



Denton County Master  
Gardener Association



# THE ROOT

Grow  
With  
Us 



## 35 YEARS AND STILL GROWING



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# Buds From The Board

BY CHERYL HUCKABEE, PRESIDENT

As we fondly look back on the past few months, the Denton County Master Gardener Association has been on quite a journey. We took a well-deserved hiatus, stepping back briefly to savor the joyous holiday season with our nearest and dearest.

January brought a crescendo of celebration at the Graduation and Awards Banquet, where we shone a spotlight on the incredible contributions of our community. Fifty outstanding members were commended for their selflessness, perseverance, and remarkable accomplishments in 2023. Equally deserving were over fifty members recognized for their many years of priceless service, shaping the very essence of DCMGA and leaving an indelible mark on our community.

We tipped our hats to retired Master Gardeners, AgriLife staff, and our phenomenal community partners whose shared dedication to our mission created ripples of positivity throughout our community. The evening was made even more special by honoring the achievements of the forty-four members of the 2023 Denton County Master Gardener Graduating Class. Through 140 hours and more of volunteering and comprehensive horticultural training, their commitment truly embodied the spirit of community service.

Looking forward to February, excitement bubbles within the gardening community and DCMGA alike. This transitional period from winter to early spring sparks anticipation and preparation for the upcoming growing season. Plans are afoot for new beds, plantings, and landscapes. Seeds will be started, pruning will begin, and soil preparation will be underway. It's a bustling time, filled with the promise of a vibrant garden ahead. Check out [Preparing Your Landscape for Spring](#) in *The Root* to help you prepare, too.

February also heralds the arrival of forty-five new Master Gardener Trainees, embarking on a 14-week journey of classes and 70 hours of volunteer service, laying the groundwork to become certified Master Gardeners. The month kicks off with a Volunteer Opportunity Fair on February 14, themed "Volunteering is a Work of Heart." This event showcases the myriad programs and projects veterans and intern members can participate in throughout Denton County.



## Buds From The Board (Cont.)

As we gear up for spring gardening, community education takes center stage. From the Flower Mound Library to the Aubrey Library Gardening Series and enlightening lectures by our Master Gardeners and horticultural experts, there's a wealth of knowledge to be shared. Keep an eye on our website [Event Calendar](#) for exciting opportunities aligned with your gardening interests. And let's not forget, 2024 brings with it a leap year—a bonus day in February! An extra day to immerse ourselves in the gardening activities we hold dear. So, here's to the joy of gardening, community spirit, and the promise of growth in the months ahead!

Cheryl



### What to Plant in February

- Seed potatoes, Asparagus crowns
- Trees, Shrubs, and other permanent crops
- Winter annuals for early spring color. Plant dahlias this month.
- Cool-weather transplants like broccoli, cabbage, Brussel sprouts, and cauliflower.
- Start cool-weather seeds outdoors. These include beets, carrots, lettuce, and spinach
- Start seeds indoors for warm-season plants such as tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant.

For more monthly tips: <https://www.dcmga.com/maintain-and-solve-problems/maintain/monthly-gardening-tips/>





## 2024 Garden Tour Preview

*Flower Mound, Double Oak = Four Gardens + One Community Garden*

*May 11, 2024*

*Keyhole Gardening, Mushrooms/Mycology, Erosion Control/Drainage, Drought-Tolerant Shade Plants, Design within an HOA, Oak Trees, Native Plant Ecosystems, Pollinators, and Wildlife. Our Annual Garden Tour has it all. Watch for ticket information in early February.*

### *Shades of Eden & Art*

This one-acre property features native and adaptive showstoppers in a carefully curated design. The front, HOA-approved beds are beautified by the native oak and ornamental understory plantings, varied perennials, and a selection of reseeding annuals. A stair step display of decorative pots defines the entrance and adds color, while an innovative wave topiary of shrubs provides privacy to the side yard and truly steals the show!





## 2024 Garden Tour Preview *Shades of Eden & Art (Cont.)*

The rear of the home is a relaxed contrast of edibles and wildscaping with whimsical forms of art scattered throughout. The many beds of vegetables, herbs, and colonies of mushrooms, including a new Keyhole design, speak to the owner's passion for community gardens and supplying food pantries.



The canopy of trees and native plantings has garnered the area as a Certified Wildlife Habitat, witnessed by the occupied owl and bluebird boxes! The unique topography has created drainage issues that are creatively handled with dry creek beds, bridges, and permeable surface pathways.

Overall, this garden is a creative combination of traditional landscaping and native design that evoke feelings of peace and tranquility, in other words, an urban Eden.





## Meet A Member Sherri Ursini *Finding Her Niche*

BY JUDY ALLEN

Sherri was raised in the mid-west, where the soil is rich. Driving down the country roads where she lived, all you had to do was crack the window to take in the smell of the rich soil. In the summertime, she would walk to the family garden with the salt shaker in hand and feast on a variety of tomatoes that they grew. Her mother and grandmother raised Sherri and taught her how to garden and process what she grew. She had the very important job of “top weeder.” She had a chore list and tending the garden was the top priority. Sherri was an athlete in school and played softball and basketball. This was when she had time away from the garden. Other than the occasional mission trip, the garden was her world.



**Sherri Ursini ('21)**

Sherri continued the ancestry trend with her 4 sons. They grew sunflowers and even entered contests in the Best Vegetable category. Those are great memories for her and her children.

Trying and exploring many different projects as an intern was important to Sherri. She plunged in and strived to make connections with interns and veterans alike during the throws of the pandemic, all while longing to learn more about plants. Finding that connection between plants and people excites Sherri.



**Herb Garden**



**Sherri's entries in the DCMGA Fruit,  
Vegetable, Herb & Flower Show**

## Meet Sherri Ursini (Cont.)

She has had so many passions, from growing fruit to landscape design and growing edible and medicinal plants. But wait, there is more! What about Permaculture and Texas native plants? She is also an advanced Herb Specialist through Texas A&M AgriLife. Sherri is ready for her next Advanced Training class on Organics. She continues to take advantage of many learning opportunities when they become available. Garden planning, growing herbs, and sharing their benefits are a true passion of hers.

Since becoming a Master Gardener in 2021, Sherri has taken advantage of many Continuing Education opportunities. She has also learned more about horticulture therapy through North Carolina State University.

