



Denton County Master
Gardener Association



THE ROOT

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Us 



35 YEARS AND STILL GROWING



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Buds from the Board

BY CHERYL HUCKABEE, PRESIDENT

Gratitude is the fairest blossom which springs from the soul.

~ Henry Ward Beecher

As November arrives, it brings a season of reflection and gratitude — a time to pause and acknowledge the blessings in our lives. As I look back on my journey with the Master Gardener Program, I am thankful for the incredible experiences and opportunities it has given me. Since its inception in 1973, the Extension Master Gardener Program has touched countless lives. I'm especially grateful for the Denton County Master Gardener Program, which began in 1989 and became a cherished part of my life in 2018.

One of the greatest blessings I've received from this program is the lasting friendships I've made. There's something truly special about connecting with people who share the same love for gardening and passion for serving the community. These relationships have blossomed over the years, reminding me that gardening is not just about plants but about nurturing bonds with like-minded individuals.

I'm also incredibly thankful for the continuous learning opportunities the program offers. Through the guidance of horticulture experts and fellow Master Gardeners, I've gained knowledge that has improved my gardening skills and deepened my appreciation for the natural world. Every new technique or plant species I discover reminds me of how much there is still to learn and explore.

Lastly, I am grateful for the chance to contribute to my community's efforts to grow into a greener, healthier place to live. Knowing that our work — whether teaching others, planting trees, or creating gardens — makes a lasting impact fills me with pride and purpose.

On November 13, I invite you to our monthly meeting to dive deeper into one of gardening's most essential aspects: Soil. Jane Duke, a Master Naturalist and certified Soil Food Web Analyst, will lead an informative session on soil's vital role in ecosystems. Learn how soil food web analysis can support Monarch way stations, create native spaces, and transform lawns into fertile, healthy habitats. The one-hour program begins at 10 a.m. at Global Spheres Center in Corinth. We hope to see you there!




In The Veggie Patch: Cabbage

BY DONNA HULL

Cabbage belongs to the Family *Brassicaceae*, known informally as the “cole crops” or cruciferous vegetables. There are over 400 varieties of cabbage known, and most horticulturalists include smooth-leaved head cabbages, crinkled savoy cabbage, loose-leaf “Napa”-type cabbages, bok choy, and Brussels sprouts in the group. From the culinary perspective, cabbage can be divided into five groups: (1) white and green cabbage with tightly packed round heads; (2) red cabbage, with tightly packed round heads of red leaves; (3) savoy cabbage, similar to the green head but with crinkled leaves and a slightly peppery or nutty flavor; (4) Napa cabbage, an oblong cabbage with looser leaf pack and mild flavor; and (5) bok choy. This article focuses on the first four of these cabbages.

Origins and Benefits

Wild ancestors of cabbage most likely originated in Britain and continental Europe in cool and wet habitats along the coastlines. (If you are a fan of genetics, google the “Triangle of U” for some interesting information on cabbage evolution!) Throughout the Middle Ages and into the time of the Roman Empire, cabbage was cultivated in other parts of Europe and in the Mediterranean, where open-leaf varieties were grown by the Greeks and Romans. Even then, there were apparently both positive and disparaging views regarding the smell of cooked cabbage! Odors aside, the medicinal properties of cabbage are significant. Raw cabbage is an excellent source of Vitamin C, and sailors from northern Europe regularly carried it on board their ships to prevent scurvy. Cabbage is also a good source of potassium (Vitamin K), B6 folate, calcium, and other minerals.

Plant Requirements

Cabbage requires cool temperatures, and is best grown in the fall to early winter in north Texas. Optimum day/night temperature range is 40°F to 70°F (some varieties, such as Green Boy, are more heat tolerant). If plants are gradually exposed to colder temperatures, they can tolerate a maximum cold temperature of 15–20°F with frost cloth. All varieties require at least 4–6 hours of sun and well-drained soils; they are adaptable to heavy clay soils (they do not do as well in sandy soils), and prefer a pH range of 6.0–7.5.



Purple and Green Smooth-Leaved Head Cabbages

In The Veggie Patch: Cabbage (Cont.)

How to Plant

Cabbage is best planted as transplants in North Texas, beginning with the cooler temperatures in October, or 10-12 weeks before the first frost. Cabbage plants need space and time to grow, so be prepared to give them room in your beds for 2-3 months; the average number of days to harvest ranges from 60-80 days after planting, depending on the variety. Prepare the soil with ample organic material, both for drainage and to provide long-term nutrients. It is advisable to add a high-nitrogen fertilizer to the bed prior to planting. Plant transplants 18-24" apart for best development in rows 1.5'-2' apart.

Maintenance and Care

Water regularly - cabbage prefers a uniform moisture level for optimum development of the heads. Fertilize every 3-4 weeks with a high-nitrogen fertilizer. October temperatures can get warm, so be ready to help your transplants with water and shade cloth to endure the lingering hot days. Be aware that your greatest challenge will be the pests that like to feed on cabbage leaves.

Cabbage loopers are among the worst pests, but they are controllable with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt). Other pests include aphids, harlequin bugs, crickets and grasshoppers. One non-pesticide solution for these pests - cover your cabbage plants with micro mesh fabric and prevent any access to the plants. Fungal diseases such as downy mildew, *Alternaria* leaf spot, and black rot may occur under certain conditions. Control with fungicidal sprays and/or choosing disease-resistant varieties.



