

Denton County Master Gardener Association

# THE ROOT

Grow With Us



Photo Courtesy DCMGA Member Janice Goetz

## Buds From The Board

BY KATHRYN WELLS, PRESIDENT

Happy October, friends! What a magnificent month; each one is special in its own unique way, but October is my favorite.

This wonderful autumn season between summer and winter is a glorious time to garden here in north Texas, and we have many inspirational programs this month to help educate and motivate you including "Preparing Your Garden for Winter," "Starting Plants from Seeds," "Pollinator Gardening," and "Fall Gardening & Bulb Planting." Dates and details are available on our Denton County MGA website. We'd love to see you at one ... or more!

Our Denton County MGA YouTube channel also has some great content for this season ... and every season. Conveniently organized into topical playlists, you can quickly find videos for subjects you're seeking. This one from October 2020 features Toni Moorehead who shares seasonal landscape maintenance tips as well as design tips and plant choices for fall and winter interest.

CONNECT WITH US ON THE WEB  
<https://dcmga.com>

## WHAT'S GROWING ON

.....

- 01 Buds From The Board
- 03 Spotlight:  
Denton County  
Community Grove
- 05 Meet a Few 2022 Master  
Gardener Interns
- 08 October General  
Meeting
- 09 Plant of the Month:  
Japanese Painted Fern
- 11 Feature: La Niña  
Summer Survivors
- 17 Garden Visits:  
Hagerman National  
Wildlife Refuge
- 21 Pre-Emergent Lawn  
Treatment
- 22 Save Those Leaves!
- 26 NTX Gardening Focus:  
When to Prune  
Perennials
- 27 DCMGA Resources &  
Opportunities
- 28 Help Desk Q&A: Forcing  
Christmas Cactus to  
Bloom

## Buds From The Board (Cont.)

And, what's that you say? You missed our recent jam-packed "Fall into Gardening" educational event? No worries! Some of those classes were recorded and will be added soon to the channel. If you click the "Subscribe" button, you'll be notified when new content is added.

And, if you're interested in becoming a Denton County Master Gardener, we are now accepting applications for our 2023 training class. We'd love to meet you at the 2023 Intern Informational Meeting on Friday, October 14th, from 10 am to noon at Global Spheres Center (7801 S Interstate 35, Corinth, TX 76208). It's a great opportunity for you to learn more about who we are and what we do ... and for us to learn more about you!

Denton County Master Gardeners and Denton County residents—you put the "ah" in autumn; I hope October is full to overflowing with your very favorites!

Kathryn



### TOP GARDENING TIPS

## October

Continue sowing wildflower seeds. Press into the soil to facilitate germination; do not mulch.

Prepare tender plants to overwinter inside; check for insects.

Cut & freeze fresh herbs in oil for winter use in soups and stews.

Leave the leaves! Compost, or use as mulch.

#DCMGA #GROWWITHUS

DENTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

## Groovin' at The Grove *Denton County Community Grove*

BY SHERRI URSINI

What does Denton County Community Grove mean to me? A sense of responsibility comes to mind. In 2017 the Grove began with the objective of educating our community about fruit production. In our work at the Grove, we've learned about fruit growing through study, instruction, and experience. Many factors have affected our success, including drought, disease, rust, drift, and timing. Michael Cook, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Viticulturist specialist, and Patty Cooke, past project manager of the Grove, have been assets to this project from the beginning. The pandemic resulted in slowing down the Grove's progress, but didn't change our goals to demonstrate and teach.

Like a good book, the first blooms of our Ranger peaches keep us captivated. The peach blooms this spring were a myriad of flowers covering the trees like a blanket. And our Methley plum put on a show! Much like a detective in a good mystery, we always look for signs of Pierce's disease on the grapes or rust on the Orient Pears.

Larry Stein, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension horticulturist based in Uvalde, warned in the February 2021 AgriLife Today article about the effects of Winter Storm Uri ". . . the area's peaches, plums, apples, pears, grapes, and other fruits are concerned, we can probably expect a lower yield as a longer-term result of the damage inflicted by this extended cold spell. There may still be some latent damage to the plant that will cause the fruit not to set. It may be that some plants leaf out well only to die back later due to severe damage to the vascular system. Unfortunately, the effects of the 2021 freeze may linger for years." As predicted, the beautiful blossoms on our Ranger peach were just that. It was not a good year for peaches at the Grove.

### Fruit Grown at The Grove



Photos Courtesy DCMGA Member Sherri Ursini



## Groovin' at The Grove (Cont.)

The Master Gardener and community volunteers at the Grove focus on the maintenance and care of the fruiting plants with the goal of a bountiful harvest. We teach, learn, and encourage each other. We're proud to donate our harvest to our local food pantry, Friendship House of Carrollton First Baptist Church. Epsie Rucker and the volunteers at Friendship House work so hard to serve and feed our community. We're happy to contribute to this outstanding organization.



**Epsie Rucker, Vic Rucker, Mike Russell, Bill Ruff, and Debbie Hilyer (l. to r.) with fruit donated to the Friendship House of Carrollton First Baptist Church**



**Master Gardeners Sherri Ursini, Sue Hudiburgh, Lela Khan, and Tim Torn**

Learning at the Grove is ever-changing and much more fun together.

We will select topics and a date for an open house in the coming months. We hope you'll join us. It's time to demonstrate!