Sherri has worked on many projects, from the Plant Sale to the Garden Tour. She is the Project Manager for Herbal Branch. They meet monthly and have a wide range of topics and events. At last month's meeting thirty Master Gardeners made seed paper, transplanted lemon grass, and learned how to start seeds indoors. They are planning a Spring Tea for Fair Oaks residents in April. So, you can see, Sherri is busy. She loves to learn, and she loves to build relationships with those around her. We are so happy that Sherri decided to become a Denton County Master Gardener!



Photos Courtesy DCMGA Member Sherri Ursini

**Herbal Branch booth at the 2023 DCMGA Fall Into Gardening event**





## Plant of the Month - The Seedy Truth

BY MARTHA CANTRELL

As one of the most impatient ADHD adults I know, I have found that I really enjoy challenging myself by starting plants from seed. I'm not a success every time, but I enjoy the HUGE sense of accomplishment when I DO wait and am rewarded with a beautiful harvest. Until I started my Master Gardener Training, my seedy adventure started with no plan. I flew by the seat of my large britches, leaving death and brown wilted things in my wake. I now have a plan and would like to share it with you.

### Step One - Acquiring Seeds

The first way I acquire seeds in my germinating adventures is collecting them myself. I have plants in my garden that happily give me seeds, usually way more than I will use. I save what's left in envelopes, little jars, anything that will keep them dry. Make sure you label your seed containers. I include the month, year, and location I collected them. You can also attach a picture of the parent. Below is a link to a fantastic presentation from The Orange Gardener with more details about collecting and saving seeds.

<https://theorangegardener.org/assets/talks/seed-collecting.pdf>



The second way to acquire seeds is to purchase them from catalogs and retailers. I must admit that I am obsessed with seed catalogs and some are true works of art, with beautiful watercolor paintings. Other catalogs are more utilitarian, providing tons of varieties and detailed information but aren't something you would showcase. At the end of my selection process, including retail stores, my purchased seed total = WAY TOO MANY. Am I the only one who does this? I think not.

Seed packets vary as much as catalogs. Some are beautiful watercolor displays of what the seed must have grown into in some imaginary garden tended to by fairies. Other packets have pictures of actual plants that must have been grown by professional nurserymen under perfect conditions with some fairy involvement. And lastly, some seed packets are plain white with only the printed word. I like these because they set no expectations for me to chastise myself when my tomato doesn't grow up to look like the giant, juicy, flaw-free red beauty on the packet. Most of the seed packets will have all the details you need for success. Read these directions carefully, follow them like you would a trail of gold, and you won't need fairies.



## The Seedy Truth (Cont.)

### Step Two – Preparing the Seeds

Several things may need to be done to seeds before they are planted, most of which are noted on the seed packet. Here are just a few:

- **Test Viability** – There are 2 ways you can test the viability of older seeds.
  - Float seeds in water. The seeds that sink to the bottom are viable, floaters are not.
  - Place 10 seeds between wet paper towels & and place in a sealed plastic bag. If 5 germinate within 2 weeks, you have 50% overall germination/viability.
- **Scarification** – The seed's outer shell may need to be nicked for quicker water absorption and faster germination.
- **Cold Stratification** – Cold temperatures break down the seed coat and allow water to enter the seed for faster germination.
- **Pre-soak** – Soak seeds in warm water 8-12 hours to help break dormancy and germinate faster.

### Step Three – Choosing Growing Container, Soil & Setup

There are many things you can start seeds in – from folded-over toilet paper rolls, used yogurt containers, nursery pots/trays, to fancy seed-starting incubators. They all work if you have the correct light and temperature to insure germination. I use incubators as well as small used nursery pots placed under grow lights. You must adjust light height from your seed/seedling. I let my seedlings 'incubate' too long and they got leggy, which is great if you're a Ziegfeld girl, not if you're a seedling.



*The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is implied.*





## In The Veggie Patch

### *Broccoli: A Cool-Weather Favorite*

BY DONNA HULL

#### ***Origin and Benefits***

*Brassica oleracea* - broccoli - is a member of the cabbage family (Brassicaceae), also known as the “cruciferous” vegetables. Originating in the eastern Mediterranean area, its relatives include cauliflower, brussel sprouts, kale, and mustard green among others. Historians believe that broccoli was first cultivated by the Romans, who appreciated its culinary and health benefits. Broccoli is now known to be a rich source of vitamins A, C, and K, potassium, calcium folic acid, iron and dietary fiber.

#### ***Plant Requirements***

Soil: loamy to slightly “heavy” soil with small amounts of clay; 5.6-7.0 pH

Light: full sun, but will tolerate part shade

Temperature: optimum growth is between 40°F and 70°F. Temperatures 80°F and above may result in flowering of the heads. Temperatures below 25°F can kill the plant.

#### ***Planting***

Broccoli can be planted in the spring or fall in North Texas. Its main constraint is the length of the cool-temperature season, which tends to be longer in the fall than spring in our area. Thus spring planting is best done with transplants, started by seed indoors (4-6 weeks before last average frost) or purchased from your local nursery. Fall planting can be done with seeds between mid-August and late September, or with transplants from early September through mid-October. Plants should be spaced 18” to 24” apart in rows up to 36” apart.

#### ***Maintenance and Care***

Broccoli requires regular watering, keeping the foliage dry. These plants are heavy nitrogen feeders, and will benefit from a side dressing of nitrogen-rich fertilizer 1-2 times during the growing season. Major pests include cabbage loopers, aphids, and other worm pests. You can control worm pests with either *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) spray or Spinosad. Fungal diseases such as downy mildew may occur if conditions are wetter than usual.



Photos Courtesy DCMGA Member Donna Hull

**Mature Broccoli Head,  
ready for harvest**

## In The Veggie Patch - Broccoli (Cont.)

### *Varieties for North Texas*

Waltham 29, Di Cicco, Bonanza, Early Dividend, Green Comet, Green Magic, Packman, Premium Crop, Southern Comet.

### *Harvesting and Storage*

Broccoli is ready to harvest when the heads are 3-6" across. Early harvesting of the main, central head will encourage side shoots, which will always be smaller than the central head. Cut the stalk 5-8" below the head at an angle. Broccoli stores in the refrigerator for approximately 5 days, and is an excellent candidate for preservation by freezing. Cut the head into smaller florets, blanch or steam for 3 minutes followed by an ice bath, then freeze florets in a single layer in the freezer. Pack frozen florets into freezer-safe bags.