Savoy Cabbage

Varieties for North Texas

There are a number of varieties of cabbage recommended for North Texas. Green head cabbages that grow well here include Early Jersey Wakefield, Farao, and Green Boy. Alcosa is a good savoy variety; Red Express and Red Acre are recommended red cabbage head choices. A newer variety, Snow Crown, is a "self-blanching" green head cabbage, meaning that the outer leaves grow over and protect the developing head from sunscald.

Harvesting and Storing

Cabbage is ready to harvest when the head is firm to the touch, and the size is of the desired choice. Be aware that larger heads will continue to need regular, even watering to prevent the cabbage head from splitting - too much moisture or too little can cause cracking. If grown in the spring, cabbage is also prone to bolting with warmer temperatures - thus the

In The Veggie Patch: Cabbage (Cont.)

recommendation to grow in the fall. When ready, cut the stem with a knife as close to the head as possible, leaving the older leaves and stalk in place. Some varieties may produce small lateral heads afterwards if conditions are right. Store it whole and unrinsed until you are ready to use it, in a plastic bag (best if it is a breathable plastic), and in the refrigerator. If you are lucky enough to have a root cellar in Texas, wrap them in newspaper and store them apart on a shelf for 2-3 months!



Napa Cabbage

Resources

MarthaStewart.com – “5 types of cabbage you’ll find at the grocery store—and the best ways to use them,” Gollin, R. (2024, April 22).

<https://www.marthastewart.com/types-of-cabbage-8635048#:~:text=The%20entire%20cabbage%20gang%2C%20which,produce%20category%20manager%2C%20Misfits%20Market>

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension – “Cabbage” (n.d.-a), Masabni, J., Department of Horticulture

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2011/10/cabbage1.pdf>

Texas Gardener – “Perfect Cole Crops for Texas Winters” (n.d.).

<https://www.texasgardener.com/perfect-cole-crops-for-texas-winters/>

Texas A&M Horticulture – (6 B.C.E.). “Cabbage. Aggie Horticulture PLANTanswers: Vegetable Page.” Retrieved October 15, 2024, from

<https://aggie-hort.tamu.edu/plantanswers/vegetables/cabbage.html>

*Check out the
Best Cabbage Soup recipe
on page 6*



BEST Cabbage Soup Recipe

This cabbage soup recipe is a cozy and healthy blend of cabbage, veggies, and herbs for an easy, low-carb meal. Add chicken or beef to make it a hardy meal.

Author: Lisa Bryan
from [DownShiftology](#) with Lisa Bryan
<https://downshiftology.com/recipes/cabbage-soup/>



Prep Time: 15minutes mins Cook Time: 15minutes mins Total Time: 30minutes mins
Servings: 4 servings

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large carrot diced
- 2 garlic cloves minced
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/2 cabbage chopped
- 1 (14-ounce) can diced tomatoes
- 4 to 6 cups vegetable broth depending how thick or brothy you'd like it
- 1 to 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/4 cup roughly chopped fresh parsley
- cracked black pepper to taste
- 1 onion diced
- 2 celery stalks diced
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Instructions

1. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium-high heat, and add the diced onions, carrot, and celery. Cook for 4 to 5 minutes.
2. Add the minced garlic and spices and stir for another minute.
3. Add the cabbage and let it sweat for 5 minutes, stirring frequently.
4. Pour in the vegetable broth and diced tomatoes and let it simmer uncovered for 10 minutes, or until the vegetables are softened to your liking.
5. Remove the cabbage soup from the heat and add the lemon juice, parsley, and cracked black pepper. Give it another stir, then serve.

Nutrition

Calories: 145kcal | Carbohydrates: 19g | Protein: 4g | Fat: 7g | Saturated Fat: 1g |
Polyunsaturated Fat: 1g | Monounsaturated Fat: 5g | Sodium: 469mg | Potassium: 511mg | Fiber: 6g | Sugar: 9g | Vitamin A: 3106IU | Vitamin C: 61mg | Calcium: 103mg | Iron: 2mg

Recipe Submitted by Judy Allen



You're Invited

November 2024, Monthly General Meeting & Program
"Soil is Key to Habitat Creation, Maintenance and
Restoration"



Discover soil's vital role in ecosystems with Jane Duke, Master Naturalist and certified Soil Food Web Analyst. Learn how soil food web analysis aids in setting up Monarch way stations, creating native spaces, and transforming lawns, ensuring soil fertility and healthy habitats.

November 13, 2024, 10 am
Global Spheres Center
7801 S Interstate 35E, Corinth, TX 76210

Plant of the Month - Pansies

BY DONNA HULL

Cooler temperatures are finally arriving in North Texas. As summer annuals look a little older and less happy with the weather, it is time to replant beds and containers with beautiful cool-weather annuals. There are many such plants to choose from, but the most popular - and one of the easiest to grow - is the pansy. In addition to ease, they have beautiful flowers in many different colors and varieties, all developed for the home gardener.

