

Denton County Master Gardener Association

# THE ROOT

Grow With Us 



Salvia nemorosa 'Sensation Sky Blue'. F.D. Richards, CC BY-SA 2.0

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<https://dcmga.com>

# Buds from the Board

BY RAELINE NOBLES, PRESIDENT

Hello, April! We have so looked forward to your arrival, and now, here you are! Budding tree leaves fill pockets of blue sky, and seedlings grow stronger, ready (or almost!) for transplant, and flashes of color emerge as Texas Superstar® annuals and native perennials work to bring their best show to the party of spring in North Central Texas. It's a time of budding beauty, cool mornings, and hope. Although the hard work of preparing and planting for spring may leave us sore, seeing the results makes it all worthwhile. Garden safely, keep those gardening gloves and sunhat on, stretch well before and after your garden session, and drink plenty of water. You may well still be a bit sore, but recovery is so much faster. More than anything, have fun, enjoy the metamorphosis of spring, and be proud of the results you see after each passing day of work. For more information on Texas Superstar® plants, check out <https://texassuperstar.com/>.



Stephanie Brundage, Unrestricted, wildflower.org

**Texas Gold Columbine**  
**Texas Superstar® Plant**

There are other reasons to celebrate April. For one, our annual Plant Sale is April 26 at the North Texas Fairgrounds ([2217 N Carroll Blvd, Denton, TX 76201](https://www.northtexasfairgrounds.com/)). We moved the event this year to the Fairgrounds for all the right reasons. We had outgrown our space for people, plants, and parking at our previous Plant Sale home, Trinity United Methodist Church in Denton. We are so thankful for their many years of kindness and support – Their help allowed Don and Pat Edwards (and so many other volunteers!) to grow the Sale into what it is today. The Fairgrounds will allow larger shaded areas for our plants and people, along with more facilities to support a growing crowd of happy plant buyers. The parking area is also larger and will allow many more patrons and volunteers to come and go with ease. Please mark your calendars for April 26 – For more information on our annual Plant Sale, see the two links below.

Download the printable [Plant Sale Flyer](#) and [go to the Plant Sale webpage](#).

April is also National Volunteer Month. A huge THANK YOU goes out to all of our volunteers! It takes a village to effect positive change in community knowledge and practice. Our DCMGA village is strong, able and committed to educate and inspire Denton County residents through research-based horticulture to promote eco-friendly gardens and enduring landscapes that enrich our communities.

## Buds from the Board (Cont.)

Being a 100% volunteer nonprofit organization, the Denton County Master Gardener Association would not be the growing force it is without our 352 volunteers giving it their all, from Interns all the way to the Board of Directors. Within those two extremes, we have 300 experienced volunteers trained and certified by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service who work tirelessly to educate our community on sustainable gardening. They practice those high values in our nearly 40 projects throughout Denton County, including community gardens, institutional landscapes, and local events such as our Plant Sale, Garden Tour, and Fall into Gardening. Our most important resource is our people, and we are so very proud of their work. So are others, as we received four first-prize state awards for our projects from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension in 2024. We hope for more this May when the 2025 awardees are named!

Come out and see us in action at any of our free educational forums, special events, or ongoing projects. You are always welcome! Our website ([www.dcmga.com](http://www.dcmga.com)) offers a full calendar of opportunities to learn and practice sustainable gardening. We look forward to seeing you in between your own gardening sessions. Happy April to you all!

~ Raeline



### *What to Plant in April*

- Warm weather crops into garden beds
- Seeds outdoors for beans, squash, okra, cucumbers, and melons
- Roses and summer flowering shrubs
- Fertilize roses if not done in March
- Fertilize warm-weather grasses with nitrogen
- If Spring flowering plants have finished blooming, you can prune. Not before, or you will lose the season's flowers

For more monthly tips:

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

## 2025 Garden Tour Preview

*Denton and Oak Point = Four Gardens + One Community Garden*

*May 10, 2025*

*Enjoy seasonal creeks, Texas native plants, rain gardens, water conservation & management, shade gardening, raised vegetable beds, fruit trees, berries & grapes, cacti & succulents, fragrant roses, community garden, hügelkultur, chickens, high tunnels, perennials & annuals, pollinator gardens.*

*Our Annual Garden Tour has it all. Tickets are available now on [dcmga.com](https://dcmga.com).*

*New this year! As you explore the gardens, watch for posters featuring the Digging Deeper logo scattered throughout the landscapes. These posters offer quick facts on a variety of popular garden topics. Each one also includes a QR code that links to more detailed articles and fact sheets, allowing you to explore topics further. You can read the articles right in the garden or take a photo of the QR code to read the article later. Additionally, enjoy hands-on activities at each garden, presented by Denton County Master Gardeners.*

### **Windblown Wildscape**

Windblown Wildscape is a one-acre garden planted on a quiet hillside in Oak Point. The landscape slopes gently downward into a seasonal creek that drains farther downstream into Lewisville Lake. Nine years ago, the owners undertook their first major landscaping effort when the hillside was covered with exposed tree roots, bare soil, sparse grass, greenbrier, and poison ivy, all regularly subjected to erosion during heavy rainfalls. Naturally shady due to trees, the owners wisely filled the original gardens with shade-tolerant plants.



**A peaceful front yard oasis with a majestic shade tree and lush, shade-loving plants.**

Lea Sage Watson, CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0, Denton County MGA

## 2025 Garden Tour Preview (Cont.)

In 2024, a Texas-size windstorm downed several trees, changing a significant part of this landscape from shade to sun. The owners replaced many shade-loving plants with sun-tolerant selections, transforming this landscape into curving plant beds full of new life. The landscape is now filled with native plants, ten varieties of groundcovers, fruit trees, vegetable gardens, and even a rain garden. They repurposed much of the wood from their fallen trees into building bench seating, pot stands, stair handrails, vine support, and a stump sculpture.



Lea Sage Watson, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, Denton County MGA

Clare Harris, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, Denton County MGA



A favorite Agave plant

Favorite plants in the Windblown Landscape include large agaves with tropical boldness and blue color. The papyrus is tall and striking in the rain garden. Visit Windblown Wildscape and learn about efforts to begin Hügeltkultur and the owners' intentional water conservation efforts, including installing rain barrels, rain gardens, and other water-saving measures.

**Windblown Wildscape**

**DIGGING**  
*deeper*

**Learning Opportunities**

**Rain Gardens**  
**Hügelkultur**  
**Water Conservation with Rain Barrels**  
**Shade Gardening**



# Spotlight: Earth Day Celebration at Josey Ranch Pocket Prairie

BY LISA BURT

Did you know that in the heart of Carrollton, you can experience a native Texas Blackland Prairie? In 2015, the Denton County Master Gardener Association partnered with the City of Carrollton to restore an acre adjacent to the Carrollton Public Library at Josey Ranch Lake. Today, the Josey Ranch Pocket Prairie features a large pollinator garden, which DCMGA volunteers and North Texas Master Naturalists maintain. They also oversee two monarch waystations. Most recently, with a grant from the Native Plant Society of Texas, DCMGA added two new planting beds called "Soft Landings." These beds provide habitat and food for pollinators and other animals around keystone trees.

While the Prairie is a beautiful garden to visit, its primary purpose is to educate the public about native plants and promote home pollinator gardening. Throughout the year, volunteers offer native gardening classes for both adults and children and assist with the Carrollton Public Library's seed library.



Lela Khan, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, Denton County MGA

**Enjoy the native plants in the pocket prairie.**



Lela Khan, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, Denton County MGA

**Learn from Master Gardeners at the Earth Day Celebration**

## Earth Day Celebration (Cont.)



Jacy Williamson, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, Denton County MGA

The Pocket Prairie's biggest event of the year is just around the corner: the 3rd Annual Earth Day Celebration!

Set against the backdrop of our growing native garden, visitors of all ages can engage with City of Carrollton employees and local nature experts on topics such as Texas wildlife, astronomy, geology, and meteorology. Attendees can listen to a story about Earth Day, learn about water conservation and reducing light pollution, explore Carrollton's many natural areas and trails, and ask a Master Gardener gardening questions. There will also be opportunities to dive into vermiculture (composting with worms), release ladybugs to help control Pocket Prairie pests, view the Recycle Art Contest Exposition (and vote for a winner), and create a nature craft to take home. The event will serve as a reminder

### Visit the Vermiculture Demo Booth!

that appreciating and protecting our beautiful Earth is something everyone can do. And, of course, explore the Josey Ranch Pocket Prairie as it wakes up for spring!

The Earth Day Celebration will be held on Saturday, April 19, 2025, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Josey Ranch Lake Library (1700 Keller Springs Rd, Carrollton, TX, 75006).