*Judge each day not by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant.*  
~ William A. Ward



## Meet A Few 2022 Master Gardener Interns

BY CHERYL HUCKABEE

*This is the second part of a two-part series about some of our 2022 Master Gardener Interns' first year experiences. After a couple of challenging years due to the pandemic, we were ready for a fresh start with a new class of Master Gardener Interns. Forty-five interns took off out of the blocks in a full sprint, completing 75+ hours of training and over 4,000 hours of volunteer service to our mission of educating the community about sustainable gardening.*

*We asked the 2022 interns about their experiences this year. Here's what a few of them had to say.*

### Kari Miley

"I made some awesome new friends. We have so much in common, it was fun trading gardening ideas. I loved my Mentor Sheila Daniel, she was very friendly and helpful.

"I loved the lectures during Intern basic training. I learned how to mow, water, and treat my turf (grass) to conserve water and have a beautiful weed free lush yard. I learned how to conserve water in my landscape and garden. I am much more aware of insects and plant diseases. I now have resources available to me to find answers to my questions. I'm interested in learning more about vegetable gardening, composting, and permaculture in 2023.



**Kari Miley  
Class of 2022**



**Kari's Raised Beds**

"The Garden Tour was an extremely rewarding experience. I was an intern captain for the one of the 2022 Garden Tour homes. I am a 2023 Garden Tour co-captain.

"I only *thought* I knew how to garden. I learned so much more about gardening than I could ever imagine. I learned proper care of plants and nature, water conservation, and alternative approaches to gardening. I made some awesome new friends, both veterans and interns.

"My intern experience was challenging and fun. It was a very happy time for me. I can't wait to continue my journey as a Master Gardener."

## Meet Master Gardener Interns (Cont.)

### Sherry Galbreath

"Having a "pod" of fellow Master Gardener Interns to get started was so helpful. I felt like I had instant friends and someone to help with questions and general navigation of the program.

"Having only lived in Texas for a year before starting the class, I had a lot to learn about gardening here! The classes were so helpful, and the hands-on experience with volunteer activities, plus getting to know the other Master Gardeners, gave me more confidence and knowledge. I want to learn more about native plants. I had a large native garden in Illinois, but the plants here are very different.

"I want to try one of the community gardens projects and any of the projects involving natives and prairie plants. I worked at the Josey Ranch Pocket Prairie several times and it was very rewarding.

"My second year of gardening in Texas has been better than the first! I planted my first garden last year using my skills from Illinois and it was a disaster! This year, I had some vegetables!

"Anyone who enjoys plants and growing a garden should try it. The knowledge I got from the program has helped immensely - and I also made some friends along the way!

"I thought I was a competent gardener, since I was a Master Gardener in Illinois for several years before moving here, but I very quickly found out that just because I was successful there did not mean I knew anything about gardening in Texas! I really enjoyed the classes, getting to know people, and working on the projects, and my own garden has really benefitted!"



**Sherry Galbreath  
Class of 2022**



**Sherry volunteering at the DCMGA  
Plant Sale May 2022.**



## Meet Master Gardener Interns (Cont.)

### Debra Wallace

"Probably my most memorable experience during my first year was working the Garden Tour at Angie Lindsey's house. I learned so much and especially enjoyed the day of the tour visiting with the community and other gardeners.

"I've implemented several things, i.e., watering turfgrass deeper and less often, which has worked wonderfully even in this drought. I've been a vegetable gardener for years, but still learned things I should do differently to get better results. I learn something new every day when working the Help Desk and doing research, that I used to help me in my own garden while helping others. I would like to learn more about native plants, water conservation, and landscaping.



**Debra Wallace**  
**Class of 2022**



**Debra's Vegetable Beds**

"I will be a 2023 Garden Tour captain at the Red Rock Crossing Garden. I plan to continue to work the Help Desk and really enjoy the Gardenscaper projects when they come up.

"It's an overall great experience learning new things about things you are passionate about. It's also rewarding to be able to help others in the community.

"Just want to say that the mentor/mentee pods are an excellent idea for new interns! I feel that it really makes a difference to have that support system while going thru the program. And the added benefit of what I consider will now be lifelong friends."



Join Denton County MGA for our *hybrid* (in person and virtual) October General Meeting & Program.

We're pleased to welcome Tarrant County Extension Agent Laura Miller, who will present "Direct Marketing of Commercial Horticulture Products."

Advance registration is required only for virtual participants live-streaming via Zoom.

In-person participants will meet in the Solomon's Porch building at Global Spheres Center (7801 S Interstate 35, Corinth, TX).

As always, our General Meeting programs are open to the public and free of charge.



## 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>

## Spotted in Member's Gardens



Photo courtesy of DCMGA member Janet Gerstenfeld  
**Lily Turf**  
*Liriope muscari 'Variegata'*



Photo courtesy of DCMGA member Lea Sage Watson  
**Okra**  
*Abelmoschus esculentus*



Photo courtesy of DCMGA member Cece Kenney  
**Hardy Hibiscus**  
*Hibiscus moscheutos*



Photo courtesy of DCMGA member Joanne Spurgin  
**Spider Lily**  
*Lycoris radiata*



## Plant of the Month - *The Versatile Shade-Loving Japanese Painted Fern*

BY SUE MURRAY

Like many gardeners, a section of my yard is almost always in the shade. I have Hostas planted, but I wanted something else to compliment them. I know many ferns like shade, so I started my investigations. I soon discovered a beautiful specimen called the Japanese Painted Fern. It is native to Japan and Asian countries and a favorite woodland fern of many gardeners. I like that it is low maintenance, and a single plant can serve as an accent, or you can do mass plantings as a ground cover. It works great as an edging plant along walkways and adds a softness to the landscape. It contrasts nicely with the other shade perennials and works well in container plantings. If you utilize a container, select one at least 12 inches in diameter and 10 – 12 inches deep. To top it all off, this fern is pest and disease-resistant. Even rabbits tend to avoid it! The only thing it is not good at is being a houseplant. These ferns need to experience winter dormancy to thrive.