Pansy's Past

The modern pansy is a cultivated variety that came about through the crossing of wild and cultivated species of the Genus *Viola*. Thus all pansies are violas, but not all violas are pansies! There are believed to be over 500 species of *Viola*, many of them still in wild habitats across Europe and Asia. The earliest plants called "pansy" appear to be a wild variety that was discovered in the European alpine meadows. It differed from the known species of *Viola* by having larger, more rounded blooms and by growing from one main stem which branches above ground as opposed to several stems branching below the ground. The name pansy is believed to come from the word "pensée" which means thought, or memory, in French.



Pansies (*Viola x wittrockiana*) with the Familiar "Face" (Color-Blocking) on the Flower Petals

Canva Photo

The person credited for the discovery of the variety that we all recognize as a "pansy" today is William Thompson, gardener to Lord Gambier in Iver, England. The two began crossing numerous species of *Viola* in the early 1800s. In 1839, Thompson developed the species *Viola x wittrockiana*, a pansy with large, rounded flowers that had large color blocks on the lower petals which are now called the "face" (or in some literature, monkey face) of a pansy. Its popularity was immediate, and gardeners throughout Europe and then the U.S. began planting this variety of pansy. Breeding didn't stop, however; new varieties without the "face" (also called clear-face) were developed later in the 1800s by a Scotsman named Dr. Charles Stewart. And breeding continues to this day - currently most of the research on these plants is being done in the U.S., Germany, and Japan. The result? Many, many different beautiful colors and patterns to choose from.

Pansies (Cont.)



Photo Courtesy DCMGA Member Donna Hull

Johnny Jump-Ups

Other *Viola* species, including Johnny Jump-Ups, are known for their smaller flowers and often have "whiskers" or lines radiating from the center of the flower.

There is one more variety that deserves mention when we talk about the home garden and *Viola* - and that is Johnny Jump-Ups. I remember asking my mom to buy these when I was finally allowed to have a say in what was planted in her front beds! Johnny Jump-Ups, the species *Viola tricolor*, are native to Europe, Siberia, and Iran. They traditionally had small yellow, blue, and white flowers with "whiskers" or lines on their faces. For the curious, they are called "Jump-Ups" because the flowers would bloom overnight and their tall height made them seem to "jump up" above the foliage. Today you can find these lovely small relatives of the pansies in all colors, with and without faces or whiskers.

When to Plant and How to Grow Pansies

Pansies are typically 2-7" in width and 4-9" in height. They are best planted in full sun in soils with temperatures between 45°F and 70°F. Too much warmer and the pansies can become leggy and grow poor roots, which will not help them through the winter. Any colder, and the plants' roots simply don't grow, leading to the same outcome. Over the next few weeks, soil conditions in North Texas should become perfect for planting - but don't wait too long!

Pansies prefer well-drained soils with added organic matter and a slow-release nitrogen fertilizer. They can be grown in raised beds, containers, or in the ground. For the latter location, be sure that the soil does not have too much clay that retains moisture. Pansies are susceptible to fungal diseases, and while they like to be watered, they do not like to have roots sitting in water. Plant them 6" to 10" apart, using 1 or 2 colors for a showy display or using as many varieties as you choose! Water them after planting, then about 2 times per week (depending on rain) or when the top 1-2" dry out.



Photo Courtesy DCMGA Member Donna Hull

A "Clear-Face" Pansy is Characterized by Solid Colors

Pansies (Cont.)

Here in Texas, we love to plant and grow pansies in part because they are also very cold hardy and can survive a hard freeze in our area. Though they might survive without it, pansies should be covered with frost cloth during weather that dips into the 20s, and it is especially advisable to cover them if there is freezing rain. They will likely look a bit frostbitten after you remove the cloth, but pansies will begin to rebound even with temperatures in the 30s, provided that they are otherwise healthy plants.

And depending on where you live, you may need to be aware that pansies are often referred to by some horticulturalists as “critter candy”! Deer love to eat pansies. So do slugs, snails, and pill bugs – use whatever snail and slug bait you prefer, from the store or a homemade version. Some gardeners who are pesticide-free in their gardens also add pansy flowers to salads or for decoration on pastries – give it a try, and enjoy your pansies this winter!

Resources

Neil Sperry's GARDENS, Sperry, N. (2013, April 6). *Pansy Time in Texas!*
<https://neilsperry.com/2010/11/pansy-time-in-texas/>

AgriLife Extension Texas A&M Systems, (n.d.). Pansy. Aggie Horticulture. Retrieved October 15, 2024, from <https://aggie-hort.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/flowers/pansies.html>

AgriLife Extension Texas A&M Systems, (n.d.-a). “It’s Pansy time!” East Texas Gardening. Retrieved October 15, 2024, from <https://hortipm.tamu.edu/county/smith/tips/flowers/pansy.html>

Henderson County Master Gardener Association, (2023, December 9). “Johnny Jump Up: A Little Bloom with a Big Impact.”
<https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/publicity/johnny-jump-up-a-little-bloom-with-a-big-impact/>



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>



Mark Your Calendars: It will soon be time to renew your DCMGA membership for 2025!

- When: October 1 – December 15, 2024
- On-Time Renewals fee: \$20

Procrastinators, Beware:

- Late Renewal (Dec 16 – Dec 31, 2024): Add \$15 to your fee
- Super Late Renewal (After Jan 1, 2025): A \$20 late fee is added to your renewal fee (Ouch!)

