

THE FORT BEND GARDENER



HORTICULTURE IN FORT BEND COUNTY

SPRING 2014

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Backyard Basics	1
Native Plants at Seabourne Creek Nature Park In Rosenberg.....	2
Richmond Farmers Market	3
Seasonal Garden Checklist.....	3
Going Nuts for Pecans in 2014 ..	4
Understanding Swarms: Part of a Bee Colony's Life	5
Tycoon Tomato: A New Texas Superstar	6
Introducing: Flashy Light Corner Market	7

Contributions from:



FORT BEND COUNTY
Master Gardeners

Aggie
Horticulture®



Fort Bend
Beekeepers
Assoc.

T E X A S
Master
Naturalist

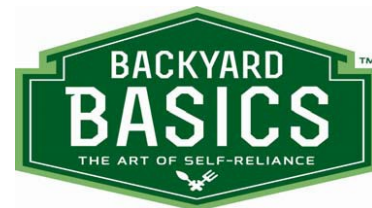


Contributing Editor

Barbara Buckley
Director of Communications
Fort Bend Master Gardeners

From Garden to Table —Growing, Preparing and Preserving Nutritious Food

By Boone Holladay,
County Extension Agent-Horticulture



The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners are pleased to present Backyard Basics, a year-long series of programs and workshops designed to help us all get back to the basics of healthy living through home-grown, home-based production, preparation and preservation of nutritious food.

Presenters for the series include Fort Bend Master Gardener specialists, AgriLife Extension Service staff and entrepreneurs experienced in areas such as poultry and food preservation. The workshops often feature demonstrations and visits to the Master Gardener demonstration gardens. The series began on March 22 with "Vegetable Production."

Upcoming Topics

- ***April 26 Fruit Production:** Selection, planting, pruning, pest & disease control.
- ***May 10 Culinary Herbs:** Select the herbs to grow, how to grow them, and their culinary uses.
- ***June 28 Aquaponics:** Aquaculture (raising fish) & hydroponics (soil-less growing of plants) grow fish and plants together in one integrated system.
- ***July 12 Poultry:** Legal considerations of raising chickens for egg production and choosing, caring for and feeding your flock.
- ***August 16 Vermicomposting:** Create organic fertilizer by raising worms.
- ***September 6 Grilling:** Selecting beef by grade and cut, and proper cooking techniques. Cooking demonstration and taste test included.
- ***September 20 Freezing & Dehydration:** Extend backyard food production with freezing & dehydration.
- ***October 11 Canning:** Extend backyard food production through canning.
- ***November 8 Jams & Jellies:** Making jams and jellies with your harvest.

Preregistration is required for each program by contacting Brandy Rader at 281-342-3034 or brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu.

You can also find more information and download registration forms at www.fbmg.com. The cost for each program is \$15 for individuals, \$25 for couples.

Native Plants at Seabourne Creek Nature Park In Rosenberg

By Lynn Trenta, Master Gardener/Master Naturalist

Native plants, including prairie plants and grasses, are beautiful additions to a garden or make a wonderful garden by themselves.

After these plants are established, they typically use less water and require little maintenance in terms of insect or disease control.



Native plants also provide habitats and serve as specific hosts and food for wildlife, including many beneficial insects. This is important to sustain a healthy environment and aide in agricultural production, among other purposes.

Butterfly Garden and Native Prairie Plants

The Coastal Prairie Texas Master Naturalists have incorporated native plants in several projects. These areas include a butterfly garden, a prairie demo garden, and a prairie restoration area. Native trees have also been added to the park.

The Butterfly Garden is close to the parking area at the park. This beautiful garden shows how native plants can be incorporated into a garden with non-native plants.

The Prairie Restoration Project

The Prairie Demo Garden, down the path to the right, contains only native prairie plants and provides seeds for the Prairie Restoration Project adjacent to it.



The garden identifies many of the prairie plants and demonstrates how native prairie plants can create a beautiful home garden. There is also a planting table which shows the different stages of plant growth, from seedlings to mature plants ready to go into the ground.

The Prairie Restoration Project is an area of the park in which invasive non-native plants are being removed and native prairie plants are being introduced and replenished.



Many Native Plants Are Familiar—and Engaging

Although some native prairie plants may be unfamiliar to the general public, the Indian Blanket, Gulf Muhly, and Black-eyed Susan in the accompanying photos are commonly seen in neighborhood and commercial landscaping. Winecup and evening primrose are often present in un-mowed fields. Along with some native grasses, such as Little Blue-stem, it is easy to see how these plants can contribute to an engaging and beautiful garden.