For more information and the schedule of events, visit:

<https://www.cityofcarrollton.com/about-us/calendar/special-events/earth-day>

For details about how to participate in the Recycle Art Contest, visit:

<https://www.cityofcarrollton.com/departments/departments-a-f/community-development/neighborhood-partnership-office/earth-day-2024>



## April General Meeting & Program

*You're Invited*

April 2025, Monthly General Meeting & Program  
"Cacti: A Wild & Pokey Adventure"



Join us for an inspiring presentation with Dallas native Payge Stevens, whose journey from wedding photography to desert botanicals led to the creation of The Cactus Queen. Discover her passion for rare and unique cacti, and learn why these hardy, low-maintenance plants are perfect for any home—or any level of plant parenthood!

April 9, 2025, 10 am  
Global Spheres Center, Solomon's Porch  
7801 S Interstate 35E, Corinth, TX 76210

### TOP GARDENING TIPS

## April

Plant warm season herbs & vegetables.  
Plant warm season flowering annuals & perennials.  
Prune spring-blooming shrubs & vines after flowering.  
Prune shade trees as needed except Live or Red Oaks.  
Allow spring bulb foliage to die & dry before removal.

**#DCMGA #GROWWITHUS**

DENTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

# Plant of the Month - Beautiful Borage

BY KAREN GIBSON

Borage (*Borago officinalis*) is an annual herb that originated in the Mediterranean area. Historically grown as a medicinal herb, it has several common names, including starflower, bee bush, bee bread, and tailwort. It is a pollinator plant loved by honey bees, bumble bees, and small native bees. A graceful-looking plant, borage has star-shaped hanging blue or white flowers.

## Growing Conditions

**Sun:** Full sun is best, part shade is tolerated

**Soil:** All types of soil, including poor soils

**Water:** Tolerates drought once established

**Fertilizer:** If the soil is poor, occasional feeding with a fertilizer labeled for edible plants will be beneficial. A high-phosphorus fertilizer will aid flower production.

**Zones:** 2a – 11b

**Bloom time:** Spring, Summer, Fall

**Resistant to:** Deer, Diseases, Insect Pests, Rabbits

**Flower:** Star shape, 1 inch size

**Height:** 1 1/2 - 3 ft

**Width:** 1 – 2 ft



Karen Gibson. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Denton County MGA

Blooming Blue Borage in Karen's yard.

## Propagation

Borage grows well from seed, either as seedlings begun inside or directly sown after the last threat of frost. Sprinkle the seeds on bare ground and cover lightly with soil or compost. Water until the seeds germinate and become well-established; additional watering is needed only when the soil dries out.

Borage is not invasive, but it is a self-seeder, which means seedlings will sprout up on their own after the first year of planting. These are easily thinned out, or you can carefully transplant them elsewhere. I love seeing a mass of borage springing up randomly in my yard! Borage blooms last several weeks. To keep the plants looking nice, trim off the older flowers. In addition, you can also do a Chelsea Chop, pruning the plants halfway back in late June.

## Edible and Medicinal Properties

Borage leaves and flowers are edible and can be used in salads, teas, and sandwiches. The leaves taste and smell like a salty cucumber and are best when picked young, as older leaves will be bitter. They can be eaten raw or cooked like spinach. While the leaves and flowers are

## Borage (Cont.)



Young Borage Plant. Karen Gilbert. CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

**Young borage leaves are best for eating.**

you may wish to wear garden gloves/long sleeves while harvesting or pruning and plant where children will not brush up against it.

edible, the hairy leaves can feel unpleasant to the mouth, so chop the leaves finely.

NC State Extension cautions that the leaves can have “low-severity poison characteristics” with symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, and dermatitis, so moderation in consumption might be warranted. Borage stalks can be prickly and cause skin irritations, so you may wish to wear garden gloves/long sleeves while harvesting or pruning.

Borage can be harmful to cats, dogs, and horses. Contact may cause skin irritations in humans, so

According to Bexar County Master Gardener Barbara Bresler,

- “Borage is a low-calorie culinary herb containing many important nutrients, minerals, and vitamins.
- Borage contains essential fatty acid  $\gamma$ -linolenic acid (GLA), an omega-6 fatty acid that plays a vital role in restoring joint health, immunity, and healthy skin.
- Borage has high levels of vitamin C (ascorbic acid), a natural antioxidant.
- The herb is a rich source of vitamin A and carotene, both of which are strong antioxidants.”

### ***Companion Plant***

Borage is a companion plant for tomatoes, strawberries, legumes, spinach, brassicas, and squash. It adds trace minerals back into the soil and is excellent for composting and mulching. Some claim that borage also repels pests, such as hornworms, and I have found this to be true in my garden.

Since I discovered borage, I make sure I have a few plants each year. The star-shaped flowers are bee magnets, and more bees increase pollination for the chance of a good vegetable harvest. In addition, hummingbirds love borage, and who doesn't want to see more hummingbirds in their landscape?

## Borage (Cont.)

### Resources

“*Borago officinalis*.” NC State Extension, <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/borago-officinalis/>

“Magical Marvelous Borage.” Jan Rhoades, University of California, <https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=39234>.

“Borage-*Borago officinalis*.” University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Illinois Extension, <https://extension.illinois.edu/herbs/borage>

“Borage, aka Starflower: An Annual Herb.” Barbara Bresler, Bexar County Master Gardeners, <https://bexarmg.org/2023/06/21/borage-aka-starflower-an-annual-herb/>

“Growing Herbs in Texas.” Joseph G. Masabni, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2013/09/EHT-079.pdf>



Karen Gibson, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, Denton County MGA

Beautiful white borage flowers.



### North Texas Gardening Timely Articles from [DCMGA](#) and [The Root](#)

[In the Veggie Patch: Parsley \(3/2024\)](#)

[Make Your Yard a Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary \(4/2022\)](#)

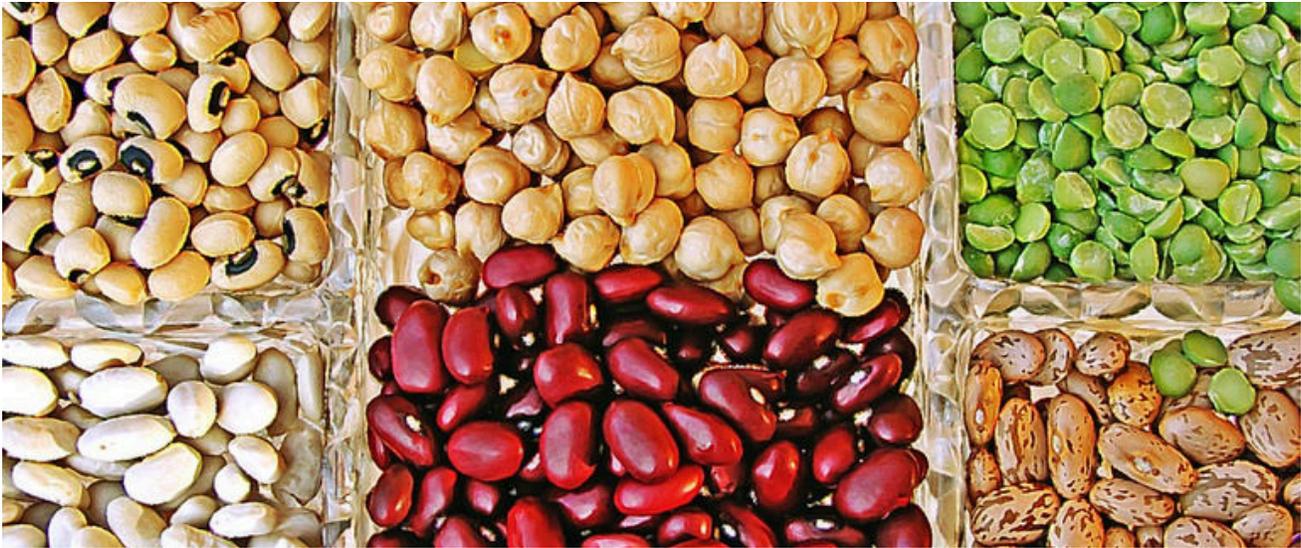
[Leopard Plant \(Plant of the Month\) \(4/2022\)](#)

[Hügelkultur \(Gardening Basics Series\)](#)

[Path to the Plate - Green Beans](#)

# In The Veggie Patch: Should I or Shouldn't I Inoculate My Legumes This Season

BY IVY SUMMERFIELD



Legumes, CCo Public Domain, via pixabay

“Should I inoculate my legumes this season?” That was my question, and my first thought was, “Why?” I needed a better understanding of the process before deciding. So, I did my research, and by the end, I felt confident in answering with a clear “Yes” or “No.”