**Smaller Side Florets  
form after the central head**

### *Resources*

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Masabni, J. & Texas AgriLife Extension Service. (n.d.). Broccoli. <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/>. Retrieved December 29, 2023, from <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2011/10/broccoli.pdf>

Taste of History. (2021, August 23). A brief history of foods: broccoli. <https://www.tastesofhistory.co.uk/post/a-brief-history-of-foods-broccoli>

### *Editor's Note*

*We are starting this new recurring column, In the Veggie Patch, with the hope that it will help you grow more delicious vegetables and herbs in your home gardens. Enjoy!*





# Keyhole Gardening

## *A Simple Guide to Growing Healthy Food*

BY KELLI BIXLER

### ***History***

The design and creation of the Keyhole Garden began in the 1990s by the Consortium for South African Food Emergency. During this era, South Africa was plagued with one of the highest HIV/AIDS rates in the world. The goal of the Keyhole Garden was to allow sick and weak residents to continue to grow their healthy food. Keyhole gardens were built high enough so that people did not have to bend over while working, sturdy enough for a weak person to lean on, and small enough so that a person could reach the entire garden without walking.

Keyhole Gardens did very well, even in drought, and it was discovered that it stopped the soil from eroding even in areas where the soil was depleted. The design of Keyhole Gardens was implemented all over Africa, where all gardeners could grow healthy foods in an accessible way. The Keyhole Garden first arrived in the United States via Texas, which has a similar climate to parts of Africa.

### ***What is a Keyhole Garden***

Keyhole Gardens are a kind of raised bed that allows the recycling of old materials and kitchen scraps to create nutrient-rich soil. The design makes the garden completely accessible, even if a gardener has a physical disability. This eliminates the need for gardeners to walk around the garden, reducing soil compaction. The height of the wall means a gardener does not have to bend over if they have trouble with knees or backs. The height also makes a deeper trench for the composting of kitchen scraps. Keyhole Gardens are also beneficial for gardeners in northern climates as Keyhole Gardens warm up faster than in-ground gardens and, when built with stone, help to retain moisture.



Photo Courtesy <https://www.bigblogofgardening.com/build-keyhole-garden/>

**A keyhole garden is optimal for growing plants in arid climates.**

### ***Keyhole Shape Explained***

Keyhole Gardens are so named because they resemble an old-style lock. A more modern description would be the shape of a Pac-Man from the 80s video game. The shape is a circle

## Keyhole Gardening (Cont.)

with a pie-shaped cut-out allowing the gardener access to the entire garden. At the garden's center is a 10-12 inch wide compost basket buried deep enough to reach the roots of the plants. Sometimes called a cylinder, the compost basket can be made of landscape mesh, sticks, chicken wire covered in newspaper, tomato cages covered in fabric, or baskets. The basket needs to be made from a porous material. The purpose of the compost basket is to hold high-nutrient, organic material and allows it to decompose slowly into a gooey mess. As water moves through the basket, either from rain or hand-watering, it carries hydration mixed with nutrients straight to the roots of the plants. If the basket ever becomes full of compost, the more solid mixture can be spread over the top of the garden for an extra boost.

### *The Keyhole Wall*

The outside wall of the Keyhole Garden should be constructed from a material that can be built higher as the soil level increases. The original Keyhole Gardens were made from stones and bricks. These materials work great, as well as straw bales, stones from home-improvement stores, professional masonry work, or any material hard enough to hold in the soil and allow a weak person to lean on the outer wall. Be mindful not to leave significant gaps in the wall or soil and nutrients may escape the Keyhole Garden.

### *Preparing The Garden*

The interior of the Keyhole Garden should be filled in Hügelkultur style. Start with wet cardboard at the bottom to block weeds and grass. Next, the basket should be installed in the middle of the garden. Eventually, the basket will be supported with soil. Sticks or logs can be placed on top of the cardboard. This will create a foundation filled with nutrients from decomposing items. Other items, such as leaves, tree limbs, coffee grounds, grass clippings,

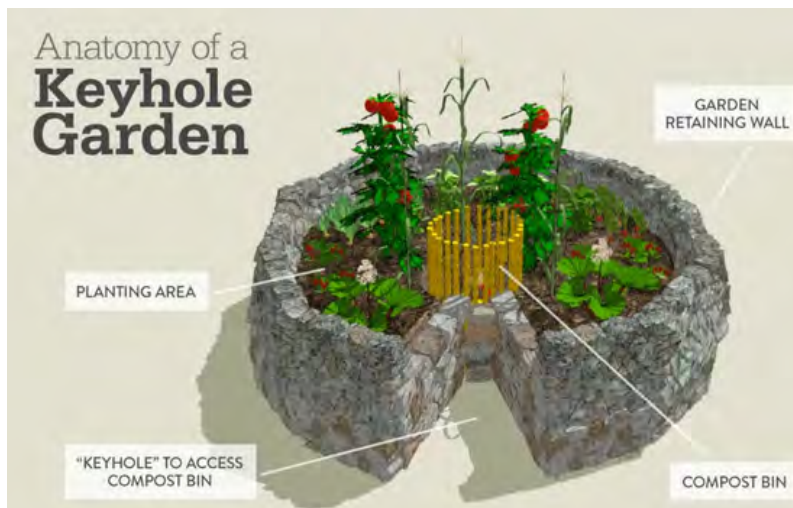


Photo Courtesy <https://www.bigblogofgardening.com/build-keyhole-garden/>

newspaper, and ashes, can also be added to the bottom. Several bags of good topsoil and bagged compost should be added on top of the solid items, and the Keyhole Garden should be filled slightly higher than the outer wall in a dome shape sloped towards the compost basket. As the solid items break down, you must refill the soil above the wall as the planting season progresses. Cover the soil with a good layer of mulch to help hold the moisture in the garden.