Photo by David J. Stang, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

### Japanese Painted Fern

Named a Perennial Plant of the Year in 2004 by the Perennial Plant Association, its botanical name is

*Athyrium nipponicum* 'Pictum'. It grows 12 – 18 inches high and wide with lance-shaped leaves on arching fronds. The fronds come in various colors, including silver, burgundy, and green. The stems are red wine or purple-colored and give rise to the "painted" name.

The fronds look delicate, but this fern is durable and hardy. The fronds turn from a silvery green to a darker green as the temperatures rise. The Japanese Painted Fern does well from early spring until the first frost if you plant the painted fern in moist, well-drained soil that contains abundant compost. Consistent moisture is essential for optimal health and appearance. But too much water can lead to crown rot that can kill the fern.

Even though it prefers shade, a small amount of morning sun will generate better frond color, as will cooler weather. Avoid intense afternoon sun, or the fronds can turn crispy and brown. For optimal performance, cut back the old fronds when the new growth appears in the spring. Don't over-fertilize; use only about half what you would for other perennials.

## Japanese Painted Fern (Cont.)

The USDA hardiness zones for the Japanese Painted Fern are zones 5 – 8 (which includes our area). It will also survive in colder zones. Historically, this fern evolved where chilly temperatures are the norm, so it will struggle without some cold winter days. Container-planted ferns do not have to be uprooted. Instead, you can sink the pot in the compost pile or surround it with straw or bubble wrap. In springtime, the plant may be slow to wake up, but don't fret; when it starts to warm up, you will see the heads begin to uncoil from the soil. Be patient. They are worth the wait.

There are other varieties worth looking at besides the gold standard *Athyrium nipponicum* 'Pictum'. Some of the more popular *Athyrium nipponicum* are 'Godzilla' (big proportions, long fronds, about three feet tall), 'Ghost' (more upright, lighter coloration, about two feet tall), and 'Crested Surf' (slightly darker foliage, fronds that split into curled tendrils at the tip, and a good spreader).

Consider adding this versatile fern to your shady areas. I don't think you will be disappointed.



Japanese Painted Fern with Hosta

### Resources

University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture, Research & Extension

Plant of the Week: Japanese Painted Fern

<https://www.uaex.uada.edu/yard-garden/resource-library/plant-week/japanese-painted-fern.aspx>

Missouri Botanical Garden

Plant Finder: *Athyrium nipponicum* var. pictum

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=b640>

Savvy Gardening

"Japanese painted fern: A hardy perennial for shady gardens," Jessica Walliser

<https://savvygardening.com/japanese-painted-fern/>

DCMGA – Denton County Master Gardener Association

<https://dcmga.com/north-texas-gardening/perennials/shade-plants/japanese-painted-fern/>





## La Niña Summer Survivors

BY LEE ANN YATES

Well, North Texans, we are coming out of the third hottest summer in DFW recorded history with the third longest stretch of 100°F.+ days and the third hottest July. Gracias, La Niña, but you can move along now and don't hurry back any summer soon! Adiós! Good-bye! Git! Whew! She started up early and stuck around way too long!

I did what every science-based, research-driven gardener does when they wonder about others' gardening – I took a completely randomized, totally unscientific, narrowly focused poll of Master Gardeners in Denton County on Facebook. I put out a call on the DCMGA members' Facebook page to see what plants had survived La Niña's scorching breath and got a surprising number of positive responses. Lots of plants survived, some barely, others with vigor. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for your contributions. Here's a roundup of what you shared with me.

A Master Gardener spouse team doubled down against La Niña and hauled hoses to every plant in their large landscape three times a week – exhausting but worth every bit of sweat. Coral honeysuckle, flame acanthus, Turk's cap, American beautyberry, and gauras, among others, hung on and are now thriving after the short period of cooler temperatures and rainfall we had in early September. After being on the Garden Tour in 2022, this couple was determined to keep their plants alive and is happy with the results of their efforts.



Photos Courtesy DCMGA Members Mary Branstetter, Karen Gibson, Angie Lindsey

### Turk's Cap

Another 2022 Garden Tour member claimed great success with her native and adapted plant gardens. Rock rose, evening primroses, Mexican hats, tangerine crossvine, frogfruit, and Spanish dagger yucca flourished through the drought. She also said that her four o'clocks and zinnias, along with several milkweed varieties, did quite well, even though she was under watering restrictions.

## La Niña Summer Survivors (Cont.)

Several Master Gardeners reported that both established and young crape myrtles did well – the established ones even bloomed with no supplemental water in one landscape and the younger ones with supplemental water only once a week. Others reported that crape myrtles planted a couple of years ago succumbed to the heat, unfortunately.



**Texas Rock Rose**



**Henry Duelberg Salvia**

Hollies and yaupons watered by a drip irrigation system following local water restrictions did well for one gardener, as well as some oakleaf hydrangeas, while other gardeners reported theirs didn't make it. One person stated that her young redbuds lost all their leaves, a phenomenon that happens when stressed trees work to reserve nutrients to stay alive. She added that they seem to be recovering with the September rain. Several people reported salvias doing well overall, particularly Indigo Spires, that immortal couple Henry and Augusta Duelberg, and Black and Blue salvia, as well as *salvia greggii*.