Thinking back to my first year of gardening, I can't help but laugh. With every new vegetable, I wondered, “Should I be doing more to help this seed grow?” I'd buy my seeds, follow the package instructions, water as needed, and send a hopeful prayer: “Dear Lord, don't let me fail.” Sometimes, I had a bountiful harvest; other times, I ended up with just a few leaves—or nothing at all! But failure was never a reason to quit; instead, it pushed me to learn more.

Over time, I realized that soil and water weren't the only things plants needed. Elements like nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K), calcium, magnesium—and even beneficial bacteria—play crucial roles in plant growth.

My research on inoculation challenged me to think beyond the basics, and I hope it does the same for you. So, if you ever ask, “Should I inoculate my legumes?” take the time to understand the process. Knowledge is the first step to making an informed decision!

## WHAT ARE LEGUMES?

As described by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, “Legumes are a family of plants that, with the help of *rhizobium* bacteria, have the additional attribute of being able to remove nitrogen gas from the air and transform it into a form of nitrogen that plants can use.” (1)

## In The Veggie Patch: Inoculating Legumes (Cont.d)

Legumes belong to the *Fabaceae* (or *Leguminosae*) family, the third-largest family of flowering plants, with over 20,000 species! They can be broken down into categories, including vegetable legumes, which consist of peas, lentils, and beans.

- Peas range from common varieties like chickpeas to exotic types like asparagus peas.
- Lentils are dried seeds often identified by their brown, green, yellow, or red color. (2)
- Beans include popular varieties like pinto, black, red, kidney, and soybeans.

Legumes are important for human and animal consumption and are widely used in agriculture as cover crops or livestock feed. (3)



Canva Stock

While listing examples of legumes helps, it doesn't fully define the term. A legume refers to the entire plant—including its leaves, stem, and pods. Pulse crops (grain legumes) are explicitly grown for dried seeds. (4) Oilseed and fresh legumes are also cultivated for oil production and fresh vegetable consumption.

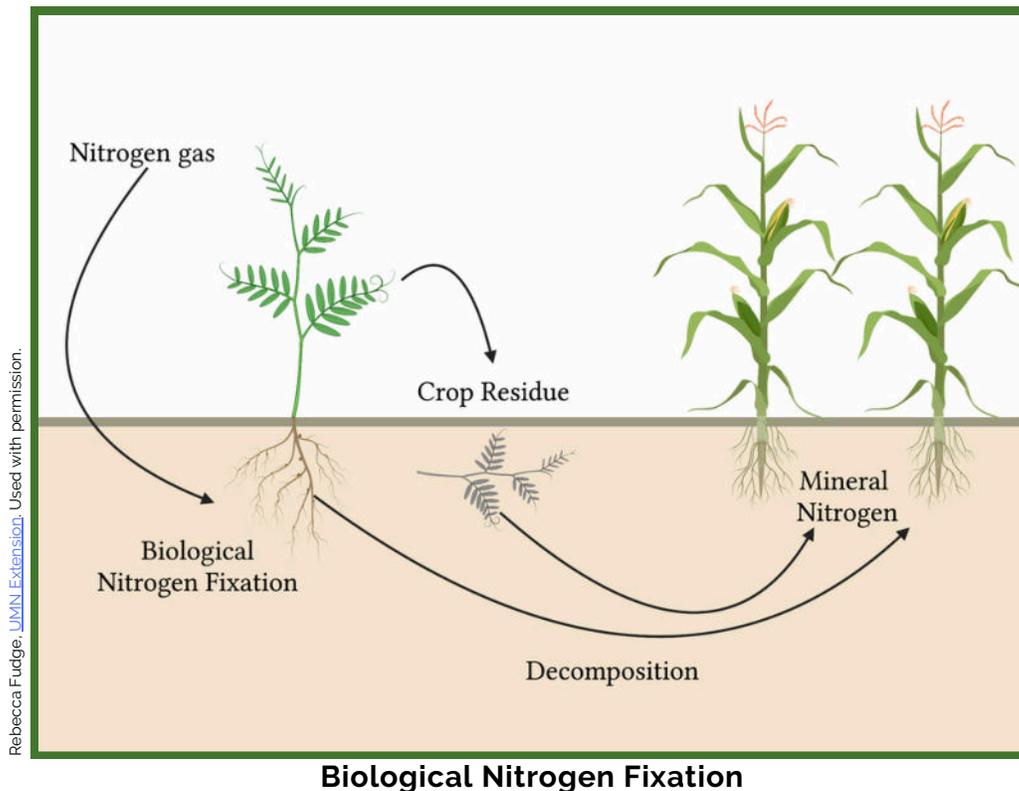
### WHAT IS INOCULATION?

According to Webster's Dictionary, inoculation is defined as "introducing a microorganism." An example given states that "beans are inoculated with nitrogen-fixing bacteria." (5) The nitrogen-fixing bacteria used for peas, lentils, and beans is called rhizobia for home gardening. This bacterium forms a symbiotic relationship with legumes, benefiting both the plant and the bacteria. (6)

The taproot is the first root to emerge when a legume seed germinates. (7) Rhizobia bacteria attach to the roots, forming nodules. Once these nodules develop, nitrogen fixation begins. This process allows the plant to take nitrogen from the air and convert it into a form it can use for growth. In return, the plant supplies the bacteria with energy through photosynthesis—a mutually beneficial relationship.

Each legume species requires a specific type of inoculant to maximize nitrogen fixation. Consult your seed provider and carefully read manufacturer labels to ensure you use the correct inoculant for your crop. Also, never plant inoculated seeds in dry soil—proper soil moisture is essential for success. (8)

## In The Veggie Patch: Inoculating Legumes (Cont.d)



### Types of Inoculants for Home Gardeners (9)

- Direct-Soil Application – Apply inoculant directly to the planting row before sowing seeds.
- Seed-Applied Inoculant – Mix the inoculant with seeds before planting.
- Pre-Inoculated Seeds – Seeds that come already inoculated by the manufacturer.

Choosing the correct inoculant and planting conditions can help your legumes thrive while naturally enriching your soil.

### Why Should I Inoculate?

Most of the research I found on inoculation focused on large-scale farming. Still, the principles apply just as well to home gardening—the only real difference is scale and application ratios. Farmers primarily apply inoculants to cover crops to feed livestock and enrich the soil for future planting. But for home gardeners, the key question isn't "Should I inoculate?" but rather, "Why would I?"

For me, the answer was simple: higher yields and healthier plants. As a "go big or go home" gardener, I aim for maximum production each season. I realized that good soil management, including proper pH levels and inoculation, could naturally provide nitrogen. (10)

## In The Veggie Patch: Inoculating Legumes (Cont.d)

Before deciding if inoculation is right for you, consider the benefits, cost, and time investment. Inoculation introduces beneficial bacteria that help legumes convert atmospheric nitrogen into a usable form, enriching the soil with nitrogen and benefiting future crops. (11) This process promotes higher yields and reduces or eliminates the need for nitrogen fertilizer (12). Inoculants are affordable and widely available at garden centers, feed stores, and online. The application takes just a few minutes, and inoculated seeds should be planted within 24 hours to ensure effectiveness.



Rebecca Fudge. [UMN Extension](#). Used with permission.

**Inoculated Peanut Seed**

### Tips for Purchasing and Using Inoculants

- Buy seeds and inoculants together to ensure freshness.
- Check the package to match the correct inoculant with your legume variety.
- Verify expiration dates on both the inoculant and seed.
- Look for a high rhizobia per gram count—the more, the better!
- Store inoculants in the refrigerator immediately after purchase to protect the live bacteria.
- After inoculating, let seeds dry for 24 hours, then plant them right away.

### Planning: Rotating Crops Wisely

Introducing inoculants affects your garden in the long term, so plan accordingly. Let's say you inoculate beans and have a fantastic harvest. The following year, you plant a different legume—whether inoculated or not. By year three, you rotate legumes out and plant cucumbers in that same bed.

Everything seems great—your cucumber vines are lush and thriving—but there's one problem: no cucumbers! Why? Cucumbers require less nitrogen, and the excess nitrogen from previous legume plantings causes them to put all their energy into vines and leaves instead of fruit.

What is the moral of the story? Think ahead when planning crop rotations! Inoculation is a powerful tool, but balancing soil nutrients is essential for the best results.