## Keyhole Gardening (Cont.)

### *What To Plant?*

Not all plants thrive in such a tight space as a Keyhole Garden. Plants that need much space or have different nutrient requirements will not always thrive, but most common vegetables have been planted in a Keyhole Garden and succeeded. Gardeners can plant seeds or transplant seedlings grown indoors in a Keyhole Garden. Some plants that do well in a Keyhole Garden include:

*Carrots	*Onions	*Beets	*Radishes	*Potatoes
*Turnips	*Garlic	*Lettuce	*Chard	*Watermelons
*Spinach	*Mustard	*Herbs	*Okra	*Peas
*Green Beans	*Cucumbers	*Tomatoes	*Kale	*Berries

### *Fill The Basket*

The basket in the middle of the Keyhole Garden should be filled with a combination of green and brown organic matter. Examples of brown matter are pieces of cardboard, dry leaves, dead stalks of plants, straw, and pieces of 100% cotton, wool, or silk fabric. Green organic matter could be veggie scraps, egg shells, tea bags, freshly cut grass or leaves, and fresh manure (barnyard types, not from pets.) Thoroughly water the organic matter after you place it in the center basket. This will help to break it down and aid the nutrients to leach into the soil.

### *Watering a Keyhole Garden*

One of the purposes of a Keyhole Garden is to conserve water. Plants should be able to grow using the moisture from the basket; however, external watering will sometimes be needed. Some Keyhole gardeners use some irrigation, but watering with a hose when you add organic material or watering when the ground is dry should suffice. After rain or watering, the soil dome angled towards the compost basket will help extra water mix with the organic matter and seep into the roots with additional nutrients.

### *In Conclusion*

Keyhole Gardening is an excellent way to grow plants and vegetables. The wall is high enough for those with mobility issues, and the cut-out allows gardeners to reach all plants without moving. Keyhole Gardens use less water than traditional gardens, and the water is mixed with added organic matter to boost plants' roots. Add flowers to attract pollinators and use collected rainwater for extra water conservation. Try planting in a Keyhole and grow your own bountiful harvest.

## Keyhole Gardening (Cont.)

### Resources & References

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<https://www.bigblogofgardening.com/build-keyhole-garden/>

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TIME TO RENEW



2024 DCMGA membership renewal opens Sep 1  
Veterans and 2023 Interns \$20 until Jan 31, \$30 after  
Scan the QR code or go to the Member Home Page



## DCMGA's 2023 Graduation and Awards Banquet – Where Excellence Blossoms!

BY CHERYL HUCKABEE

Amidst an atmosphere of gratitude and camaraderie, the 2023 Graduation and Awards Banquet unfolded, a tribute to remarkable individuals who shape the very fabric of DCMGA. Cheers echoed for selflessness, perseverance, and achievements, celebrating the rockstars of our community.

Dee Payne, Kathi Efflandt, and their team crafted an enchanting setting, treating attendees to a delectable dinner. Mike James dazzled with an incredible 2023 year-in-review presentation.

The spotlight shone on those whose enduring contributions make a lasting impact — veteran, intern, and retired Master Gardeners, AgriLife staff, and community partners. The ceremony also celebrated the 2023 Denton County Master Gardener Graduating Class, whose passion for community service and dedication left an indelible mark on our hearts. Our fun-filled evening reached its pinnacle with the installment of our 2024 Board of Directors.



**2024 Board of Directors**

Front row from left: Raeline Nobles (Member-at-Large), Kathryn Wells (Immediate Past President), Bonnie Ambrose (Outreach Director), Lori Barr (Secretary), Judy Allen (Communications Director), Dale Powell (Treasurer). Top row from left: Kelli Bixler (Vice President), Ellen Gauntt (Education Director), Cheryl Huckabee (President).

*Your service is appreciated!*

## Cheers to Growth, Knowledge, and Achievements: Celebrating the Graduation of the Class of 2023!

Ronnie Aquino  
Denise Babb  
Janice Beck  
Karen Belk  
Johanna Belwood  
Lillian Brown  
Lisa Burt  
Becky Cameron  
Martha Cantrell  
Justus Carlile  
Mario Casanova  
Becky Collins  
Dan Conrad  
Susan Cox

Tammy De Wet  
Katrina Dufreche  
Vanessa Fitzgerald  
Kat Golden  
Jeff Hardgrave  
Kaitlyn Hartgrove  
Donna Hesters  
Donna Hull  
Jaspar Kaur  
Gina Kemna  
Paige Kendrick  
Leslie Koberna  
Mary Loskorn  
Kristin Lyon  
Lisa Marlow

Brenda Martin  
David Mason  
Tyffany Mason  
Alison McMahon  
Laurel Odell  
Kathy Preston  
Bob Snyder  
Molly Stingley  
Pam Wells  
Ellen Westmoreland  
Jill Wetmore-Brown  
Dominique Wilson  
Tiffany Wishert  
Janice Yoder Smith



Class of 2023

*Congratulations!*



## Hats to the amazing individuals who've made a real difference in our community!

### *Texas Emeriti Master Gardeners,*

is our way of giving a huge shoutout to our retired members who've given over 5 years of exemplary service to DCMGA and our community. Our newest Texas Emeriti Master Gardeners: Selena Schindler (1992), Myrna Engle (1993), Tom Harpool (1994), Evelyn Jane Powell (1994), Carolyn Gold (1996), Donna Wolfe (1996), Janie Farler (2003).



Texas Emerita Master Gardener  
Selena Schindler (Class of 1992)



Texas Emerita Master Gardener  
Carolyn Gold (Class of 1996)

***Honorary Master Gardener,***  
is awarded to awesome individuals, who are not members, but who've made outstanding contributions to the Denton County Master Gardener Association and the community. Gina Steiner shines as a remarkable recipient!

*You Are Amazing!*



Honorary Master Gardener  
Gina Steiner, AgriLife

# Building Bridges, Cultivating Growth: Celebrating Exceptional Community Partners!

## *Community Partner Award,*

honors those outside of DCMGA who excel at teaming up with us, promoting sustainable horticulture, and getting the community involved.

Our 2023 amazing partner is Tractor Supply - Bartonville!



Kathy Turner, Tractor Supply - Bartonville, Manager



From left: Anne McMahon (2021), Lori Giesler,  
Kelli Bixler (2020)

*We Appreciate You!*



# Honoring Excellence: Celebrating the Achievements of our 2023 Award Recipients!

## *Special Merit Award,*

our outstanding veteran and intern members are the real MVPs, showcasing service to DCMGA and our community in every possible way.