Other tough thrivers include lantana, yarrow, pink muhly grass, and several Mediterranean herbs – mint, basil, sage, oregano. Black-foot daisy, a notorious water-hater, was in its element with no rain. Zexmenia, woody stemodia, snakeweed, and cut-leaf daisies enjoyed the dry conditions as well.



**Zexmenia**



## La Niña Summer Survivors (Cont.)

Sedums planted in the ground did not appear to fare well – there is only so much moisture those tender babies can hold on to over a length of time, but the same gardener relayed that a couple varieties of her purple heart did just fine. Verbena, 'Walker's Low' catmint, cleome, passion vine, coreopsis, and Japanese aralia were mentioned by a few respondents as remaining healthy with occasional watering.

Bloom times were definitely interrupted by the extensive heat, but that is not completely out of the ordinary for mid-summer in North Texas. Many described their plants as "hanging on, but not producing" until the first little rain shower. Numerous gardeners described how blooms appeared very quickly after plants had their thirst quenched. One Master Gardener who grows several native varieties attributed earlier than usual seed set on some of them this summer, she believes due to the punishing heat. The native plants definitely know how to preserve their family lines by producing seeds that might survive when the parent won't.



**Star White Zinnia**



**Flame Acanthus**

A long-time Master Gardener has piqued my curiosity about her "weird yellow rose" which got along just fine, as did another MG's 'Peggy Martin' rose. My 'Peggy Martin' struggled, but put on a tiny second show of blooms in the few days of cool weather in early September. That variety of rose is so willing to survive whatever Nature throws at her – it is truly a wonder. Pick the right one and roses can be tough as nails! I'm going to have to pursue that "weird rose."

## La Niña Summer Survivors (Cont.)

I work with a team of Master Gardeners at the Historical Park Gardens in Denton, which is owned and maintained by the County. Water restrictions, mandated for county properties in early summer, cut watering cycles to twice weekly. The team had concerns that many of the mostly non-native plants wouldn't make it. We were pleasantly surprised when we did a definitely non-scientific, purely observational audit in mid-August around the historical houses. Several varieties looked scorched and pretty ragged – irises, amaryllises, oakleaf hydrangeas, even some coneflowers. However, tall Mexican petunias, daylilies, trailing lantana, *salvia greggii*, Turk's cap, and Garden phlox were not only maintaining, but blooming. The established Eve's Necklace tree, magnolia, lacebark elm, and large crape myrtles around the property looked really good as well. Two fig trees that looked like definite goners after the equally crazy Big Freeze of 2020, recovered, thrived, and produced figs this summer. They stand about seven feet tall by five feet wide! Several perennials I mentioned earlier were going strong. All this on about one inch of water, two times a week, in an historically hot summer.



**Fall Clematis**



**Tropical Hibiscus**

So, what lessons did La Niña leave us with? Landscape plants can survive and recover on only an inch a week of supplemental water, increased to one inch, twice a week in a deep, crazy-hot, long summer. Many native and adapted plants will survive on next to zero supplemental water in a drought and several varieties thrive in Death Valley-like temperatures (I might be exaggerating a tad on the temps!) Established trees and perennials stand a good chance given supplemental water. In-ground irrigation systems and drip irrigation in beds are a convenient help, but hauling hoses works if you have the dedication.



## La Niña Summer Survivors (Cont.)



**Texas Star Hibiscus**



**Frog Fruit**

What can you do to see success? Talk with Master Gardeners, attend our public talks and classes, email our Help Desk with questions – information available on our website! If you've been with us for a while, these will sound familiar: Know your soil (soil tests), Know the plant, and Right Plant, Right Place!!

Happy Gardening, Denton County!!





It's time for  
Membership  
Renewal!

Scan this code or go to  
[dcmga.com/members-info/](https://dcmga.com/members-info/)  
to renew



*The All New Ball Book Of Canning And Preserving* by Ball Home Canning Test Kitchen. TI Inc. Books; Illustrated edition (May 31, 2016).

*Mini Farming: Self-Sufficiency on 1/4 Acre* by Brett L. Markham. Skyhorse; Illustrated edition (April 1, 2010).

*The Drunken Botanist Hardcover* by Amy Stewart. Algonquin Books; 1st edition (March 19, 2013).

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## Garden Visits

### Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge

BY KAREN GIBSON AND JANICE GOETZ

*Editor's Note: In 2020 we began highlighting local gardens in response to the need for social distancing and restricted travel. Restrictions have eased, but interest in local (and not so local) gardens is alive and well. So we continue to highlight gardens that our members visit.*

Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge is a flora and fauna jewel an hour's drive from most of the north DFW Metro area. Located in Grayson County, just a few miles west of Sherman, the refuge provides habitat for wildlife, migratory birds, and native plants. Visitors can hunt, fish, observe wildlife, and hike.

"The HNWR is located within the Central Flyway, a route traveled annually by numerous species of waterfowl and other migratory birds. The refuge enjoys a reputation as a premier bird-watching destination in North Texas." (Source: Wikipedia).



Photos Courtesy DCMGA Members Karen Gibson & Janice Goetz

(Karen Gibson)

My husband and I are day-trippers – nearly every Saturday we hit the road for somewhere, anywhere, that takes us out of the city. When COVID hit, we began looking for places to visit other than State parks, which suddenly required advance reservations. Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge was one of the first places we visited and we have been back multiple times since.

On our first visit we took advantage of the self-guided AutoTour. All you need is your smart phone! Drive to the numbered location and listen to the associated program. We learned about the history of Hagerman – it wasn't always a refuge – and about the many uses of the refuge. We were surprised to learn of the working relationship between the refuge and oil companies operating on the refuge.