After learning how inoculation benefits my garden—now and in future seasons—I've decided: Yes, I will inoculate my legumes this year! I can work toward higher yields and healthier soil with rhizobia bacteria readily available and atmospheric nitrogen available. By understanding

## In The Veggie Patch: Inoculating Legumes (Cont.d)

that each legume requires a specific inoculant, I can choose the right product and apply it correctly for the best results. My goal? Strong, nutrient-rich plants with maximum yields!

Gardening is all about learning and experimenting. So, I challenge you to step outside the box and try something new!

### Resources

1. "Need for Legumes." Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center at Overton, <https://overton.tamu.edu/faculty-staff/gerald-wayne-evers/cool-season-legumes/need-for-legumes/>
2. "Lentils." Montana State University Extension, [https://www.montana.edu/extension/buyeatlivebetter/other\\_nep\\_resources/fact\\_sheets/lentils/Factsheet\\_Lentils\\_.pdf](https://www.montana.edu/extension/buyeatlivebetter/other_nep_resources/fact_sheets/lentils/Factsheet_Lentils_.pdf)
3. "Legumes and Pulses." Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, <https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/legumes-pulses/>
4. "Pulse Crops and their Key Role as Staple Foods in Healthful Eating Patterns – 0.313." Colorado State University Extension, <https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/agriculture/pulse-crops-and-their-key-role-as-staple-foods-in-healthful-eating-patterns-0-313/>
5. "inoculate." Meriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inoculate>
6. "Nitrogen Fixation." Cornell University Cooperative Extension, <http://nmsp.cals.cornell.edu/publications/factsheets/factsheet39.pdf>
7. "Inoculation of Forage Legumes." UK Cooperative Extension Service, <https://forages.ca.uky.edu/sites/forages.ca.uky.edu/files/agr90.pdf>
8. "Using the Appropriate Legume Inoculant for Conservation Plantings." USDA, <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/plantmaterials/natpmtn13723.pdf>
9. "Inoculation of Forage and Grain Legumes." PennState Extension, <https://extension.psu.edu/inoculation-of-forage-and-grain-legumes>
10. "Nitrogen Fixation." Cornell University Cooperative Extension, <http://nmsp.cals.cornell.edu/publications/factsheets/factsheet39.pdf>
11. "Inoculating Legume Seed." University of Kentucky, <https://grazer.ca.uky.edu/inoculating-legume-seed>
12. "Nitrogen Fixation." Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center at Overton, <https://overton.tamu.edu/faculty-staff/gerald-wayne-evers/cool-season-legumes/nitrogen-fixation/>



# Ollas: The Ancient Gardening Hack That Still Rocks!

BY JANICE YODER-SMITH

Olla, pronounced “oh yah” or “oi yah,” is a Spanish word for a pot. In the 16th century, Spaniards introduced ollas to the native populations of the Americas. Ollas provided a proven solution to watering gardens in times of water scarcity. Archeologists have found ancient olla artifacts in Africa and China. Ollas have been used to supply water to nearby plant roots for about 4,000 years.

An olla is an unglazed clay pot, fired at low temperature, with a lid to keep out insects, soil, and debris. A buried olla pot allows water to seep out to nearby roots slowly. The presence of water in the soil draws roots toward the olla. The diameter of the olla determines the area where water reaches plants. A general estimation states that water will travel about twice as far as the pot’s average diameter. A 10” average diameter pot may water plants up to 20” from the center of the pot. How far the water moves in a specific location depends on soil type and compaction. Water travels more slowly in heavy clay than in loam or sand. Purchased and homemade ollas yield similar success when planted with their reservoirs below the soil line and their necks or rims exposed about 1-2” above it. Ollas work best with plants with fibrous roots. When ollas are lifted before the first freeze, gardeners observe mats of fine roots covering the pots and the sides of the holes they were in.

Using ollas for irrigation saves time during periods of mandated water restriction. A gardener fills the ollas, which can water several plants each, once every 3 to 4 days instead of standing in the heat, hand watering every plant once or twice a day. Tomato growers using multiple large ollas find fewer split fruits because ollas help maintain a steady moisture level in the soil.



Two examples of ollas in Janice's garden.



Fine roots covering a lifted olla.

## Ollas (Cont.)

Ollas may replace or supplement drip irrigation lines. Using an olla in a large pot allows a gardener to relocate that pot without having to disconnect it from drip irrigation lines. Ollas provide watering solutions for large containers in locations far from drip irrigation lines. Long periods with high temperatures and no rainfall make heavy clay soils less permeable to water.

Combining ollas with drip irrigation provides consistent soil moisture to high-thirst plants while keeping the soil surface more receptive to rainfall later.

Ollas or olla spikes used with recycled bottles can also benefit indoor plants in large containers. Ollas help maintain soil moisture while indoor gardeners are away on trips, and multiple olla spikes with bottles may benefit plants during longer gardener absences.



Janice Yoder-Smith, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, Denton County MGA

**An olla spike in a houseplant.**

Some gardeners hesitate to install ollas. Seedlings and young transplants need surface water until their roots spread deeper into the soil, and an olla provides moisture deeper into the soil. Others dislike how much space ollas occupy. A few gardeners object to the cost or the need to lift, clean, and store ollas through the winter.

Use an online pot volume calculator to estimate the amount of water an olla can store: <https://www.omnicalculator.com/biology/potting-soil-calculator>. A simpler measure is to fill the pot with water and pour it into a large measuring cup or a pitcher of a known volume.

I experiment with watering methods in my yard. During the past five years, my best Celebrity® tomato harvest happened when I used a combination of drip irrigation and two ten-inch top-diameter ollas, one on the south side and one on the plant's north side. I experienced success growing oregano, thyme, marjoram, dianthus, and vinca using three six-inch ollas in 42" x 20" elevated planters. My homemade ollas worked as well as the ones purchased from an artist. I lost some ollas to freeze damage when I forgot to lift them. My simplest ollas are 10" clay pots with saucers to cover the tops. The saucers are sealed with spray acrylic paint to limit evaporation. Gluing beads in some of the saucers and leaving them right side up on the pot allowed bees and butterflies to land and access water while the pot supplied plant roots easily. Most days, the saucer was dry by the end of the day, so there was little risk of breeding mosquitos.

Making ollas can be a fun project that yields a water-saving product that helps plants thrive. Why not try making and using one?

## Ollas (Cont.)

Native Seeds/SEARCH, from <https://www.nativeseeds.org/blogs/blog-news/how-to-use-olla-irrigation>, used with permission.

### HOW TO MAKE A TERRACOTTA FLOWER POT OLLA



**SUPPLIES**

- 2 terracotta flower pots or 1 flower pot and 1 terracotta saucer\*
- Hole plug (recommend a penny)
- Waterproof glue (recommend Gorilla Glue®)
- Waterproof silicone caulk

\* The size of the flower pots depends upon the location you plan to use the olla. For 24" containers suggest two 6-8" pots, for smaller containers suggest one 6-8" pot and one saucer. Suggest two 8-12" sized pots or one 12" or greater pot with corresponding saucer for raised or sunken garden beds with at least a 2 foot depth. If using saucers find a saucer that has the same sized rim as the pot.

**STEP 1 - PLUG THE HOLE**

You want the olla to seep water from the pores of the olla, not run out through the hole. Therefore, it is necessary to plug the hole of one of the terracotta pots. If you were using a pot and a saucer do not plug the hole of the pot as this is where you will fill it with water.

A penny is the perfect size for most terracotta pots. Alternatively you can use a flat stone, glass bead, piece of plastic, or other relatively flat material. Glue the plug material to the pot using waterproof glue. Cover entire plug area with caulk. Allow to dry according to glue and caulk instructions.



**STEP 2 - GLUE TOGETHER OLLA**

Place a bead of glue on the rim of both pots. If using a pot and saucer, place a bead of glue on the rim of the saucer and the pot. Follow instructions for the glue. For example, Gorilla Glue® requires the surface to be wet. Invert pieces so the glued rims are together. Place a heavy paving stone or other object on top of inverted pots to weigh them down. This will help achieve a tight seal.

**STEP 3 - SEAL OLLA**

Place a bead of caulk along the seam between the pots. Use a sponge or your finger to press caulk into the seam to achieve a tight seal. The pots will be buried so it does not have to look attractive. Let caulk dry and set overnight.

**STEP 4- TEST YOUR OLLA**

Before burying your ollas it is a good idea to fill with water and look for excessive seepage along the seam. If you notice water leaking from the seam, empty water and allow to dry. Re-seal the area with more caulk.

**STEP 5- INSTALL THE OLLA**

Bury your olla with at least 1-2" remaining above the surface. Fill with water. Top off with water again after about 30 minutes and the water has percolated into the soil and clay pores. Place a saucer, mason jar lid, or a flat stone over the hole. Periodically top off the water level of the olla.