Springtime Beauty

When Spring arrives, come out to see the beautiful native plants at Seabourne Creek Nature Park at 3831 State Highway 36, Rosenberg, TX 77471!

Gardening Thoughts

Gardening requires lots of water — most of it in the form of perspiration.
~Low Erickson

Many things grow in the garden that were never sown there.
~Thomas Fuller, *Gnomologia*, 1732

Richmond Farmers Market:

New Home, Same Fresh Quality

By Boone Holladay,
County Extension Agent—
Horticulture



The Richmond Farmers Market has a new home—and the same, fresh, local produce that has always been its hallmark.

The Farmers Market is now located at Wharton County Junior College Fort Bend Technology Center campus at 5333 FM 1640 in Richmond.

Participating farmers offer a broad range of products—from freshly harvested local greens and vegetables to fresh Asian salad greens, lettuces, kale, salad mixes, onions, beets, turnips, fresh herbs, locally grown vegetable and herb plants for your garden, local honey and fresh free range eggs.

Supporting Local Agriculture

Shopping at the Farmers Market not only lets you buy the freshest foods possible, it supports local agriculture. Local fresh farm sales allow limited resource farmers a “piece of the pie,” so to speak. The locally-produced food movement is making its way into our region and into the minds of consumers. Your support helps make this way of life sustainable for your local farmer. The market is open every Friday afternoon from 2 pm to 6 pm.

On May 5, they will “kick off” a Sunday morning market from 10 am to 2 pm. The Sunday market will continue in line with spring “bumper” production yields.

Meet Them, “Like” Them

Stop by the market and meet your local farmers. You can also go online and “like” the market at facebook.com/richmondfarmersmarket. You’ll find information on what’s fresh, additional market events, and for vendor applications. If you are producing food in the area and are interested in sales potential, affordable vendor space is available for locally grown fruits, vegetables, and other farm fresh products.

Seasonal Garden Checklist:

April/May

By Dr. William Welch
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
Landscape Horticulturist

Many flower or vegetable seeds left over after planting the garden can be saved for the next season by closing the packets with tape or paper clips and storing in a sealed jar in your refrigerator.

Collect records on the usual flowering habits of plants in your garden, so that as the season progresses assemblies can be made of colorful combinations that will bloom in unison.

Prune spring-flowering shrubs soon after flowering. Keep the natural shape of the plant in mind as you prune, and avoid excessive cutting except where necessary to control size.

As soon as azaleas have finished flowering, apply an acid type fertilizer at the rate recommended. Don't over fertilize, as azalea roots are near the surface and can be damaged. Water thoroughly after fertilizing.

Climbing hybrid tea roses may be pruned as soon as they complete flowering.

Removing spent flowers, trimming back excessive growth, and applying fertilizer to an established annual bed can do wonders towards rejuvenating and extending the life of the planting.

Warm season annuals such as amaranthus, celosia, cosmos, marigold, portulaca, zinnia can be sown directly in the beds where they are to grow. Keep seeded areas moist until seeds germinate. When plants are large enough, thin out and transplant extras to other areas.

Check new tender growth for aphids. A few can be tolerated, but large numbers should be controlled. Washing them off with a strong spray of water may be all that is needed for control.

Start weeding early in the flower garden. Early competition with small plants can delay flowering. Adding a layer of mulch will discourage weed growth and make those that do come through easier to pull.

Going Nuts for Pecans in 2014

By Boone Holladay,
County Extension Agent—Horticulture



We would like to spend a minute to congratulate local producers for their regional award winning pecans! We were well represented at the 2013 regional pecan show in Brenham. Regional winners included Pete Pavlosky – First place for Cape Fear; Ray Mehrens – Second place for Mahan; Bennie Hundl – Second place for Prilop, Second place Caddo and Second place Cheyenne; Gloria Scheel – First place for Stuart (her first show entry!) and Bernie Brezina – Third place for Kiowa.

Fort Bend pecan entries that qualified for state at regionals will be judged this summer at the 2014 Texas Pecan Growers Association Conference & Trade Show in San Marcos, Texas. This event will be held at the Embassy Suites in San Marcos July 13th through the 16th. For conference information contact Texas Pecan Growers Association at (979) 846-3285 or visit their website at www.tpga.org. Great work folks and good luck at state!