Important:

- If you miss the December 31, 2024 deadline, your status goes Inactive on January 1, 2025.

Stay in the Loop:

- Keep an eye on your emails and Facebook for updates from Member at Large, Raeline Nobles (rnobles2@verizon.net).



Membership Renewal QR Code

Creating Backyard Habitats

Birds and Bees, Flowers and Trees, Oh My!

BY LIZ CHANEY

Creating a backyard habitat not only increases the beauty of your property but also contributes to local conservation efforts, supports wildlife and can increase the resale value of your property. Native plants are well adapted to our local climate, require less maintenance and reduce water usage, making them the ideal choice for sustainable landscaping. In addition, backyard habitats provide food, water and shelter which are essential resources for wildlife and supports biodiversity in urban areas.

Before beginning the project consider the space, time, and resources available for the habitat. Not all areas can serve all wildlife. An apartment balcony or patio can serve hummingbirds, small birds, and butterflies. Inviting squirrels or small mammals to the same area might not lead to the desired outcome. Availability of time and resources are also considerations as the habitat will require maintenance throughout the year.

Steps to Creating a Backyard Habit

Choose Food Sources

Select plants that are native perennials to your area that will be the foundation for providing food and shelter to native wildlife. Plant selection will determine the type of wildlife that will visit. For example, pollinators will enjoy bee balm, salvias, Turk's cap and milkweed etc. Birds prefer plants that produce seeds and fruits such as sunflowers, berry bushes, fruit trees, and shrubs or birdfeeders with appropriate food are also a viable support for wildlife. A full list of prospective plants can be found in the websites below. In addition to the native perennials include adaptive vibrant annuals to enhance the flavor profile. Chocolate everyday might get boring but add salted caramel, raspberry or mint and now it is more enticing.



Photos Courtesy DCMGA Member Liz Chaney

**Monarch Butterfly on
Tropical Milkweed**



Mealy Cup Sage

Creating Backyard Habitats (Cont.)

Provide Water Sources

Installing birdbaths, puddlers, fountains or ponds can offer a reliable water source. The size of the water source should match the size of the wildlife. Pollinators such as butterflies and bees prefer puddlers (a non-metallic pie-type dish with sand or small rocks covered in water even with the sand or rock). Damselflies and dragonflies, which consume mosquitos, also enjoy puddlers. Birds and small mammals usually prefer birdbaths, fountains, or ponds. Make sure the water is always clean and available, especially during the heat of summer.



Create Shelter

Incorporate elements such as birdhouses, bat boxes, brush piles and loose dirt to provide safe resting and nesting places for various wildlife. Dense shrubs and trees also offer excellent cover. Creating shelter doesn't need to be complicated or complex. A potted plant on a patio or balcony can provide shelter near a hummingbird feeder or other bird feeder.

Avoid Pesticides

Use Earth-Kind and IPA (Integrated Pest Management) methods to minimize the use of harmful chemicals and promote healthy environments that encourage beneficial insects.

Certify your Habitat

Consider getting your backyard habitat certified through the National Wildlife Federation's "Certify Habitat" program. Certification provides recognition for your efforts. In addition, it can connect you with a community of like-minded gardeners.

Backyard habitats offer numerous benefits, including biodiversity, improved soil health, and enhanced aesthetic appeal. As well as providing educational opportunities for children and adults alike, they foster a deeper appreciation for nature and conservation. Furthermore, a backyard habitat can positively impact your property value. Homes with well-maintained and ecologically friendly habitats are often more attractive to potential buyers and a certified wildlife habitat can be a unique selling point in a highly competitive market.



Lady bugs are a predatory insect with a special appetite for aphids!

Creating Backyard Habitats (Cont.)



Texas Spiny Lizard



Texas Sage with a Honey Bee



Brown-headed Cowbird

There are a few things more enjoyable than a morning drink on the patio watching the butterflies flutter here and there or the variety of birds at the bird feeder (they both will change with the different migration patterns). Birds, bees, butterflies, and a world of wildlife for your viewing pleasure can be found in your backyard habitat.

References

National Wildlife Federation, Native Plant Habitats, “Create & Certify”
<https://www.nwf.org/Native-Plant-Habitats/Create-and-Certify>

Texas Master Naturalist, Elm Fork Chapter, “Enticing North Texas Butterflies”
<https://txmn.org/elmfork/enticing-north-texas-butterflies>

Florida Wildlife Federation, “Butterfly Puddlers”
<https://floridawildlifefederation.org/butterfly-puddlers/>

DCMGA (Denton County Master Gardener Association)
“Earth-Wise Guide to Landscape Design”
<https://www.dcmga.com/earth-wise-landscape-design/>
Gardening Basics, “Plants that Bring Nature into your Landscape”
<https://dcmga.com/garden-basics-wildlife-attracting-plants/>
Gardening Basics, “Landscape Maintenance is for the Living Things”
<https://www.dcmga.com/garden-basics-landscape-for-living-things/>



Winterizing Garden Tools

BY JANICE YODER SMITH

Cleaning and winterizing garden tools are tasks that some gardeners take on as the weather cools and days grow shorter in late autumn. Newer gardeners may wonder how best to take care of their tools. Veterans may welcome new approaches or general reminders of processes.