### Special Merit Awards (Veteran)

Top row: Russ Allen (2021),  
Barbara Beane (2018), Melissa  
Migis (2020)

Bottom row: Kim Shaneyfelt,  
(2017), Joanne Spurgin (2019)



### Special Merit Awards (Intern)

Top row: Becky Cameron  
(2023), Mario Casanova (2023),  
Donna Hull (2023)

Bottom row: Llsa Marlow (2023),  
Brenda Martin (2023)



*Way to Go!*

## 2023 Award Recipients!

### *Project Manager/Leadership Award,*

given to the veteran and intern members who've been an amazing leader in a DCMGA Project, Event, or Special Interest Group.



Project Manager/Leadership Awards

From left: Jolayne LaCour, (2014) Michele Rawleigh (2018), Jeff Hardgrave (2023)

### *Educator Award,*

is all about honoring a veteran or intern member who's seriously committed to spreading knowledge in Denton County through DCMGA.



Educator Awards

From left: Chryl Prestemon (2018), Becky Collins (2023)

*Kudos!*



## 2023 Award Recipients!

***Award of Excellence,***  
is a special award given to a veteran member  
who goes above and beyond for DCMGA and  
the community.



Award of Excellence:  
Bill Moen (2022)

***Janet Laminack Distinguished  
Service Award,***  
is a special recognition honoring veteran  
members who've been absolute champions  
for DCMGA and the community.



Janet Laminack Distinguished  
Service Award: Pat Moyer,(2013)

***John Cooper Educator Award,***  
is awarded to a veteran member committed to educating  
Denton County citizens in every way possible during their  
time with DCMGA.



John Cooper Educator Award:  
Kathi Efflandt (2010)

*So Well  
Deserved!*

## Legacy of Dedication: Celebrating DCMGA's Longtime Members!

### 5 Years Class of 2018

John Ankenny  
Thiago Arenas  
Tia Ballard  
Lori Barr  
Barbara Beane  
Beverly Duncan  
Bethany Griffin-Loftis  
Cindy Helm  
Cheryl Huckabee  
Bill Menius

Susan Novak  
Chryl Prestemon  
Amy Prindle  
Michele  
Rawleigh  
Pam Spooner  
Carolyn Stoy  
Donna Terreri  
Lea Watson

### 10 Years Class of 2013

Daniel Arenas  
Charlotte Canion  
Denise Jeppson  
Georgiana McCoig  
Pat Moyer  
Raeline Nobles  
Angela Rosencrans  
Sandy Stickane  
Katherine Woodward

### 15 Years Class of 2008

Sue Hudiburgh  
Shirley Manfredi  
Audrey Robinson  
Carol Rowley  
Shirlee Singer

### 20+ Years Noble Oaks

Brent Bloechle (2003)  
Suzie Cook (2003)  
Janie Farler (2003)  
Clarice Luce (2003)  
Janet Gershenfeld (2002)  
Monique Goodhart (2002)  
Carolyn Tinner (2002)  
Brigid Corbett (2001)  
Tracy Durmick (2001)  
Carol Fitch (2001)  
Kaye Gross (2001)

Mary Morrow (2001)  
Brenda Wellenreiter (2001)  
Mary Ann Moreland (2000)  
Linda Williams (2000)  
Gresha Leamon (1999)  
Ruth Orpin (1999)  
Carolyn Gold (1996)  
Donna Wolfe (1996)  
Joan Stanley (1994)

### 30+ Years Royal Oaks

Myrna Engle (1993)  
Selena Schindler (1992)



*Spectacular!*



## A Beautiful, Fun, and Inspiring Celebration!



Top row: 5 Years, Class of 2018 - Lea Watson, Chryl Prestemon, Beverly Duncan, Lori Barr, Cheryl Huckabee, Cindy Helm, Michele Rawleigh, Barbara Beane, Susan Novak, Carolyn Stoy,

Second row: 10 Years, Class of 2013 - Daniel Arenas, Raeline Nobles, Pat Moyer; 15 Years, Class of 2008 - Sue Hudiburgh, Shirley Manfredi.

Third row: 20+ Years - Carol Fitch (2001), Carolyn Tinner (2002), Kaye Gross (2001), Suzie Cook, (2003), Clarice Luce (2003)

Bottom: 30 Years - Selena Schindler (1992)





# Gardening Grandma Says...

BY BARBARA BROWN

*Humans transitioned from hunting and gathering to growing their food about 12,000 years ago. Over the millennia they found some tricks to increase their harvest. What they learned they passed down to their children. Today, some of us are fortunate to have a grandmother, aunt, or neighbor who continues the tradition of sharing old-fashioned gardening wisdom. Much of that shared knowledge is helpful but sometimes it was just a superstition with a long history. The Gardening Grandma series of articles puts these tips and tricks to the test of modern science by answering the question, “Does it really work?” Or, is it a myth?*

*“You should plant your vegetable garden during the appropriate moon phase to get the best harvest. That means you should: Plant root vegetables when the moon is waxing. Plant leafy vegetables during a waning moon. Sow leafy annuals such as lettuce, spinach, cabbage, and celery during a new moon. Plant fruits and foods with external seeds when the moon is in its first quarter phase. Second quarter phase: Plant tomatoes, beans, and peppers when the moon is in its second quarter.”*

**Truth or myth? Let's find out!**

## Background information:

Centuries before County Extension agents or the Internet gardeners were taught how to successfully grow food through lessons passed down from family elders. Gardening traditions often included planting in tune with the phases of the moon.



Artwork: aberry89 on DeviantArt

According to the *Farmer's Almanac*: “The basic idea behind ‘Gardening by the Moon’ is that the cycles of the moon affect plant growth. Just as the Moon’s gravitational pull causes tides to rise and fall, it also affects moisture in the soil. Therefore, it’s said that seeds will absorb more water during the full Moon and the new Moon, when more moisture is pulled to the soil surface. This causes seeds to swell, resulting in greater germination and better-established plants. Moon phase gardening considers two periods of the lunar cycle: the time between the new Moon and the full Moon (the waxing of the Moon) and the time between the full Moon and the new Moon (the waning of the Moon). It’s considered best to plant certain types of plants during the waning of the Moon and other types during the waxing.”