Crop Outlook for 2014

Here are words directly from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension pecan specialist Monte Nesbitt with the crop outlook for 2014:

“Last year’s pecan crop (2013) was light for the state. The problems with the farm bill meant that the USDA preliminary pecan forecast was suspended, so we have no official numbers for the state of Texas or the U.S. crop for last year. Based on grower testimony and our own visits to orchards and looking at the pecan show, the crop was generally low with significant quality problems in some areas. East Texas, in particular, was challenged by rainy periods during harvest, resulting in loss of quality for some orchards. In contrast, pecan orchards in West Texas produced very good quality in many orchards. The panhandle of Texas produced no pecans in 2013 due to late spring freeze.

Although the crop was low in Texas and the Southeastern U.S., market prices fell off substantially in early December and as recently as January, no pecans were really being sold. All of the reasons for the market stagnation are unknown. Some growers moved their crop into cold storage in hopes of a resumption of buying activity in the spring or early summer of 2014.

Texas should see a bigger crop in 2014, and if it does show a truly ON-year, it will mean a shift in the alternate bearing cycle, which for many years was a cycle of On-Years in odd-numbered years (1999, 2001, etc.). However, it is possible that the crop in Texas will be mixed and not truly ON throughout the state, due to the drought and water challenges experienced in parts of the state over the past few years and thus a lot of trees out of sync with one another. Growers who took care of their trees in 2013 and had light cropping should expect to start the year with good crops and should prepare to protect against pecan scab, pecan nut casebearer and other early-season crop challenges.”

This outlook suggests a good harvest in Fort Bend County and even further, a good sample of entries in the 2014 Fort Bend County Pecan Show! The 2014 Fort Bend County Pecan Show will be held on Saturday, December 13th at the Bud O’Shieles Community Center in Rosenberg. Fort Bend County will also host the East Region competition in conjunction with our county show. This event is free of charge, includes a range of pecan-themed snacks, pecan materials for sale, and a great educational program. So come out hungry and cheer on our local pecan growers as they compete to move onto State in 2015!



Understanding Swarms: Part of a Bee Colony's Life

By Jeff McMullan

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

A "swarm" of bees clustered on a limb is a colony of insects in search of a new home. Most of us think kindly of honey bees because of their role as pollinators and their difficult struggle with pests and disease. Nonetheless, we don't want bees to move in with us!

Types of Swarms

There are two kinds of swarms: reproductive swarms and absconding swarms. Reproductive swarms appear most often during the spring while absconding swarms can be at almost any time of the year. Absconding swarms have been driven from their home by overcrowding, pests or disease or some other condition that has made their home uninhabitable for them. Because it contains an entire honey bee colony, an absconding swarm is often larger than a typical reproductive swarm. Reproductive swarms are an important part of the honey bee colony's life cycle since it is the way new colonies are created by honey bees.

Honey bees multiply by dividing. In the spring when the colony is strong and nectar and pollen are plentiful, the honey bees may begin preparations for a reproductive swarm. The old queen slows down her egg laying and trims down for her upcoming move. The colony begins feeding a number of larvae that will develop into a single replacement for the departed queen.

Grave Risks for New and Old Colonies

Producing a new colony is a risky process for the honey bees. The old queen leaves with about half the workers in search of a new home. The existing colony's population will be much smaller and they must successfully defend their home. They also must replace the departed queen with one that is accepted by the colony after she emerges from her cocoon. She must kill her rivals (there can be only one queen) and successfully return to the colony from a dangerous mating flight. Only then can she begin laying eggs and emitting the scents (pheromones) that regulate honey bee colony unity.

The swarm is at grave risk too. Since a queen is not a strong flyer, the reproductive swarm usually settles in a cluster that is not too distant from the hive. They must find a suitable place to live and begin foraging for food and raising new bees in order to survive. Because their queen is old, they may even be faced with raising a new one within a few weeks.

Keep the Colony Safe—and Away

As the swarm cluster waits, scout bees search for a new home. It is bad advice to kill a swarm of bees that can be easily captured by a beekeeper. It is equally bad advice to expect them to just go away since they could move into the wall of your home! Contact your Extension agent or search the internet for a beekeeper organization that is nearby. Unfortunately, if bees move into a new home that conflicts with humans, they become a costly pest control problem instead of a beekeeping problem.

Also be aware that bees prefer a home that has been occupied by bees before. They often move right back in to a vacant cavity that is available for them. If you have had bees before, a liberal spray of insect repellent (like Off!) at the entrance will discourage new tenants. This is especially important if you see scout bees investigating a potential new home. The swarm awaits nearby, but Off! will encourage them to move elsewhere, or a beekeeper can offer them a vacant hive to move into instead!