Wise gardeners review safety guidelines before starting their work. Where do they have the best lighting and ventilation if they are sharpening or cleaning tools? Where will they have access to water, drains, and electricity plus any other equipment they need to tune up their garden tools? Do they have sand or kitty litter to absorb any spills? Is there a fire extinguisher nearby? Will they inform someone where they will be and keep their phone with them?

Gardeners must always remember that they can grow new skin but not new eyes. They locate or replace their safety glasses or **ANSI Z87.1**-approved goggles to protect the front and sides of their eyes from splashes, sparks, and impacts. <https://blog.ansi.org/ansi-isea-z87-1-2020-safety-glasses-eye-protection/>

They understand that different tasks require different gloves and equip themselves with appropriate hand protection. The *University of Arkansas* provides guidance about which gloves to use for different tasks.

https://www.uaex.uada.edu/life-skills-wellness/extension-homemakers/docs/Leadership_Training_Guides/gardening_gloves.pdf



Safety Equipment



Cleaning Tools



Lubricants

To improve safety and efficiency, gardeners gather and organize tools in advance. They review detailed instructions for the cleansers and equipment they plan to use. The *University of Minnesota Extension* provides detailed explanations of cleanser usage.

<https://extension.umn.edu/planting-and-growing-guides/clean-and-disinfect-gardening-tools#sources-2148210>

Photos courtesy of Janice Yoder Smith

Winterizing Garden Tools (Cont.)

A minimum garden tool cleaning kit includes

- Safety glasses and appropriate gloves to protect your eyes and hands
- Stiff bristle or wire brush and sanding paper or block to scrub off lighter debris or rust
- Putty knife, 5-in-1 tool to scrape off stubborn debris or rust
- Lubricating or cooking spray to remove plant sap
- Mill file, carborundum (honing) stone, and vise grips to sharpen edges
- Water-displacing penetrating lubricant to prevent rust and lubricate moving parts
- Double-boiled linseed oil to preserve wood handles
- Wire brush and a putty knife to remove soil
- Sandpaper to smooth wood handles and steel wool to polish metal surfaces

Step 1: Clean

Use the wire brush and/or putty knife and soap and water on hand tools (shovels, spades, trowels, rakes, hoes, pruning shears, loppers, and hedge clippers). Remove sap with a rag and a lubricant or cooking spray.

Disinfect the blades of garden hand tools with 70% rubbing alcohol. A 10% chlorine bleach/water solution be used instead, but unless rinsed off after 30 minutes, can corrode metal. Disinfect tools after every tool use. The *University of Minnesota Extension* provides detailed explanations of different tool cleaning solutions.

<https://extension.umn.edu/planting-and-growing-guides/clean-and-disinfect-gardening-tools>

Step 2: Sharpen

Sharpen the cutting edges of pruning shears, loppers, hedge clippers, hoes, and mower blades and the scoop edges of shovels, spades, and trowels with a honing stone or fine file. Be cautious when using a bench grinder to avoid damaging the steel temper of shovels and hoes. If uncomfortable sharpening blades, an internet search will help locate blade sharpeners nearby. Some hardware and sewing shops may have sharpeners. Explore these links for excellent how-to guidelines for sharpening hand tools:

- DCMGA Tool Sharpening video by Nick Barrows: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmFskqgvdbQ&pp=ygUoZGVudG9uIGNvdW50eSBtYXNoZXIgZ2FyZGVuZXJzIGNsZWVuW5nIGdhcmRlbiBob29scw%3D%3D>
- Wisconsin Horticulture: <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/maintaining-lawn-and-garden-tools/>
- University of Florida Gardening Solutions: <https://gardenningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/tools-and-equipment/sharpening-your-tools>

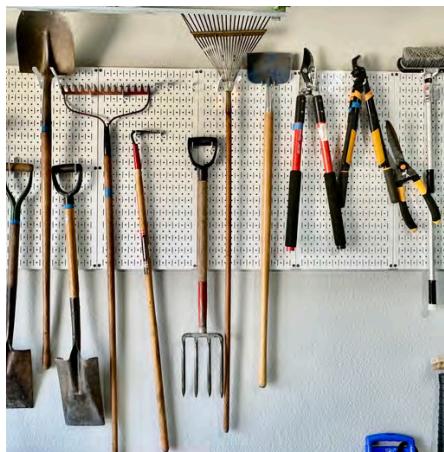
Winterizing Garden Tools (Cont.)

Step 3: Lubricate

Wipe all metal surfaces with lubricating oil to remove and prevent rust. After cleaning and sanding any nicks, wipe wooden handles with boiled linseed oil. **IMPORTANT:** Oily rags, especially those used with linseed oil, can spontaneously combust and cause fires. Place used rags in an air-tight container like a glass jar or metal coffee can, fill with water to thoroughly soak the rags, and seal tightly. Contact your trash service for the local disposal procedure.

Step 4: Prepare Other Tools

Tighten hardware on wheelbarrows and utility carts and to prevent rust, spray paint any worn spots that reveal bare metal. Lubricate wheels so they don't squeak. Examine tires and wheels. Replace if needed.