*A terracotta pot olla made from 2 6" pots installed in an 18" container planted with a tomato. It is capped with a mason jar lid.*

*Finished ollas made from a 6" diameter pot (left) and saucer and two 8" pots (right).*



### Resources

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# Rooted in North Texas: A Newcomer's Guide to Gardening Success

BY CHERYL HUCKABEE

## *Water-Wise Wonders: Smart Gardening for Droughts and Downpours*

*Welcome to the third article in our eight-part gardening series for North Texas newcomers! Dig in to learn from seasoned Master Gardeners who've mastered taming our unique climate and soil challenges.*

Welcome to North Texas! If you're new to the area, you've probably noticed that summers here can be brutally hot and dry. With Denton County's rapidly growing population and a limited water supply, conserving water—especially in our gardens—is more critical than ever. North Central Texas frequently experiences drought conditions, and recent summers have seen below-average rainfall, making efficient watering methods essential. Nearly half of all landscape irrigation water is wasted due to overwatering and inefficient practices. By adopting smart water conservation techniques, you can keep your garden thriving while helping to protect this precious resource for future generations.

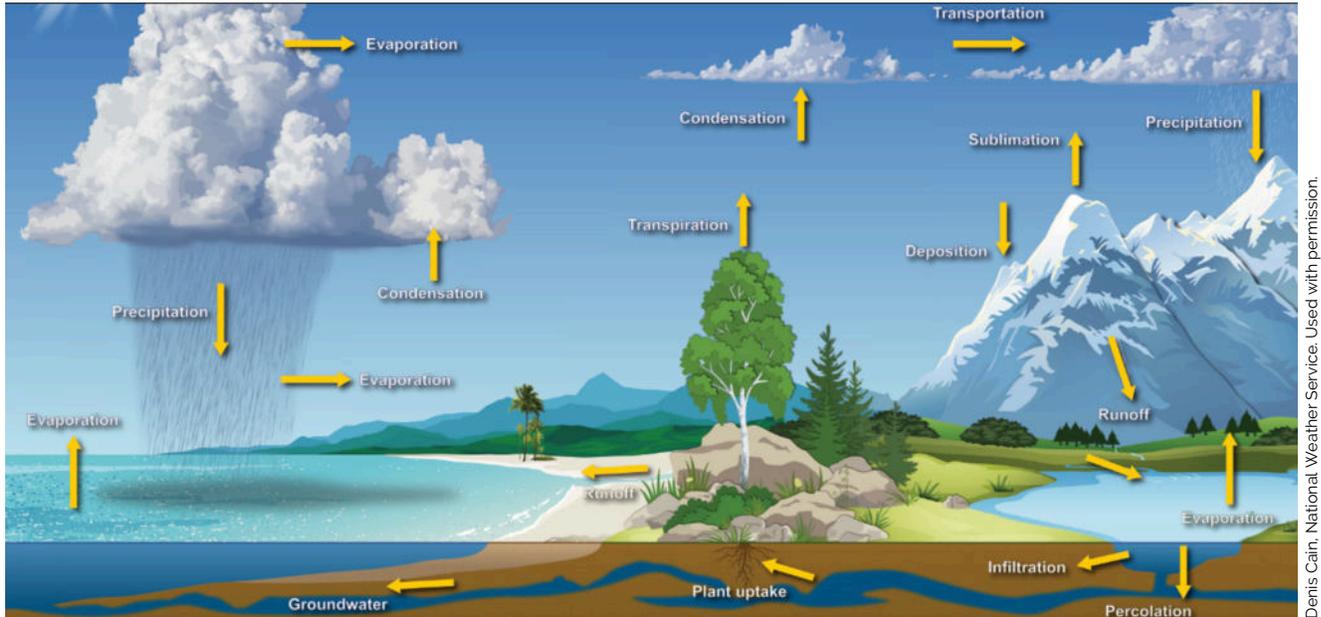
### ***The Water Cycle: How It Works and How We Impact It***

Before diving into specific conservation techniques, it's important to understand the basics of the water cycle and how our actions can impact it. Water constantly moves through the water cycle, which keeps fresh water available for everyone. It starts with evaporation, where the sun's heat turns water from lakes, rivers, and oceans into vapor. Plants also release moisture into the air through transpiration. As the vapor rises and cools, it turns into clouds, then falls back to Earth as rain, snow, or hail. Some of this water goes into the ground, refilling underground water supplies, while the rest flows into rivers and streams, keeping the cycle going.

Human activities can disrupt water cycles. Cities replace soil with concrete, causing more runoff and flash floods. Cutting down forests changes rainfall patterns. Using too much groundwater for farming and industry drains aquifers. Pollution from chemicals, waste, and plastics harms water sources and ecosystems. By understanding our impact, we can make better choices to protect water resources.



## Rooted in North Texas - Water-Wise (Cont.)



The Water Cycle

### ***Smart Watering: Efficient Irrigation for a Thriving Garden***

Using water wisely in your garden conserves this precious resource and promotes healthier, more resilient plants. The best time to water is early morning before 10 a.m. when temperatures are cooler, and winds are calmer, allowing plants to absorb moisture effectively. Evening watering is an option but increases the risk of fungal diseases, while midday watering leads to excessive evaporation and potential leaf damage. Additionally, watering deeply once or twice a week encourages strong root growth and drought resistance, whereas frequent shallow watering can leave plants vulnerable to heat stress.

For even greater efficiency, consider drip irrigation or soaker hoses. These systems deliver water directly to plant roots, minimizing waste and reducing weed growth by keeping the surrounding soil dry. Smart irrigation controllers and soil moisture sensors take water conservation to the next level by adjusting watering schedules based on real-time weather conditions and soil moisture levels. By incorporating these techniques, gardeners can create a lush, thriving landscape while using water responsibly.

### ***Healthy Soil, Less Water: The Key to Sustainable Gardening***

Healthy soil is essential for a water-efficient garden. Improving soil structure with organic matter like compost or aged manure helps water seep in and stay there. Organic matter binds soil particles, creating space for air and water, making it easier for plant roots to absorb moisture. Just 5% of organic matter in soil can hold up to 20 times its weight in water. Microorganisms and earthworms help by breaking down organic material and improving air

## Rooted in North Texas - Water-Wise (Cont.)

circulation. Regularly adding compost and mulch keeps the soil moist, reducing the need for frequent watering and promoting sustainability.

Mulching is a simple and effective way to save water. A layer of organic mulch, like wood chips, straw, or grass clippings, can cut evaporation by up to 35%, regulate soil temperature, and prevent erosion. Composting adds nutrients to the soil, boosts microbial activity, and improves moisture retention by up to 25%. To avoid water loss from compacted soil, gardeners can aerate the soil, minimize walking in planting areas, and use cover crops like clover to break up dense layers. By keeping the soil healthy, gardeners can create a thriving garden that needs less water and stays strong during dry spells.

### ***Designing a Water-Wise Landscape:***

#### ***Beauty with Less Water***

A beautiful and water-efficient garden can be achieved with Earth-Kind® landscape design. This approach focuses on water conservation through planning, soil enrichment, drip irrigation, and drought-tolerant or native plants. Techniques like mulching, reducing turf areas, and proper pruning enhance water efficiency. The Rule of Thirds principle divides the garden into equal parts: plants, turf, and hardscape. This balance improves biodiversity, air quality, and water retention while reducing maintenance and water use.



**Rule of Thirds Landscape Design**

Choosing native and drought-tolerant plants like Texas Sage, Black-Eyed Susan, and Red Yucca saves water and reduces the need for chemicals. Grouping plants with similar water needs, called hydrozoning, prevents overwatering and optimizes irrigation. Rain gardens and bioswales capture and filter rainwater, reducing runoff and replenishing groundwater. With thoughtful planning and sustainable practices, water-wise landscaping conserves resources and supports a thriving garden.

### ***Capturing and Reusing Water: Sustainable Solutions for Your Garden***

Water conservation isn't just about using less water—it's about making the most of what you have. Rainwater harvesting is an easy way to collect and store rainwater for later use, reducing reliance on city water and reducing stormwater runoff. A simple rain barrel can save up to 1,500 gallons of water annually, while larger cisterns can store thousands of gallons for

## Rooted in North Texas - Water-Wise (Cont.)

use. These systems provide a free, sustainable water source for your garden during dry spells.

Greywater systems reuse water from sinks, showers, and washing machines (excluding toilets) for irrigation. This nutrient-rich water can cut household water use by up to 50% and promote healthy plants—systems like laundry-to-landscape, branched drain networks, and greywater drip irrigation direct this valuable resource where needed. Using permeable surfaces, like gravel paths or porous concrete, helps rainwater soak into the ground, replenishing groundwater and reducing runoff. These water-saving techniques allow gardeners to create a resilient and eco-friendly landscape.