Another area of cooperation is a Butterfly Garden area near the Visitors Center, built and maintained by the Friends of Hagerman NWR. We stop there each time we visit to see what is in bloom and any new additions. The butterflies and other pollinators are always busy there!

## Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge (Cont.)

While there is something to see at all times of the year, the winter months provide the most bird activity, especially waterfowl. Canadian geese begin to arrive in October and snow geese in November. By winter, there will be literally thousands of geese in the area. It's a sight not to be missed!



*(Janice Goetz)*

Hagerman is a perfect location for me to visit. It fits the bill for my love of native plants, wildlife and photography. When the butterfly garden is at its peak, it is buzzing with pollinators and the native flowers are a joy to see.

As a member of the Friends of Hagerman Photo Club, I've had a few opportunities to drive to Meadow Pond within the Refuge to watch the sun rise over the pond when the Lotus flowers are in full bloom. Watching the sunrise over the pond is a site to be seen. The pond is normally only accessible by foot, except during scheduled hunts, so check the website before heading that way.





## Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge (Cont.)

One of my favorite experiences at the Refuge is the sounds produced by the hundreds of geese and numerous other birds that reside or migrate through the Refuge. Grab a picnic lunch, and check it out!



### Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge

Website: <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/hagerman>

6465 Refuge Rd, Sherman, TX 75092

Open sunrise to sunset daily

There is no entrance fee to enjoy the Refuge

### Visitor Center Phone:

(903) 786-2826

### Visitor Center Hours:

Monday - Saturday: 9AM - 4PM

Sunday: 1PM - 5PM

### Auto Tour & Tram Tour

Auto Tour is self-guided. Tram Tours are available every Saturday at 2:00PM Central Time

To enjoy an audio narrative tour from the comfort of your car visit:

<https://friendsofhagerman.com/Auto-Tour>

To participate in a refuge staff guided tram tour adventure visit:

<https://friendsofhagerman.com/Tram-Tours>

### Friends of Hagerman

"Friends of Hagerman NWR Foundation is a 501(c)(3) corporation whose mission is to instill reverence, respect, and conservation of our wild creatures and habitats through supporting environmental education, recreational activities, and programs of Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service."

<https://friendsofhagerman.com/>

### Additional Resource:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hagerman\\_National\\_Wildlife\\_Refuge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hagerman_National_Wildlife_Refuge)

## Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge (Cont.)

### Butterfly Garden

Karen contacted David Turner, chairperson of the Butterfly Garden Committee for FOH (Friends of Hagerman), who related that the garden was put in and is maintained by FOH. Work sessions are held most Wednesday mornings during the growing season, weather permitting. Most of the volunteers are members of FOH, and many are also Bluestem Texas Master Naturalists and Grayson County Master Gardeners and receive credit for service hours. Most of the volunteers live in Grayson County, but some are from Denton, Collin, Fannin, and Lamar counties.



Butterfly  
Garden  
May 2021

Butterfly  
Garden  
September 2022





## More Photos from Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge



# SEPTEMBER TURF TIP

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

**MID-SEPTEMBER THROUGH EARLY OCTOBER**

THERE'S A SPECIFIC TIME-FRAME TO APPLY

Apply Fall pre-emergents when soil temperatures drop to around 70F for 4-5 consecutive nights or when nighttime lows are 60-65F. This will vary a lot from year to year and region to region. For North TX, this is typically between mid-September to early October. Your time is limited!

**STOP THE GROWTH OF COOL WEATHER WEEDS  
ONCE THE COLD WEATHER USHERS IN WITH  
RAIN AND A COLD FRONT - IT'S TOO LATE**

A pre-emergent application will inhibit the seeds before they can "emerge" or germinate in the cooler weather.

**REMEMBER, NOW IS THE TIME**

DON'T MISS THIS BRIEF WINDOW FOR TREATMENT

If you miss this deadline, then the cool-season annual seeds will germinate and it will be another year before you can treat them.

**WHAT TO APPLY  
CORN GLUTEN MEAL OR BENEFIN?**

Corn Gluten Meal can have a success of up to 60% if it does not receive rain for five to seven days after it is applied. Benefin will only be effective if applied in the short time frame from mid-September to October. To read more about these options, visit <https://aggieturf.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/Preeemergence-Herbicide-Guide-4.pdf>

**CHECK OUT MORE INFORMATION**

ANOTHER RESOURCE FROM TEXAS A&M

To learn more about weed identification and treatment for cool and warm season weeds, be sure to visit: [http://publications.tamu.edu/TURF\\_LANDSCAPE/PUB\\_turf\\_Herbicides%20for%20Weed%20Control%20in%20Turfgrass.pdf](http://publications.tamu.edu/TURF_LANDSCAPE/PUB_turf_Herbicides%20for%20Weed%20Control%20in%20Turfgrass.pdf)

Denton County Master Gardener Association

Questions? Contact our Help Desk

email: [master.gardener@dentoncounty.com](mailto:master.gardener@dentoncounty.com)

PHONE: 840-348-2892

## Save Those Leaves

BY KAREN GIBSON & CHERYL HUCKABEE

Have you seen those “Save the Leaves” graphics on social media lately urging you to cease bagging up your leaves to send to the landfill?

Take a moment to consider why YOU need to use those leaves:

- Leaves and yard debris make up over 13% of your landfill’s contents, releasing greenhouse gas methane into the atmosphere.
- Your turf will be healthier with a light layer of shredded leaves.
- Wildlife depends upon leaf litter for habitat – food, shelter nesting – over the winter, including many moth and butterfly caterpillars.
- Leaf blowers create noise and air pollution.
- Leaf mold is a great soil amendment, improving the structure of your soil and its water retention capabilities.
- Leaves provide a natural mulch, perfect to help retain moisture over the winter and protect your plants from those blasts of Siberian air we can get here in north Texas.

