

# THE FORT BEND GARDENER



HORTICULTURE IN FORT BEND COUNTY

SUMMER 2013

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION

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## Contributions from:



FORT BEND COUNTY  
Master Gardeners

Aggie Horticulture® 

Fort Bend  
Beekeepers  
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T E X A S  
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## Contributing Editor

Barbara Buckley  
Director of Communications  
Fort Bend Master Gardeners

## Getting back to Backyard Basics!

By Boone Holladay, County Extension Agent-Horticulture



The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Fort Bend County, along with the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, are offering opportunities for the people of our region to learn more about getting back to homegrown and homemade basics. The Backyard Basics programs and workshops, conducted through

the summer months, support healthy living through home-based food production, preparation, and preservation. The programs are offered at a nominal cost and their development comes from a growing statewide and national interest from consumers to learn more about where their food 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.

The summer series of programs offered in Fort Bend County will include: Vegetable Production – August 10<sup>th</sup>, Composting – August 17<sup>th</sup>, Water Conservation – August 24<sup>th</sup>, Food Dehydration and Freezing – September 7<sup>th</sup>, Orchard Fruit Production - September 14<sup>th</sup>, and Selecting Meats and Grilling - September 21<sup>st</sup>. Each Saturday program begins at 8:30 a.m. and concludes around 11 a.m. and will be located at the Bud O'Shields Community Center located at 1330 Band Road in Rosenberg. Registration for a single class is \$15 dollars, \$25 dollars for couples. If you want to sign up for the complete series, preregistration is discounted at \$75 dollars, and \$125 dollars for couples. Kids under 10 accompanied by parents are free! Future programs being planned for 2014 include small flock poultry production, small herd goat and lamb production, hydro and aquaponic production systems, cut flower and herb gardening, beekeeping and honey production, and canning of jams and jellies. I'll include updates on these future programs in upcoming issues of the *Fort Bend Gardener*. If you have friends or family that would like to receive this newsletter, please have them contact our office. For more information on these events and registration, please contact Administrative Assistant Brandy Rader at [brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu) or (281) 342-3034. Visit <http://fortbend.agrilife.org> to download and print fliers. Also visit us on Facebook at [Fort Bend County Extension](https://www.facebook.com/FortBendCountyExtension). Please pass along this information to friends and neighbors. We aim to spread the word and get our communities back to the basics.

## Seabourne Creek Nature Park

By Lynn Trenta, Programs Director  
Coastal Prairie Master Naturalists

South of the intersection of Highways 36 and 59, and one exit past the Rosenberg Convention Center to the left, you will find Seabourne Creek Park. In October of 2009 the Coastal Prairie Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists entered into an agreement with the City of Rosenberg to assist with the development and management of 164 acres of the park. With Karl Baumgartner as the project director, the chapter's goal is to create a true nature park.

The park has many activities for visitors to enjoy. Heading east from the main parking lot, you see a beautiful butterfly garden on your way to the fishing lake. Trails lined with trees planted by volunteers under the supervision of the Master Naturalists lead to wooded areas, wetlands, prairies, and bird-watching havens. In the park you can stroll, hike, or bike down the many trails or just take in the natural settings. An added bonus to all of these great activities is the guided bird hikes on the first Wednesday of the month, available November to April. These hikes have led to the identification of 159 species of birds—quite impressive for such a small and relatively urban park!



From the parking lot, head south taking the trail leading up the hill. This leads to the prairie area, comprised of 3 different sections. You can observe a prairie demo garden, a prairie restoration section, and a tall grass prairie, which will soon line the trail going past the wetlands to the wooded area. One of the latest projects is the prairie demo garden where a formal design frames the garden's natural landscaping, displaying a myriad of native prairie plants. Most of the beds have their own theme. The theme of the front and back beds is the "Native Prairie" and contrast with the "Backyard Prairie Garden", which shows gardeners how prairie plants can be used in a more formal setting in a city back yard. Other themes for the garden are "The Color Yellow", "Prairie Butterfly Garden", "Gardening for Pollinators", and the "Prairie Plant Identification" bed. The prairie plants are identified by rustic yellow-lettered wooden signs that are scattered throughout the garden beds.