KOMU News, CC-BY 2.0

### ***Avoiding Water Waste: Simple Steps for Smarter Gardening***

Wasting water in the garden can harm the environment, raise bills, and make plants unhealthy. Leaks in irrigation systems, outdoor faucets, and toilets are significant sources of water waste. A dripping hose bib can waste thousands of gallons per year. Regularly check for leaks, watch water bills for spikes, and do simple tests like dye tablets in toilets. Fixing minor issues like worn washers and misaligned sprinklers can save a lot of water.

Runoff and soil erosion also cause water waste. Overwatering, compacted soil, and impervious surfaces like driveways prevent water from being absorbed properly. To slow water movement and increase absorption, use mulch, plant native ground covers, and add rain gardens or bioswales. Use responsible fertilization and eco-friendly pest control to avoid chemicals washing into waterways. Gardeners can create a sustainable and efficient outdoor space by being mindful of water use and making simple changes.

### ***Conserve Water Locally: Water Conservation Incentives***

Several municipalities within Denton County have taken proactive steps by establishing water conservation programs to help residents use water more efficiently. Incentive programs for installing rain barrels, rain and freeze sensors, watering timers, SMART irrigation equipment, irrigation system check-ups, and upgrades may be available. Be sure to check with your city government to discover the programs available in your area. The Upper Trinity Regional Water District (UTRWD) also plays a significant role by providing educational tools and programs.

## Rooted in North Texas - Water-Wise (Cont.)

By following these water conservation tips and participating in local programs, you can contribute to a more sustainable future for North Texas. Together, we can ensure our community thrives, even during the hottest and driest summers. Happy gardening!

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## Growing with The Root

I'm excited to step in as the editor of The Root! A huge thank you to Karen Gibson for her incredible 7+ years at the helm—beautifully editing, formatting, and condensing so much information into engaging 40+ page issues for our 1,675 subscribers. Her grace under pressure and kindness make working on the Communications Team a joy. I look forward to working with her and many other contributors!

~ Cheryl Huckabee

# What Are These Creatures? Asparagus Beetles

BY JANICE YODER SMITH

Asparagus growers sometimes find unpleasant surprises in the garden. They might find their months-old plants with browning and scarred ferns and bent young spears as they inspect their crop in early May. If so, they will likely find tiny beetles with elongated bodies. They are smaller than lady beetles and have different spot arrangements. Most insects will likely be bluish-black with six cream-colored spots on their backs. They have red-orange stripes on both sides that wrap around the back. A few beetles will be red-orange with redder heads and twelve black spots on their backs. The gardener might also find some very small creatures that have legs and heads but don't look like insects. Many have black heads and gray bodies, but there is a lesser population of orange ones. Are those creatures beetle babies? What are these things eating the asparagus?

Based on the descriptions, the insects observed are asparagus beetles, which are common pests of this vegetable. The most common of these beetles are *Crioceris asparagi*, which has bluish-black adults and gray larvae, and *Crioceris duodecimpunctata*, which has red-orange adults and orange larvae. These pests are easier to observe on warm, sunny days. Damage inflicted by the adult insects makes passing nutrients to strengthen the roots difficult. The weakened plants then become more susceptible to diseases such as Fusarium Wilt.

Asparagus growers, your actions can significantly impact the life cycle of these beetles, which lasts about a month during the asparagus growing season. A week after the adults lay eggs, larvae emerge and start eating the asparagus spears. Their presence makes the spears less desirable to eat but does not damage the plant. Larvae fall off the plants and onto the ground about two weeks later. A new batch of adults is ready to feast about a week after that. During the fall and winter, these beetles shelter in the brown foliage.



*Crioceris asparagi*

David Cappaert, Bugwood.org



*Crioceris duodecimpunctata*

Kansas Department of Agriculture, Bugwood.org

## What Are These Creatures? Asparagus (Cont.)

Removing that fall foliage as soon as possible reduces the number of these pests that survive to feast and reproduce the following spring. Your proactive measures can make a significant difference in managing these pests.

Home gardeners who often check their gardens have success picking off the beetles, larvae, and eggs and killing them in a pan of soapy water. Interplanting tomatoes, nasturtiums, and marigolds attract lady beetles and other insect predators that eat asparagus beetles. Using pesticides to limit asparagus damage kills beneficial insects, so avoiding or limiting the use of such products is wise. Agricultural Extension agencies recommend researching options and following label directions if gardeners use pesticides.

### Resources

“Asparagus beetles.” University of Minnesota Extension, <https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden-insects/asparagus-beetles>

“Asparagus Beetles Active in South Dakota.” South Dakota State University Extension, <https://extension.sdstate.edu/asparagus-beetles-active-south-dakota>

“Managing Insect and Mite Pests in Vegetable Gardens.” John A. Jackman, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, <https://gillespie.agrilife.org/files/2013/02/Managing-Insect-and-Mite-Pests-in-Vegetable-Gardens.pdf>



Whitney Cramshaw, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

Asparagus beetle (*Crioceris asparagi*) damage.



# Looking Ahead - 2025 Plant Sale: New Location, Same Great Plants!

BY MELISSA MIGIS

We're excited to share that this year's annual Plant Sale has a new home! Join us at the **North Texas Fairgrounds** ([2217 N Carroll Blvd, Denton, TX 76201](https://www.northtexasfairgrounds.com/)) for an even better shopping experience. Plant lovers won't want to miss it!

## What You'll Find



**Natives & Adaptives:** perfectly suited for the North Texas climate.



**Perennials:** flowers and foliage that return year after year.



**Succulents:** drought-tolerant with unique shapes and colors.



**Roses & Small Trees:** stunning roses and Japanese maples.



**Ornamental Grasses:** to add color and texture to your landscape.

*and much more . . .*

Photos Canva Stock

## New Venue Highlights

The new venue offers a larger covered area for displaying over 8,000 plants, increased parking with a safer and shorter walk to shop, and convenient drive-up access for plant pickup. This event is a must-attend for gardeners in Denton County and North Texas. **Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 26, and head to the North Texas Fairgrounds. The sale is from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM or sell-out.**

## Tips for the Best Selection

To get the best selection, arrive early, as shoppers start lining up before 8:00 AM. Bring a cart or wagon to transport your plants, and remember that cash, checks, and credit cards are accepted. Last year, over 8,000 plants sold out quickly, so get ready for a fantastic day with more space, plants, and expert advice. Don't miss this year's expanded selection! We have unbeatable prices on everything—from Pass Along and Nursery plants to our special Make-an-Offer section. Wear shoes appropriate for walking on a dirty barn floor.

## The Power of Pass-Alongs

A highlight of the sale is the wide selection of Pass Alongs—plants donated and nurtured by our Master Gardeners. These plants are already acclimated to local conditions, making them easy to grow and maintain with minimal effort.

## A Gardeners' Dream Sale

For over a decade, the our Plant Sale has thrilled plant lovers with a diverse selection. This year's sale promises the same, offering something for everyone, from beginners to experts.



# 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, “Add an aspirin to the water for your plants. It helps protect from diseases and promotes production.”

## **Gardening Grandma is right!**

Research indicates that Grandma was onto something that helps plants defend themselves. Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) is an organic compound used medicinally by humans since it was trademarked for sale by Bayer in 1899. When aspirin dissolves in water, it breaks into salicylic and acetic acids. Most research on aspirin’s potential benefits to plants was conducted using salicylic acid (SA).

“Research has shown that spraying this naturally occurring compound onto some plants triggers natural defenses that keep harmful fungi, bacteria, and viruses at bay.”

(<https://agresearchmag.ars.usda.gov/2003/dec/plant/#:~:text=Plants%20make%20salicylic%20acid%2C%20particularly,and%20expression%20of%20defense%20genes.>)

Reporting in “New Scientist,” published on February 12, 2025, James Wong found data supporting the role aspirin could play in promoting the health of a plant. In a report from the University of California – Riverside, on July 12, 2022, author Jules Bernstein reported that “Plants protect themselves from environmental hazards like insects, drought and heat by producing salicylic acid, also known as aspirin.”

Iowa State University Researcher Finds “Natural Compound Boosts Plants’ Freeze-tolerance,” published April 14, 2020. An Iowa State University researcher has found an inexpensive, natural way to improve plants’ ability to tolerate freezing temperatures and boost their



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

antioxidant levels. Using spinach as a test plant, he and his research team successfully showed that, indeed, small doses of salicylic acid can improve freezing tolerance in the plants. Moreover, the same treatment also increased the plants' antioxidant levels.