Tycoon Tomato: A New Texas Superstar

*Adapted from "Tycoon Tomato Named Superstar," by Robert Burns,
Published on the Website AgriLife Today*

Released at the San Antonio Livestock Exposition in 2011, the Tycoon Tomato has proven to be so exceptional that it has achieved recognition as a Texas Superstar, a crop that performs well for consumers and commercial growers throughout Texas.



Evaluated in extensive testing by Texas A&M AgriLife Research and AgriLife Extension horticulturists, superstars must also be easy to propagate, ensuring that the plants are both widely available throughout Texas, and reasonably priced. They must be disease resistant and must tolerate Texas heat well.

Tycoon has many characteristics that rival or even outdo the Celebrity tomato, the long-standing favorite of many commercial and home growers, according to one Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service horticulturist.



The Tycoon has superior resistance to diseases and nematodes, and it can produce very large fruit of superior quality. The plant is resistant to tomato yellow leaf curl virus, a disease that has become a major problem for many varieties in the past few years. It is also resistant to the fungi verticillium and fusarium, races one and two, and tomato spotted wilt virus, and nematodes as well.

Tycoon is an annual and determinant variety, which means that it is bushy rather than vining, and produces and ripens all its initial fruit crop at nearly the same time, most often within about a two-week period. Tycoon is also capable of growing very large tomatoes, with some specimens reported at one pound or larger.

Texas Superstar is a registered trademark owned by Texas A&M AgriLife Research, a state agency that is part of the Texas A&M University System.

Kudos for the Texas Master Naturalist Program from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality



Congratulations to the Texas Master Naturalist Program for being named the TCEQ Environmental Excellence Award Winner in the Civic/Community Category for 2014!

Congratulations are due to all TMN Volunteers, Chapter Advisors and Program supporters and partners all across the state on this exceptional achievement!

Introducing: Flashy Light Corner Market

The farm stand operated by Fort Bend Master Gardeners Peg Turrentine and Jennifer Plihal, owners of Three Sisters Farm in Needville, has a new name. Since it's located by the flashing light at the intersection of FM 762 and FM 1994, it's Flashy Light Corner Market!

Flashy Light, located approximately six miles from the entrance to Brazos Bend State Park, is open on non-rainy weekend days—either Saturday or Sunday (or both when they have ample produce).

For example, in May and June they will be harvesting tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, cucumbers, squash, beans, and herbs. This summer they will also be growing okra and purple hull peas. Three Sisters Farm produce is grown without the use of chemical fertilizers or pesticides.

Jennifer and Peg also sell free range chicken eggs and local honey harvested in the Richmond area at Flashy Light. They process excess produce into pickles, pickled okra, salsa, pickled peppers and cow-boy candy.

Flashy Light Corner Market generally opens in the late afternoon/early evening and closes up when the sun starts to set. Since dates and times are subject to change, customers can follow the schedule on facebook at www.facebook.com/3SistersFarm. For more information call (832) 276-4979 or sign up for weekly emails at info@threesistersfarmtx.com.

If you are interested in visiting Three Sisters Farm, call to schedule an appointment. Jennifer and Peg also host field trips for children's groups. For more information, please see their website at www.threesistersfarmtx.com.



Upcoming FBMG Garden Talks

On the first Saturday of each month the Fort Bend Master Gardeners invite you to visit the demonstration gardens to see what is growing each month. Master Gardeners are working in the gardens from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. for visitors to ask questions and get information about plants.

At 10:00 a.m. on most Saturdays a special "Garden Talk" will focus on specific topics/garden features.

The dates for the May and June "Garden Talks" are listed below. Please join us in the gardens.

Garden Talk Dates

- May 3, 2014 - 10:00 a.m.
Conversion to Drip Irrigation Workshop
- June 7, 2014 - 10:00 a.m.
Native Plants Garden Walk

Visit fbmg.com for information and location.

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION



Upcoming Programs

- April 24
Composting for Small Acreage Producer
- June 19
Grafting Vegetables: Principles & Practices
- For more information visit
<http://fortbend.agrilife.org/horticulture/>

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service-Fort Bend County
Boone Holladay, County Extension Agent-Horticulture
1402 Band Road, Suite 100
Rosenberg, Texas 77471

STANDARD PRESORT
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
ROSENBERG, TEXAS 77471
PERMIT NO. 51

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION



Boone Holladay

Boone Holladay, CEA-Horticulture
JB.Holladay@Ag.tamu.edu
(281) 342-3034
Fort Bend County Extension
1402 Band Road, Suite 100,
Rosenberg, TX 77471

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

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.

Backyard Basics Education Series
Upcoming Programs
April 26, May 10, and June 28

Coastal Prairie Master Naturalist
Monthly Program - Check website for dates

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/>