Fallen leaves that accumulate in our landscape are a terrific, free resource! Their benefits include conserving moisture, modifying the temperature of the soil, preventing soil erosion, reducing weed growth and, when composted, they supply a slow release of nutrients to plants.

Let's talk about the various ways you can manage your fallen leaves with information from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Earth-Kind Landscaping.



- Mow a light covering of fallen leaves and leave them in place on your lawn. It's helpful to use a mulching blade to shred the leaves.
- Use the fallen leaves as mulch in your ornamental beds, vegetable gardens and around trees and shrubs. Mowing over them and capturing them in your mower's bag attachment will shred them and is an effective way to distribute them where you want. Apply 3" to 6" around trees and shrubs leaving a 4" to 6" gap around the plants' trunk or stem. In ornamental and vegetable gardens apply 2" to 4". Shredded leaves are also great to use in garden paths.



## Save Those Leaves! (Cont.)

- Improve the soil by working 6" to 8" of shredded leaves into clay soil to improve aeration and drainage. Doing this in sandy soil will improve water and nutrient retention in the soil. A light broadcast of high nitrogen fertilizer over the area and keeping the area moist will help decompose the shredded leaves.
- Compost dry leaves along with other yard waste such as grass clippings, small shredded/chipped up plants, and weeds. Leaves can also be decomposed by themselves into leaf mold that can be used as a soil amendment.

Leaf mold is super easy for homeowners to make and has lots of beneficial uses in your garden. Did you know that leaf mold holds 300% to 500% of its weight in moisture? In addition, when worked into the soil, it improves the soil structure and provides a habitat for good soil organisms like earthworms and beneficial bacteria. Leaf mold can also be used as mulch.

Leaf mold is produced through fungal decomposition which is cooler and slower than heat-generating composting. Here are some simple ways to make leaf mold:

- Rake the leaves into a pile, moisten them a little, and let them sit.
- Put the leaves into black plastic bags, wet them down and shake the bags to distribute the moisture, and poke a few holes in the bags. Put the bags in a shady spot and check them every few months to add water if needed.
- Speed up the decomposition process by shredding the leaves and adding a little high nitrogen fertilizer to the pile or bags. Turning the pile with a garden fork and turning over the bags also helps them decompose more quickly.
- Leaf mold is ready to use when it is soft and crumbly, resembling chocolate cake.



**Compost Bins**



**Leaf Mold Created in Trash Bags**

## Save Those Leaves! (Cont.)

Leaf mold is super easy for homeowners to make and has lots of beneficial uses in your garden. Did you know that leaf mold holds 300% to 500% of its weight in moisture? In addition, when worked into the soil, it improves the soil structure and provides a habitat for good soil organisms like earthworms and beneficial bacteria. Leaf mold can also be used as mulch.

If you are concerned that using leaves as mulch will add phosphorus to your soil, consider periodically testing your soil. According to the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, "Heavy continuous use of compost, manures or other materials as a source of organic matter can lead to imbalances or excess levels of some nutrients after a number of years. As with any soil amendment, it is advisable to periodically test your soil for nutrient levels, pH and organic matter and adjust your fertilizer and organic matter applications accordingly."

Learn more about why and how to have your soil tested on the [Denton County Master Gardener Association website](#).

### **Tips to keep Rodents out of your Compost Bin/Pile**

The advent of cooler weather means rodents are looking for a winter home. Here are a few tips to keep them out of your compost area:

- Moisture - Compost bins tend to be ignored in the winter. Soak your compost pile with water several times over a few days. The critters should move to dryer accommodations.
- Turn your compost on a regular basis.
- If you aren't adverse to the idea, use a snap trap to lower the local rodent population.
- Use a bin with solid sides
- Ensure the lid fits tightly with no gaps for critters to crawl in
- Rats don't like to be disturbed. Put your compost pile/bin in an area you pass by often and tap on it as you pass by.
- Never add meats, fish, fat, or strong-smelling foods like cheese to any compost bin/pile.



## Save Those Leaves! (Cont.)

### Resources

#### *The National Wildlife Federation*

"Why You Should Leave the Leaves"

<https://www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2015/OctNov/Gardening/Leave-the-Leaves>

#### *Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Earth-Kind Landscaping*

"Don't Bag It - Leaf Management Plan"

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/landscape/leaf-management-plan/>

#### *University of Massachusetts-Amherst*

"Fertilizing Flower Gardens and Avoid Too Much Phosphorus," Tina Smith & Doug Cox

<https://ag.umass.edu/cafe/fact-sheets/fertilizing-flower-gardens-avoid-too-much-phosphorus>

#### *DCMGA - Denton County Master Gardener Association*

"Compost your way to a successful garden"

<https://dcmga.com/north-texas-gardening/community-gardening/compost-your-way-to-a-successful-garden/>

"The Art of Composting"

<https://dcmga.com/north-texas-gardening/community-gardening/the-art-of-composting/>

"Soil Testing - Help Desk Question"

<https://dcmga.com/north-texas-gardening/community-gardening/soil-testing/>

#### *Compost Magazine*

"11 Ways to Stop Getting Mice In The Compost Bin..."