“Salicylic acid (SA) serves as a key hormone in a plant’s innate immunity, including resistance in both local and systemic tissue in *Stories of Salicylic Acid: A Plant Defense Hormone.*”

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1360138520300212>

### *How to Use Aspirin to Help Your Plants*

Salicylic acid can be applied as a foliar spray, allowing for rapid absorption and distribution throughout the plant, or as a root drench. It may be used as a seed treatment: “Treating seeds with SA solutions can enhance germination, seedling vigor, and early plant growth. The diluted mixture can be used to inoculate seeds before planting. Also called seed priming, SA may promote seed germination under unfavorable conditions.”

([https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8189473/#:~:text=Salicylic%20acid%20\(SA%2C%200.1mM,efficiency%20in%20seed%2Dbased%20restoration.](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8189473/#:~:text=Salicylic%20acid%20(SA%2C%200.1mM,efficiency%20in%20seed%2Dbased%20restoration.))



Canva Stock

### **Treat plants with a foliar spray.**

Martha McBurney, the master gardener in charge of the demonstration vegetable garden at the University of Rhode Island, recommends “dissolving 1.5 uncoated aspirin (81 gr. strength) to two gallons of water. Important note: She also added two tablespoons of yucca extract to help the aspirin water stick better to the leaves. (The yucca extract can be substituted with a mild liquid soap).”

A foliar plant spray with diluted aspirin water may be used every 3 weeks to once per month during the growing season. Do not spray too much or too often. Be sure to spray plants at night or early in the morning when pollinators are inactive. Although believed by some, I am sorry to report that aspirin-diluted water does not prolong the life of cut flowers.”

([https://hortscans.ces.ncsu.edu/library/all/doc\\_id/4357/](https://hortscans.ces.ncsu.edu/library/all/doc_id/4357/)).

Because the potential protection from SA varies by plant type, you may want to test it out first on a few plants to ensure that it does not harm a particular type of plant.



## 2024 DCMGA President's Service Awards

This year marks the beginning of a new tradition. The DCMGA president presents the service awards to recognize our outstanding members who achieved a milestone in volunteer service hours during 2024 and their positive impact on the community. The new pin is embossed with our state flower, the bluebonnet, to represent the great state of Texas. This year marks our greatest number ever achieved, with 122 members receiving a Gold, Silver, or Bronze award.



### Bronze (100-249 hours)

Cynthia Aguilera  
Bonnie Ambrose  
Marion Arndt  
Denise Babb  
Barbara Beane  
Cathy Berg  
Kelli Bixler  
Barbara Brown  
Lisa Burt  
Dina Bush  
Margaret Calabrese  
Liz Chaney  
Maria Chapa  
Susan Cox  
Janice Criswell  
Tammy de Wet  
Nancy DiMarco  
Claudia Duckworth  
Don Edwards  
Kathi Efflandt  
Sharrie Ely  
Donna Esposito  
Vanessa Fitzgerald  
Alice Fraga  
Andrea Garner

Bethany Griffin-Loftis  
Chuck Guarnaccia  
Patricia Gunnison  
Pam Hancock  
Mary Harned  
Linda Hay  
Cindy Helm  
Rene Henderson  
Rene Hilliard  
Traci Horton  
David Huffman  
Donna Hull  
Debbie Ishee  
Teresa Kehrweider  
Teri Kettle  
Leslie Koberna  
Jolayne LaCour  
Carol Langdon  
Lisa Lebsack  
Angie Lindsey  
Clarice Luce  
Shirley Manfredi  
Lisa Marlow  
Allison McMahan  
Liz Moyer

Irene Myers  
Carol Noble  
Susan Novak  
Jill Olhausen  
Ann Marie O'Lone  
Carol Rowley  
Kim Shaneyfelt  
Beth Sharum  
Krystal Palyu  
Brienne Pegoraro  
Trish Percy  
Joni Pritchett  
Kathy Rainey  
Michele Rawleigh  
Carol Rowley  
John Shelton  
Judson Sherman  
Barbara Smith  
Molly Stingley  
Ivy Summerfield  
Lea Watson  
Kathryn Wells  
Reesa Wilkins  
Jacy Williamson  
Katherine Woodward

# 2024 DCMGA President's Service Awards (Cont.)



## Silver (250-499 hours)

Daniel Arenas  
 Lori Barr  
 Mario Casanova  
 Susan Cosio  
 Linda D'Amanda  
 Meaghan Dawson  
 Pat Edwards  
 Karen Gibson  
 Harry Gornick  
 Tammie Gurley

Clare Harris  
 Melanie Harris  
 Susan Hudiburgh  
 CeCe Kenney  
 Lela Khan  
 Brenda Martin  
 Melissa Migis  
 Pat Moyer  
 Ruvan Nanayakkara

Chryl Prestemon  
 Joanne Spurgin  
 Steve Spurgin  
 Carolyn Stoy  
 Sherri Ursini  
 Ricky Wilkins  
 Kim Wootton  
 Lee Ann Yates  
 Janice Yoder Smith

***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>

# 2024 DCMGA President's Service Awards (Cont.)



★ Gold (500+ hours)

Judy Allen  
Russ Allen  
Becky Cameron  
Martha Cantrell  
Becky Collins  
Sheila Daniel  
Beverly Duncan

Ellen Gaunt  
Janet Gershenfeld  
Jeff Hardgrave  
Lynda Harvey  
Cheryl Huckabee  
Mike James

Bill Moen  
Raeline Nobles  
Dale Powell  
Debbie Smith  
Pam Spooner  
Melissa Weaver



DCMGA  
— HELP DESK —  
Question of the Month



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

**BY HELP DESK TEAM**

*Q: We are re-doing our landscape by adding more landscape plants and reducing grass areas. Because our young grandchildren visit frequently, are there any plants we should avoid?*

**A:** It is very thoughtful of you to plan for the safety of young children around your plants. Although we appreciate their curiosity and exuberance, we do not want them to get sick or hurt while enjoying nature.

**Good plants for young children.**

First, let us look at some landscape and garden plants that children may safely enjoy. Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife suggests Gregg's Mistflower, Turk's Cap, Autumn Sage, Bee Balm, and more. See complete list at: "Child Friendly Native Plants":

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/education/bioblitz/tpwd-child-friendly-plant-flyer-final.pdf>



**Bee Balm is safe for children to enjoy.**

**Plants to avoid because of possible toxicity to humans.**

Here is a list of plants to avoid from Texas AgriLife Earth-Kind Landscaping, "Common Poisonous Plants and Plant Parts":

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/landscape/poisonous-plants-resources/common-poisonous-plants-and-plant-parts/>

For a longer list of potential problem plants broken down by the degree or type of harm they might cause see: "University of California Safe and Poisonous Garden Plants:"

<https://ucanr.edu/sites/hdnmastergardeners/files/363609.pdf>

- Category 1: Major Toxicity: These plants may cause serious illness or death.
- Category 2: Minor Toxicity: Ingestion of these plants may cause minor illnesses such as vomiting or diarrhea.
- Category 3: Oxalates: The juice or sap of these plants contains oxalate crystals. These needle-shaped crystals can irritate the skin, mouth, tongue, and throat, resulting in throat swelling, breathing difficulties, burning pain, and stomach upset.
- Category 4: Dermatitis: The juice, sap, or thorns of these plants may cause a skin rash or irritation.

If a plant in categories 1, 2, or 3 is ingested, immediately call your doctor or the Texas Poison Control Center at (800) 222-1222. For plants that may cause contact dermatitis or a skin rash (category 4), wash the affected area with soap and water as soon as possible. Contact your physician if the symptoms do not improve within 24 hours.

#### More information.

“Top Ten Toxic Plants in Texas,  
Reprinted from The Texas  
Thoroughbred.”

<https://txmn.org/lindheimer/files/2021/05/Rector-Paper-5-Top-Ten-Toxic-Plants-in-Texas-by-Barr-2001-Texas-Thoroughbred.pdf>.

“Know the Plants in Your Garden — For Your Child’s Safety” Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia:

<https://www.chop.edu/news/health-tip/know-plants-your-garden-your-child-s-safety>

“Safe Plants for Children”:

<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2073/2014/03/010711.pdf>

## THE MAGIC OF MULCH



### Benefits

- Retains moisture
- Suppresses weeds
- Regulates soil temperature
- Improves soil health (organic)



### Organic Mulch (Best Choice)

- Shredded leaves
- Wood chips or bark
- Straw
- Grass clippings



### Inorganic Mulch

- Gravel or pebbles
- Landscape fabric
- Rubber mulch
- Tumbled glass



### How Much to Apply

- 2-4 inches for most plants
- 1-2 inches for vegetables
- Keep 2-3 inches away from plant stems



### Application Tips

- Remove weeds first
- Apply in spring or fall
- Replenish organic mulch
- Avoid 'volcano mulching'



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.