Step 5: Store

Store your clean, sharp and renewed tools in a clean and dry location. Hand tools should be stored upright off the floor on a pegboard, for instance, and shovels, etc. in racks or on wall hangers. During the growing season, keep a wire brush or putty knife near where you store your tools to clean them as you put them away.

Cleaning Power Tools

Follow the owner's manual carefully for maintenance of power tools. Remove any plant debris and weed seeds from under the mower deck, string trimmer guard and mechanism, and in crevices of other power tools. Sharpen or replace the mower blade if necessary. Tighten loose screws and nuts, remove fuel from the tank, change the oil, and check spark plugs if needed. Examine electrical cords and connections. Replace any damaged or worn parts. Remove batteries from tools. Store batteries at room temperature separately from the tools. Follow *EPA guidelines* found at the link below to prevent lithium-ion battery fires.

<https://www.epa.gov/recycle/frequent-questions-lithium-ion-batteries#08>

Following the steps to cleaning and repairing garden tools becomes easier with practice. Completing the cleaning, disinfection, and lubrication of garden tools after every use allows them to work more efficiently and prolongs their useful lives. Cleaning and disinfecting tools before and after working in someone else's garden helps limit plant disease and parasite spread.

Winterizing Garden Tools (Cont.)

Those seeking additional information about cleaning and winterizing tools may reach out to the *DCMGA Help Desk* using the form at <https://form.jotform.com/222967511206050>.

Additional Resources

University of Florida/IFAS, "Disinfecting Your Garden Tools," Florida-Friendly Gardening Information (Accessed 12 Aug. 2024)

<https://gardenningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/tools-and-equipment/disinfecting-tools/>

Fire Department, Bend Oregon, "Preventing Spontaneous Combustion of Oil-Soaked Rags," (Accessed 12 Aug-2024)

<https://www.bendoregon.gov/home/showdocument?id=16299>

Clemson University, "Winter Tool Care," Home & Garden Information Center, (Accessed 12 Aug. 2024)

<https://hgic.clemson.edu/winter-tool-care/>

UF/IFAS Extension Leon County, "Winterizing Garden Tools," 21 Dec. 2013, (Accessed 12 Aug. 2024)

<http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/leonco/2013/12/20/winterizing-garden-tools/>



What to Plant in November

- Carrots, spinach, mustard greens, radish, and turnips.
- Spring and summer flowering perennials.
- Trees, vines, and shrubs.
- Sow seeds of crimson or white clover as a cover crop, to protect soil and prevent weeds.
- Spread compost on all garden beds for added nutrition and winter protection.
- Major tree pruning can be started this month.

For more monthly tips:

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

Fall Into Gardening Recap

BY CHERYL HUCKABEE

The Fall into Gardening event was a fantastic success. Over 100 community members gathered for a day packed with gardening tips, hands-on activities, and expert presentations. Hosted by the Denton County Master Gardeners, Upper Trinity Regional Water District, and Beulah Acres at the beautiful Global Spheres Center, the event had something for everyone, from beginner gardeners to seasoned green thumbs.

One of the event highlights was The Learning Lane, featuring interactive demonstrations and presentations from local experts. The Upper Trinity Regional Water District brought in a Hydrology Stream Trailer, which helped visitors understand the importance of water conservation and how to keep their gardens hydrated sustainably.

The Denton County Master Gardeners took center stage with exciting demonstrations on topics like drip irrigation, plant propagation, and worm farming—practical tips for making your garden thrive. Attendees also received invaluable insights on growing Texas Superstar® plants, succulents, cacti, herbs, and vegetables, along with expert advice on tree care. Some lucky visitors even went home with a sapling of either a Live Oak or Shumard Oak!

The Native Plant Society of Texas was also on hand, offering guidance on how to grow Texas native plants successfully, which are well-suited for our region's climate. Visitors could get all their pressing gardening questions answered at the "Ask a Master Gardener" booth, which proved to be a popular spot throughout the day.



Hydrology Stream Trailer



Herb Booth

Fall Into Gardening Recap (Cont.)

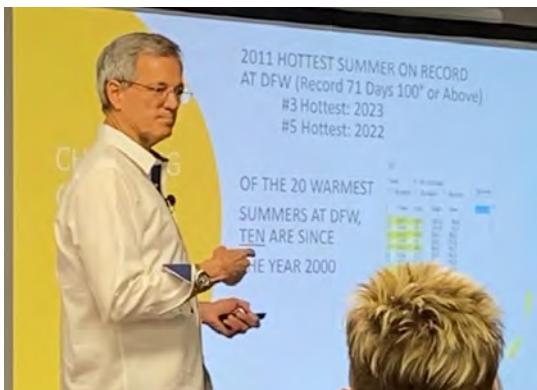
The Kids Zone provided plenty of fun for families, with educational activities hosted by the Science with Attitude team. Kids learned about pollution's impact on our waterways through the Freddy the Fish activity and participated in a hands-on Plant People gardening exercise.

Guided tours of the breathtaking Israel Prayer Garden, Potager Garden, Community Garden, and Agroforest, led by Global Spheres Center Grounds Staff and Master Gardener docents, inspired all visitors and showcased what can be accomplished with thoughtful garden planning and care.