<https://www.almanac.com/content/planting-by-the-moon>

## Gardening Grandma Says... (Cont.)

### *What science says about the effectiveness of lunar planting:*

The University of Illinois Extension office looked at this relying on a recent review paper in the journal *Agronomy*. Researchers reviewed over 120 scientifically supported references to assess if the moon's influence on Earth extends beyond tidal movements to significantly affect the lifecycle of plants. "Based on this review, and the factors we know about the moon's influence on Earth, there was no consistent relationship identified that supports a lunar influence on plant life. However, some interesting research was reviewed that alluded to other more tangential relationships."



*National Library of Medicine: National Center for*

*Biotechnology Information*, "Conceivably, the sunlight emitted by the moon at an essentially similar spectrum might be acting as an environmental signal, rather than an energy source, which is perceived by the plant, most likely via photoreceptors, to induce variation in cellular function."

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10004791/>

The most frequent caveat from researchers and science-based sites was that given the belief in the value of planting by moon cycles across many cultures and over several centuries, additional research is needed.

### **Resources:**

Deep dive: "What Has Been Thought and Taught on the Lunar Influence on Plants in Agriculture? Perspective from Physics and Biology" *Agronomy Journal* 2020:

<https://www.mdpi.com/2073-4395/10/7/955>

*National Library of Medicine (NIH)*, "Moonlight Is Perceived as a Signal Promoting Genome Reorganization, Changes in Protein and Metabolite Profiles and Plant Growth"

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10004791/>

*Plants* (an international, scientific, peer-reviewed, open-access journal on plant science published semimonthly online by MDPI): <https://www.mdpi.com/2223-7747/12/5/1121#:~:text=The%20moon%20reflects%20sunlight%20at,or%20land%20surface%20%5B1%5D>



## Retiring Veteran DCMGA Members

BY RAE LINE NOBLES, MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Two tenured veterans put in their retirement in January.

Denise Jeppson, from the Class of 2013, announced her retirement in January 2024. Denise always made a positive impact with her efforts whether in person or from her online work from home. She was active with many projects including Beulah Acres; DCMGA's annual Plant Sale; the Fruit, Veggie, Herb & Flower Show; Tree Seedling Distribution; as well as the Pollinator Citizen Science Project. The Hospitality Team and Communications Committee also enjoyed her warm, unassuming personality and many contributions to help things run smoothly for all of us!



Denise Jeppson ('13)



Phyllis Minton came to DCMGA in 2010. A firecracker influence in the Denton community and well-known in the University world, Phyllis contributed so much to DCMGA. I have always envied her for her ease of talking to people – she just walks right up to strangers and makes them feel a part of us so easily! She's an elegant lady and man, what a gardener, with a most impressive collection of Teresa's garden stones!



Photos Courtesy DCMGA Member Phyllis Minton

Phyllis Minton ('10)

I will miss seeing her and invited her to continue coming to visit us at General Meetings, celebrations, and events. For now, she's taking a few steps back from her active life, but I have no doubt we will continue to hear her name in Denton. I will miss that her confidence, her grace, and her always open, honest conversation won't be an active part of DCMGA any longer, but hope she'll continue to "pop in" with us as often as she can.

Editor's note: When I contacted Phyllis for a photo, she related the following:

*One of my most entertaining DCMGA memories was being on the Spring Garden Tour in 2015. A fierce wind and rain stirred up about 11 am and collapsed the ticket booth canopy. It drove us all into my garage for about an hour to stay dry. At one point the canopy and frame blew into the end of my driveway and landed on the large hill of mulch. (It was hot pink). Later, when guests started coming again, people wondered if it was a garden sculpture.*





**Phyllis's impressive collection of Garden Stones created by  
Angee & Teresa's Garden Stones, also DCMGA Master Gardeners.**

.....

*We will miss these two individuals a great deal.*

*We hope to see them out and about at our meetings, events, and celebrations!*



*Resources & Education Opportunities  
for Master Gardeners and the Community we serve  
can be found on the Calendar at  
Upcoming Events.*

*For non-DCMGA events, Continuing Education Opportunities.*

### DCMGA Members & Interns

*Plan Your Week (PYW) has the most current VS/CE Opportunities  
and is sent via VMS every Friday.*

## Pass-Along Marking

BY LIZ MOYER

### *Avoid Plant Sale Prep Horror!*

We've all been there. It's time to pot up pass-alongs for the Plant Sale, but:

1. We can't remember which plants were outgrowing their locations and need to be thinned and/or dug around the margins (edges)
2. The ones we think probably were candidates are still too small to be sure
3. We can't remember the names of the plants, and they are too small for ID

Oh, the horror!



Photos Courtesy DCMGA Member Liz Moyer

### Flag Marker



### Knife Marker

Act now! Grab a permanent felt tip pen and a bunch of plastic knives or utility marking flags and get out there. Mark your plants now for digging in early March. It's a good idea to make yourself a diagram or some notes when you mark them. Check your markers periodically throughout the winter to be sure they are still legible and to remind yourself where they are ...

Another advantage: utility flags and plastic knives come in a variety of colors and can really add a pop to your winter landscape!



### *Denton County Master Gardener YouTube Channel*

Click on "Videos" and check out our new presentations!

And don't forget to subscribe!

<http://www.youtube.com/c/DentonCountyMasterGardener>

**BY HELP DESK TEAM**

*Q: My neighbor says that you can toss coffee grounds out onto the soil as a way of composting. I thought coffee was very acidic, will doing that harm my plants?*

**A:** Fresh coffee grounds are acidic, but used coffee grounds are neutral when added to the soil. The acid in coffee beans is mostly water soluble, so it leaches into the coffee we drink. After brewing, the grounds are between 6.2 and 6.8 pH, so they won't affect the soil acidity.

Coffee grounds contain the three major nutrients plants and grasses need to thrive —nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. They also contribute minor amounts of important micronutrients such as magnesium, copper and calcium not typically found in synthetic fertilizers. You can save and use your own coffee grounds or you can even ask your local restaurant or coffee shop to put them in a container provided by you. Since coffee grounds are finely textured and easily compacted, they can create a barrier to moisture and air movement in the soil. Try using a thin layer (no more than one-half inch) of coffee

grounds; mix them with soil or cover them with mulch, so that the grounds are not a separate layer. Only a small percent of the nitrogen found in coffee grounds can be used by plants immediately, but over time they break down the organic matter creating a slow nitrogen supply for your plants. It also helps retain soil moisture.