<https://www.compostmagazine.com/stop-mice-compost-bin/>

#### *Planet Natural Research Center*

"Keeping Mice From Your Compost Heap"

<https://www.planetnatural.com/mice-compost/>

#### *Capital Scraps*

"Mouse eviction! Or how to fix up an under-active compost bin"

<https://www.compost.org.au/mouse-eviction-or-how-to-fix-up-an-under-active-compost-bin/>



## North Texas Gardening Focus When to Prune Perennials

*This column highlights timely articles from North Texas Gardening (DCMGA website). If you are wondering what to plant, when to plant it, when to fertilize it, and when to water it, you will find all this and more in articles written by Denton County Master Gardeners on North Texas Gardening.*

As with most ornamental plants, the timing of when you maintain them is important to their health and attractiveness in your landscape. Let's start with a simple botany lesson on the differences in the plant classifications of herbaceous perennial plants vs. woody perennial plants. The plant classification is important in their maintenance.

Herbaceous plants have soft and flexible stems where woody plants have strong and inflexible stems. Herbaceous plants can have perennial, biennial, or annual life spans. Most woody plants have perennial life spans with stems that live for several years adding new growth in height and width each year (shrubs and trees). Herbaceous perennial plants are those that die down to the ground each year but whose roots remain alive and send up new growth each year.



**Mason Bee on Coneflower**

In general, herbaceous perennials such as those planted in the spring should be cut back to near the soil level, 2" to 6" high, when their foliage and stems freeze after a couple of hard freezes have occurred. In North Central Texas, the first freeze typically occurs in mid-November.

There are a few exceptions to this rule of thumb. Perennials that provide food for birds should be left standing through the winter, cutting them back in late winter or early spring before they put out new growth. Also, perennials that add interest to the landscape in winter should be left standing until early spring.

For complete tips on what and when to cut back and which to leave standing until early spring, visit "When and how to prune perennial flowering plants" on the North Texas Gardening pages.







### Denton County Master Gardener Association YouTube Playlists

Flower Arranging	Houseplants
Herbs & Vegetables	Landscaping
Organic Gardening	Pollinators
Other Gardening Topics	Roses
Permaculture	Shade Plants
Seasonal Tasks & Tips	Tree Care
Waterwise Gardening	Turf Care
Wildlife Habitat Gardening	

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

### New! DCMGA General Meeting Presentation

October 12, 2022. 10:00 am to Noon  
Open To The Public

"Direct Marketing of Commercial Horticulture Products" presented by Laura Miller, Tarrant County Extension Agent

**Location:** Global Spheres Center, 7801 S  
Interstate 35, Corinth, TX

You may also join virtually via Zoom. Advance registration required for virtual attendance.

To Register:

<https://uso2web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUoceCoqzwuGN1K3l2fak-M55TSnIoF8Zu4>

#### DCMGA Members

Plan Your Week emailed each Friday has the most current Online CE Opportunities.

## Resources & Education Opportunities For Master Gardeners and the Community We Serve

Science-based knowledge on a variety of topics.

New!

### Home Grown Lecture Series

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. Virtual.

October 6, 2022 – Proper Pruning in the Landscape  
– Paul Winski, County Extension Agent–Commercial Horticulture

November 3, 2022 – Holiday Meats–Not Just Turkey!  
– Shannon Dietz, County Extension Agent–Ag & Natural Resources

Registration Required:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/home-grown-lecture-series-2022-tickets-221010808277>

New!

### Fall Gardening and Bulb Planting

Fall is gardening heaven for north central Texas. Not only do we get our best vegetables then, but we also look to the future by planting bulbs to provide us with an early and labor-free display of bright colors in early spring. Fall is a season of hope. Please come out and let Denton County Master Gardener Cheryl Huckabee fill your imagination.

**October 21, 2022**

4:00 p.m.

**Location:** Sanger Public Library, 501 Volivar Street,  
Sanger, TX

**For More Events – Visit  
[the DCMGA Upcoming Events Page](https://dcmga.com/)**

**BY HELP DESK TEAM**

**Q:** How do I get my Christmas cactus to bloom for the holidays?

**A:** Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*) is often a plant that is propagated and handed down from generation to generation. Their pendulous stems make them a great choice for hanging baskets with blooms of red, rose, purple, lavender, peach, orange, cream, and white.

In September, pinching (also called leveling) may be done to remove phylloclades (branches) from your Christmas cactus in preparation for the bud set. Twist off short and immature stem segments, as they will not initiate flower buds until they mature. Pinching back poorly located longer stems is a way to improve the overall shape of your plant, creating a more layered look.

The "trick" to getting a Christmas cactus to bloom for the holiday comes down to light and temperature. Around September 15, and no later than October 1, begin the process to produce flower buds by introducing at least eight days with 14-16 hours of darkness. Do not turn on the lights at night in the room

where your plant is placed, even for a short period, as that breaks the required dark cycle. If necessary, you may choose to move it in & out of a closet or cover the plant each night with a box or dark piece of cloth. The temperature should be between 60 - 68°F. Buds normally will be visible in about 4-6 weeks. Plants that remain outdoors with night temperatures between 50 - 59°F will set flower buds regardless of day length, but growth will be slower, and bud drop may occur at 50°F. Discontinue fertilization and water only if needed to prevent wilting during bud set.

Once buds reach 1/2 - 3/4" in length, move the Christmas cactus into the bright, indirect light it likes with normal home temperatures. Keep it evenly moist to prevent flower buds from falling off, but never let water stand in the saucer beneath the pot. Flowering can last up to 7 - 8 weeks if the plants are kept at no more than 68°F.