**Upcoming  
Events**

**April  
2, 9, 16,  
23, 30**

## Denton County Master Gardener Association



### LLELA Wednesday Workday

Lake Lewisville Environmental Learning Area workday.  
LLELA Nature Preserve 201 E Jones St. Lewisville, 9AM-12PM

**April  
7, 14, 21,  
28**

### Community Strong Farm

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 on the tasks of the day. Come lend a hand. Public is invited!  
1350 Milam Rd E. Sanger, Monday Mornings 9AM-11AM

**April  
9**

### Cacti-A wild and Pokey Adventure

Join us for an inspiring presentation with Dallas native Payge Stevens, whose journey from wedding photography to desert botanicals led to the creation of The Cactus Queen. Discover her passion for rare and unique cacti, and learn why these hardy, low-maintenance plants are perfect for any home—or any level of plant parenthood! The program begins at 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. and is followed by the general business meeting. The public is welcome to attend and grow with us!  
Solomon's Porch, Global Spheres Ctr. 7801 Interstate 35E, 10AM-12PM

**April  
17**

### Succulent Team-Hands On Repotting

Join us as we re-pot succulents for the Spring Plant Sale. Hands on activity.  
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C4FABAE28A4FEC07-54083316-succulent>  
Global Spheres Center 7801 S Interstate 35E Corinth

**April  
26**

### **Annual Plant Sale – Open to the Public – NEW LOCATION 9am-2pm or until sold out**

Join DCMGA at their annual Plant Sale to find thousands of plants at terrific prices. Texas natives, tough-as-nail perennials, no fuss roses, hard to find ground covers, bedding plants, container plants, and herbs. Pass Along plants from our own Master Gardeners.

North Texas Fairgrounds 2217 North Carroll Blvd. Denton, TX  
9AM until sold out.



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.





Presented by the

## Denton County Master Gardener Speakers Bureau

# APRIL 2025

**April 5**  
9:00 am - 1:00 pm

[Join Us at the Ask a Master Gardener Booth!, Denton Community Market](#)

**April 9**  
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

[Webinar: From Dirt to Dynamic: Boosting Your Soil with Compost and Care!](#)

**April 11**  
9:00 am - 10:00 am

[Thriving with Cacti and Succulents: Expert Tips for Selection & Care, Denton Senior Center](#)

**April 12**  
9:00 am - 12:00 pm

[Join Us at the Ask a Master Gardener Booth!, Jake's Place Park, Oak Point](#)

**April 12**  
10:00 am - 2:00 pm

[Join Us at the Ask a Master Gardener Booth!, Pilot Point Town Square](#)

**April 19**  
9:00 am - 12:00 pm

[Join Us at the Ask a Master Gardener Booth!, Lantana North Community Center](#)

**April 19**  
11:00 am - 3:00 pm

[Join Us at the Ask a Master Gardener Booth!, Josey Ranch Pocket Prairie, Carrollton](#)

**April 19**  
11:00 am - 3:00 pm

[Vermicomposting 101!, Josey Ranch Pocket Prairie, Carrollton](#)

**April 19**  
1:00 - 2:00 pm

[Learn to Build and Use a Rain Barrel – Join Us!, Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center](#)



[See All Events](#)

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.

TEXAS DENTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION  
 MASTER GARDENER  
 TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

**WE'VE MOVED OUR**

# Plant Sale

New Location:

## **NORTH TEXAS FAIRGROUNDS**

2217 N. Carroll Blvd.  
 Denton 76201

**Spacious, covered  
 sale area**

**Plentiful, convenient  
 parking**

**April 26, 2025**

**9:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M. or Until sellout,**

**RAIN or SHINE!!!**

Bring your own wagons  
 or carts so you can take  
 home as many of these  
 wonderful plants as your  
 garden can hold.



- Texas native plants, tough-as-nails perennials, and no-fuss roses
- Hard-to-find ground covers, bedding plants
- Herbs
- Heat tolerant and drought resistant plants
- Special container plants
- Pass-along plants from Master Gardeners' own gardens
- Master Gardeners available to help you make your selections and answer your gardening questions

For more information, Visit our Website: [dcmga.com](http://dcmga.com) Email: [master.gardener@dentoncounty.gov](mailto:master.gardener@dentoncounty.gov)  
 Call Garden Help Desk phone: (940)349-2892

\*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

\*Persons with disabilities needing accommodations for effective participation in the meeting should contact Denton County AgriLife Extension office at least a week in advance of the meeting or event to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance.\*

\*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.\*

**TEXAS MASTER GARDENER**  
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION  
Denton County

**2025**

# GARDEN TOUR

Discover, Learn, and Grow:  
Inspiring Gardens for Every Gardener



**SATURDAY  
MAY 10TH**  
9 AM - 4 PM

ADVANCED PRICE:  
**\$20**

DAY OF EVENT: \$25  
(CHILDREN 12 & UNDER  
FREE)

**SCAN ME!**



OR GO TO [WWW.DCMGA.COM](http://WWW.DCMGA.COM) FOR TICKETS!  
RAIN OR SHINE (NO REFUNDS)



**SHILOH  
FIELD  
GARDEN**

**FREE ENTRY**  
**FREE ENTRY**  
**FREE ENTRY**

**SHILOH FIELD COMMUNITY GARDEN**  
Vegetable varieties to grow in North Texas

The nation's largest community garden, producing over 60,000 pounds of food annually for local food banks with a strong focus on **sustainability**. You can't miss the **beekeeper** and chickens!

**MEET OUR GARDENS!**  
ACROSS DENTON & OAK POINT

Visit our educational stations, where experts will share the gardening techniques that shaped these beautiful gardens.



**SECLUDED SANCTUARY**  
Tranquil & relaxing oasis

In the heart of a suburban neighborhood, Secluded Sanctuary offers a peaceful escape into nature, celebrating diverse plantings, drought tolerance, and creating a vibrant wildlife habitat. With a **rich diversity of roses**, flourishing vegetable beds, and colorful wildflowers, the garden provides year-round beauty, inspiration, and valuable lessons in raised-bed gardening, effective water conservation, and the importance of **cultivating a wildlife-friendly environment**.



**ALICE IN CACTUSLAND**  
Growing & caring for cacti and succulents

Step into a whimsical world where **art meets nature** in Alice in Cactusland, a garden inspired by "Alice in Wonderland" and featuring an impressive collection of cacti and succulents beautifully arranged along charming pathways. Visitors will find **practical solutions to drainage and space challenges**, explore an enchanting Alice in Wonderland sculpture garden, visit an art studio open house, and enjoy a flourishing fig orchard, all highlighting the resilience and creativity of its dedicated owner.



**WINDBLOWN WILDSCAPE**  
Shade gardening & planting beds

Spanning one acre, Windblown Wildscape is a shaded haven that slopes down to a seasonal creek, featuring curving plant beds filled with native plants, raised vegetable beds, and a rain garden. The aftermath of the May 2024 windstorm led to **creative adaptations**, including sun-tolerant plantings in previously shaded areas and the use of downed trees for garden structures, focusing on shade gardening and **water conservation**, with highlights like agaves and vitex.



**GARDEN TAPESTRY**  
Composting techniques & rain harvesting

Nestled in northeast Denton, Garden Tapestry is a serene retreat where **native plants and ornamentals** blend harmoniously in a mix of sun and shade. Managed by a single gardener, this modestly sized garden showcases a vibrant pollinator garden, a tranquil shade garden, and a secluded back garden, with composting, rain harvesting, and **innovative gardening techniques like hügelkultur and lasagna beds**, making it a peaceful place of learning and reflection.

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.

**2025 Board of Directors**

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Vice-President	Jeff Hardgrave
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**Social Media**

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**

- April 9 General Meeting & Program, "Cacti: A Wild & Pokey Adventure" by Payge Stevens, Cactus Queen owner. Global Spheres, Corinth. Open to the public.
- May 14 General Meeting & Program, "Soil Health: Biodiversity Underground" by Sam Kieschnick, Urban Wildlife Biologist. Open to the public.

**Contact Information**

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<https://dcmga.com>

**Content**

The Submission deadline for the May edition of *The Root* is Saturday, April 5. Submissions may be revised at the discretion of the editor.

Ideas, photos, and articles are welcome and may be submitted to Editor Cheryl Huckabee or Communications Director Donna Hull at [doctorhull@gmail.com](mailto:doctorhull@gmail.com).

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