A study at Oregon State University showed that when composted, coffee helped sustain high temperatures in compost piles, in contrast with manure which does not sustain the heat as long. High composting temperatures help reduce potentially dangerous pathogens and kill seeds from weeds and vegetables that have been added to the compost.

Coffee tends to get a green or blue-green fungus growing on it. The green one is beneficial (*Trichoderma* species) while the blue-green one is modestly beneficial. In any case, moldy coffee is great to use directly in the garden.

The USDA's Agricultural Research Service in Hilo, Hawaii found that slugs and snails hate caffeine. The slugs would come right up to but would not cross over the coffee grounds. A 1-2% caffeine solution killed most of the slugs and snails in two days. One cup of instant coffee contains about 0.05 percent caffeine, and brewed coffee has more.

Indoors, diluted coffee makes an excellent organic fertilizer, especially for orchids and African violets.





*If you have questions about any horticulture-related subjects, please contact our Master Gardener Help Desk at 940.349.2892 or [master.gardener@dentoncounty.gov](mailto:master.gardener@dentoncounty.gov). It's free of charge, and our pleasure to assist you.*

## LATE WINTER PREP FOR YOUR SPRING TURF

# TIME TO APPLY PRE-EMERGENT TO YOUR NORTH TEXAS LAWN

## LATE-FEBRUARY THROUGH EARLY MARCH

THERE'S A SPECIFIC TIME-FRAME TO APPLY



Apply Late-Winter pre-emergents before the soil temperature has warmed to 55 degrees F. For weeds that tend to sprout throughout the summer, a second application may be required in June or July.

## STOP THE GROWTH OF SUMMER WEEDS

PREVENT CRABGRASS AND SANDBURS WITH A PRE-EMERGENT APPLICATION AT THE CORRECT TIME.

A pre-emergent application will inhibit the seeds before they can "emerge" or germinate. Applications of Team, Halts, Balan, and Dimension may be used to prevent crabgrass and sandburs. Remember to carefully follow ALL directions on any herbicide you use.



## REMEMBER, TIMING IS KEY

DON'T MISS THE BRIEF WINDOW FOR TREATMENT

For summer weeds such as sandburs and crabgrass you can apply pre-emergents 2 to 3 weeks before the average killing freeze date in your area. Check your local forecast. In North Texas this can be from the end of February to the middle of March. If you miss this timeframe for treatment, you will have to wait until next year to apply pre-emergent. Timing is key!



## WHAT NOT TO APPLY

AVOID WEED AND FEED APPLICATIONS AS IT IS TOO EARLY TO APPLY FERTILIZERS TO YOUR LAWN

Over fertilizing and over watering can lead to more weeds and disease in your turf.

Annual and Broadleaf weeds can be treated after they emerge. [http://publications.tamu.edu/TURF\\_LANDSCAPE/PUB\\_turf\\_Herbicides%20for%20Weed%20Control%20in%20Turfgrass.pdf](http://publications.tamu.edu/TURF_LANDSCAPE/PUB_turf_Herbicides%20for%20Weed%20Control%20in%20Turfgrass.pdf)

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# DCMGA

## Upcoming Events Public Invited!

### **Feb 5 Natural Organic Gardening and Landscaping - Flower Mound Public Library 7PM-8:30pm**

Howard Garrett, the Dirt Doctor, will explain how a simple, natural organic program for gardening and landscaping on residential and commercial projects works better in every way – including from an economic standpoint. He will show how his management program can result in a 40-50% cost savings in water use and will also answer questions from the audience. Howard Garrett, the Dirt Doctor, is host of the nationally syndicated Organic Gardening & Living radio talk show. He is Chairman of Texas Organic Research Center (TORC). Howard will have a selection of his 15 organic books after the presentation.

### **Feb 9 Wake Up Your Garden for Spring! - Denton Senior Center, Denton 9AM -10AM**

There is nothing like spring to raise our spirits! Let Denton County Master Gardener Beverly Duncan get your creative juices flowing as she tells us all about some great tips to get our gardens off to a good start.

### **Feb 9 Preserving Your Harvest - Pilot Point Community Library, 2PM-3PM**

Learn from a pro when Denton County Master Gardener Bonnie Ambrose shares the joys of preserving all this goodness from your garden.

### **Feb 10 Introduction to Permaculture - Global Spheres Center 9AM-12PM**

Permaculture is a forward-thinking design system based on principles found in nature where wildlife and native plants are vital. Its purpose is to create living environments that are harmonious, sustainable, and productive, generating human yields abundantly while greatly reducing the work and energy required to maintain them over time. Learn how all this works.

### **Feb 12 Beyond A Sprig of Parsley - Flower Mound Public Library 7PM-8:30PM**

Your choice of herbs can enliven your cooking, freshen your environment and soothe your body. In addition to these traditional qualities, many herbs also offer a great deal of ornamental value to the garden as well. You'll discover the many uses of herbs and how and where to grow them. Bonnie Ambrose is a Denton County Master Gardener, bee keeper, rancher and avid quilter. Her garden holds many traditional and non-traditional herbs that she uses in cooking, flower arrangements and teaching. Join her in exploring the many uses of herbs.

### **Feb 12 Texas Superstars - First Baptist Church, 1251 Valley Ridge Blvd, Lewisville 10-11AM**

Texas Superstars are plants that have been rigorously tested by researchers in various eco-regions of the state and earned this prestigious rating from Texas A&M AgriLife for their performance. If you are looking for dependable plants, these are the ones! Beverly Duncan and Kathy Rainey, Denton County Master Gardeners.

### **Feb 19 The Tasteful Landscape - Flower Mound Public Library 7PM-8:30PM**

Why not have your landscape and eat it too! Discover edible, attractive trees, shrubs, and plants to update the same, old yard look. Optimize your land! Presenter: Lynda Harvey has been planting vegetables and flowers since she was a toddler. She became a Denton County Master Gardener in 2006 and is a Master Gardener Specialist for Earthkind, Entomology (Insects) and Vegetables. She is certified in Native Landscape Maintenance by the Native Plant Society of Texas and has Natural-Organic Certification by Texas Organic Research Center.