Problems may occur if the plant is in a lighted room; often, the side to the window develops buds, but the lighted side of the plant does not. If its flower buds fall off, it has either



**Christmas Cactus**  
*Schlumbergera bridgesii*



received too much or too little water, continuous warm temperatures, or lack of humidity. The lack of humidity inside our heated winter homes is often a problem for Christmas cactus. You can place the planter on top of a small tray filled with pebbles. Pour water over the pebbles, but do not allow the water to rise to the top layer of the pebbles. The water will evaporate, increasing the humidity around the cactus.

After blooming is done, let the plant rest by withholding water for six weeks. Its growth period will not actively start again until around April.

A little fun fact for you. Did you know the leaves of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter Cactus are shaped differently? The Thanksgiving cactus (*Schlumbergera truncata*) has pointed claw-shaped points on the leaf. The Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*) leaves are scalloped or teardrop shaped. The Easter cactus (*Rhipsalidopsis gaertnerii*) leaves are rounded in the center.

Learn more about identifying the different holiday cactuses from *Iowa State University Extension* at this link:

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/linn/news/it-thanksgiving-christmas-or-easter-cactus>.

#### Resources:

*Michigan State University, MSU Extension*

[https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/the\\_secret\\_to\\_getting\\_a\\_christmas\\_cactus\\_to\\_bloom\\_temperature\\_and\\_light](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/the_secret_to_getting_a_christmas_cactus_to_bloom_temperature_and_light)

*University of Georgia, UGA Cooperative Extension, CAES Newswire*

<https://newswire.caes.uga.edu/story/7823/christmas-cactus.html>

*N.C. Cooperative Extension*

<https://pitt.ces.ncsu.edu/2015/12/christmas-cactus-care/>

*University of New Hampshire Extension*

<https://extension.unh.edu/blog/2020/02/how-often-should-i-water-christmas-cactus>



*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.*



## Denton County Master Gardener Association



### JOIN US TO LEARN MORE

General Meeting & Program  
October 12, 2022, 10 am-noon  
&

2023 Intern Informational Meeting  
October 14, 2022, 10 am-noon

Both at the Global Spheres Center  
7801 S I-35, Corinth



Scan the QR code or go to  
[dcmga.com/become-a-master-gardener](https://dcmga.com/become-a-master-gardener) for details & to apply

Now Recruiting for Our  
2023 Intern Class

## Want to Be a Master Gardener?

Online Applications  
Available Aug 15 - Oct 20 at  
[dcmga.com](https://dcmga.com)

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. We seek to provide reasonable accommodation for all persons with disabilities for this program and ask that you notify the Denton County AgriLife Extension Office of the auxiliary aid or service that will be required.



## Denton County Master Gardener Association Upcoming Events

**What's Growing On**

- October 11** ***Preparing Your Garden for Winter***  
7-8 pm. Presented by Lynda Harvey. Flower Mound Library.
- October 12** ***General Meeting & Program***  
10 am-noon. Business meeting & program "Direct Marketing of Commercial Horticulture Products", presented by Laura Miller. Global Spheres Center, Corinth. Registration required.
- October 14** ***Starting Plants from Seeds***  
3-4pm. Presented by Cheryl Huckabee. Lewisville Public Library.
- October 20** ***KLB Garden Secrets Series: Pollinator & Butterfly Gardens***  
6-7 pm. Presented by Liz Moyer in partnership with Keep Lewisville Beautiful. Lewisville Grand Theater.
- October 21** ***Fall Gardening & Spring Bulbs***  
4-5 pm. Presented by Cheryl Huckabee. Sanger Public Library.
- November 2** ***Garden Art on a Slim Budget***  
10-11 am. Presented by Lynda Harvey. Denton Senior Center.
- November 9** ***General Meeting & Program***  
10 am-noon. Business meeting & program "The Relationship Between Trees & Mycology", presented by Sebastian Tabibi. Global Spheres Center, Corinth. Registration required.
- November 11** ***Texas Superstars*®**  
11 am-noon. Presented by Charlotte Canion. Dallas Arboretum.
- November 17** ***KLB Garden Secrets Series: Texas Superstars*®**  
6-7 pm. Presented by Charlotte Canion in partnership with Keep Lewisville Beautiful. Lewisville Grand Theater.
- November 18** ***Preserving Your Harvest***  
9-10 am. Presented by Bonnie Ambrose. Denton Senior Center.
- November 18** ***Fabulous Fall Flowers***  
11 am-noon. Presented by Charlotte Canion. Dallas Arboretum.

For detailed information: [dcmga.com/upcoming-events](https://dcmga.com/upcoming-events)

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### Mission Statement

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

### Extension EO/EEO Statement

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

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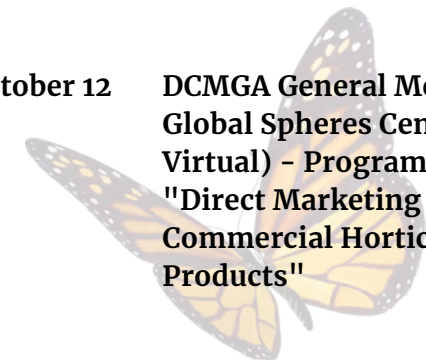
<https://www.pinterest.com/DentonCountyMGA>

#### YouTube:

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

### Save the Date

October 12 DCMGA General Meeting,  
Global Spheres Center (&  
Virtual) - Program:  
"Direct Marketing of  
Commercial Horticulture  
Products"



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### Content

**Submission deadline for the November edition of *The Root* is Saturday, October 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 Cheryl Huckabee at [dcmga.communications@gmail.com](mailto:dcmga.communications@gmail.com).

All photos are courtesy of DCMGA's Creative Visual Arts (CVA) Team unless otherwise attributed.