The day's keynote speaker, CBS Texas Meteorologist Jeff Ray, presented "Changing Weather, Changing Gardens," shedding light on how shifting climate patterns impact gardening and how we can adapt. Five additional presentations about soil health, water conservation, tree selection, Texas native plants, and pulling it all together with Earth-Kind® Landscape design offered a wealth of knowledge for attendees.



Israel Prayer Garden



Keynote Speaker CBS Texas Meteorologist Jeff Ray

A true community spirit was displayed as visitors donated 112 pounds of non-perishable food to benefit Our Daily Bread, a local charity. Participants entered a raffle to win exciting gardening gifts in exchange for their generosity, adding an extra layer of fun to the day!

The event wouldn't have been possible without the incredible Denton County Master Gardener volunteers. They truly shined, creating a fantastic educational event to help the community learn more about sustainable gardening practices. Their passion and expertise were on full display, and they clearly love what they do!

If you missed this wonderful event, don't worry! You can catch recordings of the presentations on the [Denton County Master Gardener YouTube channel](#) and check out our website [Event Calendar](#) for upcoming educational events.



Gardening Grandma Says...

BY BARBARA BROWN

Humans transitioned from hunting and gathering to growing their food about 12,000 years ago. Over the millenniums 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?

“Gardening Grandma says, “Look for the woolly caterpillars in the fall. If they are fuzzier than normal, we will have a cold winter.”

Truth or myth? Let's find out.

For centuries, farmers and home gardeners analyzed the behavior of the animals around them to predict the severity of the coming winter weather. Although there is no scientific validity to the belief that caterpillars are good weathermen, it is an enduring story somewhat akin to trusting that if Punxsutawney Phil (a groundhog that lives in Pennsylvania) sees his shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter weather.



Do we have woolly caterpillars in Texas?

Yes. “Woollybear is a term used for several species of caterpillars that are densely covered in hair, or setae. Two common woollybear caterpillar species in Texas are the saltmarsh caterpillar



Saltmarsh Caterpillar
Photo Courtesy [Alton N. Sparks, Jr.](#),
University of Georgia, Bugwood.org, [CC BY 3.0 US](#)

and the garden tiger moth caterpillar. The saltmarsh caterpillar ranges in color from black to brown to yellowish, while the garden tiger moth caterpillar has a fuzzy black top and brown bottom according to *Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service* integrated pest management specialist from Travis County.

(<https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2023/12/13/woollybear-caterpillar/>)

Gardening Grandma Says... (Cont.)

Although insects and groundhogs are not good winter weather predictors for gardeners, here are some fun and tested examples of links between unusual animal behavior and environmental events:

- Birds leave an area before a tornado outbreak: In an unrelated study of golden warblers by the Universities of California, Minnesota, and Tennessee in conjunction with U.S.G.S., researchers observed that the birds fled from their breeding territories more than 24 hours before a severe storm outbreak with multiple tornadoes. According to team leader, Henry M. Streby Ph.D. of the **University of California, Berkeley**, "The most curious finding is that the birds left long before the storm arrived. At the same time that meteorologists on The Weather Channel were telling us this storm was headed in our direction, the birds were apparently already packing their bags and evacuating the area." The researchers suspect that the birds did it by listening to infrasound associated with the severe weather, at a level well below the range of human hearing.

(<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/12/141218131415.htm>)

- Predicting an earthquake coming soon: Although many anecdotal reports state that dogs, cats, horses, and cattle act strangely long before people feel the shaking or vibrations of an earthquake, limited research has been done on the validity of this phenomenon. However, in July 2020 the **Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior**, reported that "In an international cooperation project, researchers from the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior in Konstanz/Radolfzell and the Cluster of Excellence Centre for the Advanced Study of Collective Behaviour at the University of Konstanz, have investigated whether cows, sheep, and dogs can actually detect early signs of earthquakes. To do so, they attached sensors to the animals in an earthquake-prone area in Northern Italy and recorded their movements over several months. The movement data show that the animals were unusually restless in the hours before the earthquakes. The closer the animals were to the epicenter of the impending quake, the earlier they started behaving unusually."

(<https://www.mpg.de/15126191/earthquakes-animals>)

- Crickets: "Male crickets and katydids chirp by rubbing their front wings together. Each species has its own chirp and chirping is temperature dependent. Crickets chirp faster with increasing temperatures and slower with decreasing temperatures. To Convert Cricket Chirps to Degrees Fahrenheit: Count the number of chirps in 14 seconds, then add 40 to get the temperature. The number you get will be an approximation of the outside temperature." (not all crickets follow the rules though).

(<https://entomology.unl.edu/k12/crickets/temperature.htm#:~:text=The%20simplest%20method%20is%20to,published%20in%201897%20by%20A.E>)



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:

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



Photo Courtesy DCMGA Member Liz Moyer

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!



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.

D C M G A
HELP DESK
Question of the Month



Help Desk Team Contact Information
940-349-2892
master.gardener@dentoncounty.com

BY HELP DESK TEAM

Q: What is the best shade tree for a suburban house in Denton County?