### **Feb 22 Plant Propagation - Ann Sturart Science Complex. TWU and via zoom 7PM-8:30PM**

Sponsored by the Trinity Forks Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas. Whether a beginner or an expert gardener, you will learn successful techniques to grow plants from seed, vegetative cuttings, or division in a fast paced one-hour classroom session presented by Denton County Master Gardeners Janet Gershenfeld and Kathi Eiflandt. (See DCMGA calendar for zoom link)

### **Feb 24 Permanent Gardening Class - Global Spheres Center 8AM-5PM**

To achieve a Permanent Garden, you need to understand the elements around it and how they are connected and learn from nature by observing, engaging, and activating your "Garden Brain." Our goal is to equip you to take action with more confidence, not be afraid to explore, and become the best gardener possible. Co-sponsored by Beulah Acres.

### **Feb 26 Creating a Suburban Oasis for Pollinators - Flower Mound Public Library 7PM-8:30PM**

Design your garden with plants that attract butterflies, bees, birds, moths, and more. Delight in the beauty of common butterflies and beneficial native insects that visit your plants. Teddi R Zonker is a Tarrant County Master Gardener. She is also a Monarch Conservation Specialist, a member of the NPSOT and has completed the Native Landscape Certification Program and Volunteer Advanced Training/Entomology program.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is an equal opportunity employer and program provider. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.



**Volunteering  
is a work of  
heart**

**JOIN US AT THE  
MEMBER  
VOLUNTEER  
OPPORTUNITY  
*Fair***

**FEBRUARY 14, 2024, 9:30AM**

**GLOBAL SPHERES CENTER**  
7801 S INTERSTATE 35  
CORINTH, TX

**DENTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER  
ASSOCIATION**

TEXAS  
MASTER GARDENER  
TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION  
Denton County

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**Flower Mound Public Library**  
3030 Broadmoor Ln. Flower Mound 75022  
fmlibrary.net | 972.874.6200



**FREE**

# GARDENING SERIES

PRESENTED BY THE DENTON COUNTY  
MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION



## NATURAL ORGANIC GARDENING AND LANDSCAPING WITH HOWARD GARRETT, THE DIRT DOCTOR

**Monday, Feb. 5 at 7 p.m.**

Learn how natural organic management can result in a 40-50% savings in water use. Presented by Howard Garrett, the Dirt Doctor.

## BEYOND A SPRIG OF PARSLEY

**Monday, Feb. 12 at 7 p.m.**

Discover the many uses of herbs as well as how and where to grow them. Presented by Master Gardener Bonnie Ambrose.



## THE TASTEFUL LANDSCAPE

**Monday, Feb. 19 at 7 p.m.**

Why not have your landscape and eat it too! Optimize your land for beauty and culinary use. Presented by Master Gardener Lynda Harvey.

## CREATING A SUBURBAN OASIS FOR POLLINATORS

**Monday, Feb. 26 at 7 p.m.**

Learn all about the synergy of butterflies, bees, birds, and other pollinators in your garden with Master Gardener Teddi Zonker.

Texas A&M Agrilife Extension is an equal opportunity employer and program provider. The Texas A&M University system, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the County Commissioners Courts Cooperating



**TO REGISTER, PLEASE VISIT  
[WWW.FLOWER-MOUND.COM/LIBRARYEVENTS](http://WWW.FLOWER-MOUND.COM/LIBRARYEVENTS).**



## Denton County Soil &amp; Water Conservation District



## TREE SEEDLING SALE

*Denton County Soil & Water Conservation District*

### Plant A Conservation Tree!

The Denton County Soil & Water Conservation District is once again offering tree seedlings for sale. 14 species are available for purchase. Plant a conservation tree and add beauty and shade to your property as well as many other benefits. Trees provide oxygen, windbreaks, soil protection, and wildlife habitat to benefit the landscape.



*Bur Oak*



*Mexican White Oak*



*Black Cherry*



*Shumard Oak*



*Pecan*



*Live Oak*



*Austrian Pine*



*Afghanistan Pine*



*Vitex*



*Mexican Plum*



*Desert Willow*



*Deodora Cedar*



*Italian Stone Pine*



Mail or submit orders to Denton County SWCD, 525 South Loop 288 Suite C-1, Denton, Texas 76205. If you have any questions, please phone 940-383-2691 Ext 3 or visit the USDA Service Center in Denton. Orders are reserved upon payment and quantities are limited, so please order soon.

Native seedlings available during this sale include Bur Oak, Shumard Red Oak, Pecan, Live Oak Mexican Plum, Desert Willow, and American Beautyberry (shrub).

For more information and an order form to download, visit <https://www.dcmga.com/tree-seedling-sale-2024-dcswcd/>





### Mission Statement

Denton County Master Gardener Association educates and engages county residents in the implementation of research-based horticultural and environmental practices that create sustainable gardens, landscapes, and communities.

### Extension EO/EEO Statement

Texas A&M Agrilife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

### 2024 Board of Directors

President	Cheryl Huckabee
Vice-President	Kelli Bixler
Secretary	Lori Barr
Treasurer	Dale Powell
Communications	Judy Allen
Education	Ellen Gauntt
Outreach	Bonnie Ambrose
Member-at-Large	Raeline Nobles
Past President	Kathryn Wells

### Social Media

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/DentonCountyMGA>

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/DentonCountyMGA>

Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/@DentonCountyMGA>

Pinterest:

<https://www.pinterest.com/DentonCountyMGA>

YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/c/DentonCountyMasterGardener>

### Save the Date

February 14 DCMGA Member  
Volunteer Opportunity  
Fair, Global Spheres,  
Corinth

March 13 DCMGA Monthly Meeting  
& Program, "Korean  
Natural Way Gardening,"  
Hunter Zmolik of  
EarthAid Organics

### Contact Information

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<https://dcmga.com>

### Content

The Submission deadline for the March edition  
of *The Root* is Thursday, February 15.

Submissions may be revised at the discretion of  
the editor.

Ideas, photos, and articles are welcome  
and may be submitted to Editor Karen Gibson  
or Communications Director Judy Allen  
at [dcmga.communications@gmail.com](mailto:dcmga.communications@gmail.com).

Unless otherwise attributed, all photos are  
courtesy of Denton County MGA.