The Prairie restoration area has undergone several methods to return the land to a native prairie state. Two prescribed burns have occurred with application of herbicide to some sections of the prairie area to eliminate invasive species.

The most dramatic transformation in the nature park has taken place over the last few weeks in the wetlands area. After heavy equipment shaped and molded the area, it was layered with clay and filled with water. Although the area did sometimes hold water, it will now permanently remain a true wetlands area. Already, the birds have taken notice and are arriving to enjoy this sanctuary.



With all of these attractions to enjoy, come celebrate with the Master Naturalists at their signature event, the Prairie Heritage Festival, which will take place this fall on November 2nd, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the park. This fun event brings together exhibits and speakers that provide entertaining activities and information to the public. Activities for children include face painting, crafts, gardening, animal exhibits, and presentations about animals and the environment. Tours of the park will be given as well. Past topics at the festival have been butterflies, snakes, bees, vultures, birds, prairies, and environmental projects. The Prairie Heritage Festival is a great way to come check out all of the various aspects of this wonderful park.

## Earth-Kind® Kids' Kamp

By Peggy d'Hemecourt  
Education Director  
Fort Bend County Master Gardeners



Fort Bend Master Gardeners (FBMG) will host the 5th annual Earth-Kind® Kids' Kamp Aug. 5th through 9th, 2013 for youth entering 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. FBMG volunteers teach young kampers about gardening basics, where food comes from, and the wildlife often encountered in the garden. This year's curriculum is Wildlife Gardener and includes lessons about birds, insects, amphibians, reptiles, vermicomposting and much more. Kids' Kamp will be held at the Fort Bend County Extension office from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. each day. A registration fee of \$50.00 includes all materials, snacks, and a T-shirt. Space is limited to the first 25 paid registrants. Download and print a registration form at <http://www.fbmng.com/events/event/jmg-kids-kamp/> or call Margo McDowell at (281) 633-7033 for information.

## Pecan Insect Pest Update

By Bill Ree, Extension Program Specialist

The Walnut Caterpillar, *Datana integerrima*, has been reported by multiple growers and homeowners in the region. The walnut caterpillar is a foliage feeder of trees in the family Juglandaceae which includes the pecans, hickories, and walnuts here in Texas. This insect can have two or three generations a year. Based on developmental times, 245 frost free days looks to be an approximate dividing line between areas that could have two or three generations.

Infestations start with female moths depositing egg masses which may contain 300 – 900+ eggs on the undersides of individual leaflets of mature foliage. It is believed that a single female will deposit only one egg mass in her life. Unlike fall webworm where egg masses can be deposited in layers and will be covered with “fuzz”, walnut caterpillar egg masses will be in one layer and free of any covering. Eggs will take approximately 10 – 12 days to mature and larval feeding will be approximately 23 days before larvae leave the tree to seek pupation sites.

Walnut caterpillars feed in a colony and do not construct a web so initial infestations can be easily overlooked. Early indications of an infestation might be frass or droppings on the orchard floor or in town on sidewalks and driveways; branch terminals with missing foliage but retained leaf rachis and masses of cast skins on the tree trunk or main scaffold limbs. These insects develop in “instars”, which are the larval growth stages. When the fourth instar molts, the colony molts as a group on the main trunk or a scaffold limb leaving behind a mass of cast skins. The emerging fifth and last instar larvae now feed as individuals and it is during this last instar when most of the feeding damage occurs. Most of the feeding damage will occur in the last 3 – 4 days and when the last instar finishes feeding larvae will leave the tree in search of pupation sites.

Control options will vary depending on your situation. For homeowners, the best way is to attack the



clumps in the early evening or very early in the morning or at night, if you want to use a flashlight. While the caterpillars are "roosting" you can simply use a fly-swatter, or spray with a household insecticide or a diluted spray of dish soap and water (10 drops to 24 oz. water). During the day when they are out eating everywhere, and if the tree is not too large, you can spray the entire tree with an organic product called Bt (Dipel, Thuricide, Caterpillar Killer), and products with spinosad (ex: Green Light Lawn and Garden with Spinosad), or use wettable Sevin (Carbaryl) + soap. Spray until drip. Again, even soap alone will kill them if you spray them all completely.