A: We are fortunate that many trees grow well in North Texas. To make the best selection for your yard, consider the size of the area where the tree will be planted, whether you want an evergreen or deciduous tree, and how important it is to you for the tree to support local wildlife. The Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center has a search tool to help you decide based on your North Texas growing conditions and personal preferences at:

https://www.wildflower.org/collections/collection.php?collection=TX_northcentral

You can find a list of trees recommended for North Texas from the Trinity Forks Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas at:

(<https://www.dcmga.com/wp-content/uploads/docs/npsot-plants/native-trees-denton-county-tx.pdf>) and from the Dallas County Master Gardener Association at: "Great Trees for North Texas"
<https://dallascountymastergardeners.org/great-trees-for-north-texas/>

To help narrow your search you can learn more about each candidate tree from the "Texas Tree Planting guide" provided by the Texas A&M Forest Service:

<https://texastreeplanting.tamu.edu/viewalltrees.aspx>

As you can tell, many kinds of trees will thrive here. One tree that is highly recommended is an oak tree. Considered a keystone species and lauded by Dr. Doug Tallamy, Professor of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Delaware in his book "The Nature of Oaks", these large, long-lived trees support more life forms than any other trees in North America. Oak trees help clean the air, provide excellent shade, and are generally disease-free. At maturity, oak trees are large so you need to ensure you have enough space for them to spread out. Several types of oak trees grow successfully in North Texas including the bur oak, chinquapin oak, quercus texana, live oak, post oak, Mexican oak, Shumard oak, red oak, and lacey oak.

<https://texastreeplanting.tamu.edu/viewalltrees.aspx>



Healthy Post Oak

Fall is a great time to plant a new tree in your landscape because of the cooler temperatures and extra moisture that give the tree time to establish before summer's often extreme heat. This guide from Texas A&M Forest Service will help you through the correct planting process and early tree care. "Planting Trees in 12 Easy Steps"

<https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/arborday/plantingsteps/>

*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.
It's free of charge, and our pleasure to assist you.*



North Texas Gardening

Timely articles from [DCMGA](#) and [The Root](#)



[Fall Pruning Perennials \(11/2023\)](#)

[What's Ready to Harvest in November? \(11/2022\)](#)

[Preparing Your Plants for Cold Weather \(11/2021\)](#)

[Plant of the Month Frostweed \(11/2020\)](#)

[Plant Facts - Lenten Rose Helleborus](#)

[Gardening Basics - Leaves for Mulch and Compost](#)

[Gardening Basics - Gardening Gifts](#)



Denton County Master Gardener Association

Upcoming Events November

Nov 2 **Tree Class**
Trees are one of the most valuable assets in nature, performing many functions and providing countless benefits. You will better understand how important trees are, how they work and what they can do for and with you! After the class presentation, we will go outside and plant a tree together, demonstrating proper tree planting procedures that you can replicate yourself. When is the best time to plant a tree? Yesterday!
\$12 for pre-registration, \$15 at the door. Pre-registration is highly recommended for this popular class:
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C4CA5AE29A3F9C07-tree#/>
Global Spheres Ctr 7801 S. Interstate 35E, Corinth 9AM-12PM

Nov 4 **Community Strong Farm Work Days**
Growing Vegetables for Linda Tutt High School Student Run Grocery & First Refuge Food Bank. All tasks from soil prep to harvesting as the season dictates. We will give a short education time for the tasks of the day. Public is invited to join us.
1350 Milam Rd E. Sanger, Monday Mornings 8AM-10AM

Nov 7 **Flower Mound First Baptist Community Garden Work Days**
Learn and grow veggies to help the community. Wear comfortable shoes, hat, and sunscreen. Bring water. (No Work Day on Thanksgiving)
1901 Timber Creek Flower Mound – Thursday Mornings 9AM-11AM

Nov 8 **Native Plants**
As we all struggle to maintain our landscapes in our weird weather, more and more of us have discovered the joy of Texas native plants. They will stand up to our climate and soils and even improve the soil! Denton County Master Gardener and Native Plant Society of Texas member Lynda Harvey will help you get started bringing more natives into your yard.
Senior Center 509 Bell St. Denton 9AM-10AM

Nov 13 **2024 Monthly Meeting & Program “Soil is Key to Habitat Creation, Maintenance, and Restoration”**
Discover soil's vital role in ecosystems with Jane Duke, Master Naturalist, and certified Soil Food Web Analyst. Learn how soil food web analysis aids in setting up Monarch way stations, creating native spaces, and transforming lawns, ensuring soil fertility and healthy habitats. The one-hour program begins at 10 a.m. and is followed by our general meeting. Public is cordially invited!
Global Spheres Center 7801 S Interstate 35E 10AM-12PM

(ALWAYS CHECK THE DCMGA CALENDAR FOR UPDATED INFO!)


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.





Mission Statement

As Master Gardeners, our mission is to educate and inspire Denton County residents through research-based horticulture, to promote eco-friendly gardens and enduring landscapes that enrich our 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.

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Facebook:

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

Instagram:

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

X (formerly Twitter):

<https://twitter.com/DentonCountyMGA>

Pinterest:

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

YouTube:

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

Save the Date

November 13 DCMGA Monthly Meeting & Program "Soil Is Key To Habitat Creation, Maintenance, and Restoration" by Jane Duke, Master Naturalist

December 11 DCMGA Christmas Party (Members Only)



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Content
The Submission deadline for the December edition of *The Root* is Friday, November 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 jupiterjudyjudy@gmail.com.

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