

Fort Bend Beekeepers Meeting  
Second Tuesday of each month, 7:00 p.m.

Backyard Basics Education Series  
Beginning February 2015

Coastal Prairie Master Naturalist  
Programs, First Thursday of the month

For full information on events call (281) 342-3034 or visit

<http://fortbend.agrilife.org>

<http://fbmg.com>

<http://txmn.org/coastal/>

<http://fortbendbeekeepers.org/>