For commercial producers, even though a crop is light and will be hard to spend money on, the foliage has to be protected!! Products listed for conventional producers will include - Intrepid, Confirm, Belt, Delegate and Altacor. For organic producers, products will include Entrust, certified Bt insecticides, Azera and Neemix.

Check out the Texas Pecan Integrated Pest Management website for regular updates on pecan related issues throughout the state at

<http://pecan.ipmPIPE.org>.

## Garden Humor

*New gardeners learn by trowel and error.*

*An unwritten rule of gardening -- any self-respecting rock will break at least one shovel before accepting its new home.*



## Mosquitoes

By Lisa Rogers  
Entomology Group  
Fort Bend County Master Gardeners

It's that time of year again when we are invaded by a rather small biting pest, the mosquito. In Texas there are 85 species with 17 of those found here in Fort Bend. In addition to being a nuisance, some of the species can be a public health threat. Several diseases are transmitted through the bite of infected mosquitoes.

Adult females are the mosquitoes responsible for transmitting disease because they are the only ones that consume a blood meal, which they require to develop their eggs. Prior to ingesting blood, the mosquito injects saliva containing chemicals that keep blood from clotting. This saliva causes itching and usually a small bump on the skin. The majority of mosquitoes bite from dusk to dawn.

Knowing where mosquito eggs are laid and conditions required for development can provide clues to control mosquito populations.

Some measures for mosquito control:

- Regularly drain standing water
- Change water in bird baths or outdoor animal water troughs at least once a week
- Remove any object, trash or container from outside that could contain water
- Maintain pools, artificial ponds, and sprinkler systems
- Use tight fitting screens on rain barrels
- Keep gutters clean and draining properly, and fill tree holes with plants and sand or soil

Protecting people when mosquitoes are active:

- Wear light colored personal protective clothing (long sleeves, long pants, socks and shoes)
- Avoid wearing perfumes, colognes or fragrant lotions
- Sleep in an air conditioned room, repair window and door screens
- Avoid being outside at dusk or dawn when mosquitoes are active
- Use insect repellent on exposed skins when outdoors and follow manufacturer's directions

Use pesticides to kill larvae or adult mosquitoes only as a last resort. Only use pesticides when all other measures do not work because pesticides do not know the difference between good and bad insects. Finally, always follow manufacturer's directions carefully.

## Seasonal Garden Checklist: July/August

By Dr. William C. Welch,  
Professor & Extension Landscape Specialist

- Evaluate the volume of water delivered from lawn sprinklers to ensure healthy, stress-free grass during the heat of the summer. One thorough watering which will deliver one inch of water at a time is better than several more shallow sessions. The amount of water available through flower bed sprinklers may be checked by placing several shallow pans among shrubs or flowers.
- Caladiums require plenty of water at this time of year if they are to remain lush and active until fall. Fertilize with 21-0-0 at the rate of one-third to one-half pound per 100 square feet of bed area, and water thoroughly.
- Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning from now until mid-winter. Severe pruning at this time will only stimulate tender new growth prior to frost.
- Sow seeds of snapdragons, dianthus, pansies, calendulas, and other cool-season flowers in flats, or in well-prepared areas of the garden, for planting outside during mid-to-late fall.
- Plant bluebonnet and other spring wildflowers. They must germinate in late summer or early fall, develop good root systems, and be ready to grow in spring when the weather warms. Plant seed in well-prepared soil, one-half inch deep, and water thoroughly. Picking flowers frequently encourages most annuals and perennials to flower even more abundantly.
- It is time to divide spring-flowering perennials, such as iris, Shasta daisy, oxeye, gaillardia, cannas, day lilies, violets, liriop, and ajuga.
- Select and place orders for spring-flowering bulbs now so that they will arrive in time for fall planting.
- Don't allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture.
- A late-summer pruning of rosebushes can be beneficial. Prune out dead canes and any weak, brushy growth. Cut back tall, vigorous bushes to about 30 inches. After pruning, apply fertilizer, and water thoroughly.

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



By Boone Holladay  
County Extension Agent  
Horticulture

### THREE SISTERS FARM

At the end of a small road off FM 762 you'll find Three Sisters Farm. This is a small family farm in rural Needville near Brazos Bend State Park. The farm gets its name from the previous enterprise, a live oak tree farm. Naturally, a group of three oaks still grow near the front of the property. Just behind the remnants of row planted oak trees you'll find their gardens where they grow vegetables in raised bed gardens and keep well over 100 chickens for their eggs.

Owners and operators Jennifer Plihal and Peg Turrentine, gleefully known as farmer Jen and farmer Peg, put love into what they grow. According to farmer Jen, "We believe our food should come from a source as local to us as possible. We need to learn how to eat with the seasons and embrace the fact that we won't be eating tomatoes in January, but will dream about eating them in May." Farmer Jen and Farmer Peg work hard to provide honest food for their customers and state that they grow without the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Their chickens are happy to free-range on the land, which keeps the bugs under control. The poultry flock is made up of mixed breeds, which provide a wide range of egg size and color. Their use of mechanized farm equipment is limited. These two dedicated farmers state that they would rather put the sweat equity into their product doing the work by hand.

Both farmers are also active members of the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, where they maintain the vegetable demonstration plots as well as help with a myriad of educational outreach activities.

No matter what the product is these two make sure it not only tastes great but has a great visual appearance. Aside from providing their top quality local produce to restaurants in the Houston market, they set up camp weekly just down the street from the farm at an "ol' tyme" farm stand. Swing out for a country drive on Sunday evenings until dusk, currently from 5-7pm. They'll be parked at the corner of FM 762 and FM 1994 near Brazos Bend State Park. To stay in touch on what's new with Three Sisters Farm, visit their website at [www.ThreeSistersFarmTX.com](http://www.ThreeSistersFarmTX.com).

## Garden Spotlight *FBMG Demonstration Gardens*

by Jane Gray  
Landscape Director  
Fort Bend County Master Gardeners

The Fort Bend Master Gardener Butterfly Habitat exists to provide a space for these wonderful winged insects to find food sources, a nursery for laying eggs, warmth and a safe place to hide from predators. While the habitat isn't a formal landscape space, it offers the plants that are needed for the unique life of butterflies in our area. The plants in the garden are specific to the butterflies that visit Fort Bend County.

Our goal is to showcase the plants so that local gardeners can learn which plants to use to attract these winged beauties to their gardens.



*Black Swallowtail Larva*

Plants in the garden include:

- host plants -where adult butterflies lay their eggs and the caterpillars find food
- nectar plants -food sources for the adult butterflies.

The garden has been certified as both a Monarch Way Station and North American Butterfly Association designated garden and is a wonderful place for photographers and families with children. Come see if you can spot a larva eating a plant or a chrysalis hanging under a bench or on a fence railing!



*Adult Queen Butterfly*

### Online Garden Resources

#### Aggie Horticulture:

Locate news, events, and featured sites for horticulture: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/>

#### Fort Bend Master Gardener Website

Information about Master Gardening, events, and gardening articles:

<http://www.fbmj.com>

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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Boone Holladay".

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*The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating. Educational programs conducted by the Texas AgriLife Extension serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, handicap or national origin. Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service or accommodation in order to participate in any Extension activities, are encouraged to contact the County Extension Office for assistance five days prior to activity.*

## DATES TO REMEMBER

FBMG Monthly Educational Programs  
Third Thursday of the month, 7:00 p.m.

Saturdays with the Fort Bend Master Gardeners  
First Saturday of the month 9:00-11:00 a.m.

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

Getting Back to Backyard Basics  
Aug. 10., 17, 24, Sept. 7, 14, 21

FBMG Earth-Kind Kid's Kamp  
Aug. 5—9, 2013

Coastal Prairie Master Naturalist Programs  
Aug. 1 & Sept. 5, 2013

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/>