

# Tarrant County Master Gardeners



TEXAS A & M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Volume 6 Issue 1

January 2022

## Changes to the Newsletter - Reporters Needed!

By Lorie Grandclair-Diaz

Happy New Year! This upcoming year will be the sixth year that Theresa Thomas and I have been doing our Newsletter, and it has been a pleasure. I asked the Executive Board for permission to change our Newsletter from monthly to quarterly in the hope that we will be able to get input from more people, and the Board supported my request. Theresa will continue to pull articles from past Newsletters that are still relevant, and I will still include pictures and stories from members regarding their own gardens, along with occasional updates from various members when they have something that they would like to share. What I would like to add to this is updates on our various projects. In the past, I have included stories on projects when there has been something significant, but I feel that we are missing smaller updates on what's happening around our Association. With that, I'd like to produce a Newsletter in January, April, July and October, and include small updates on all of our projects in each Newsletter when appropriate.

Our Association is large and spread out, and many of us don't know what's happening on the other side of the County. I thought that a way to begin would be to divide the County's projects into areas delineated by where projects are located in relation to I-30 and I-35.

The Northern area includes BRIT, the Japanese Garden, and all of the FWBG areas; Compost Outpost, Begonia Greenhouse, Trial Garden, Perennial Garden, and Backyard Vegetable Garden. It also includes Tarrant County Master Gardener office and Teen Challenge.

To the Northeast are Bob Jones Nature Center & Composting Demo, Common Ground NRH, Heritage Elementary OLE, and Durham Intermediate OLE.

Southeast includes Fitzgerald Elementary OLE, Meadowbrook Elementary OLE, Wildscape at Veterans Park, Samaritan House and Union Gospel Mission. Also in this area is our Community Demo Garden which includes; Perennial Garden, Herb Garden, Cactus Garden, Rose Garden, Native/Ornamental Grasses, Orchard and Berry Patch, Mother Plant Bed, Greenhouse and Shade house, Fish/lily pond, Butterfly Garden, Community Vegetable beds, Shad Garden, Container Garden, Compost area, Native Plant Garden, and Native Bird Sanctuary.

Southwest is the SW Regional Library, SW Sub Courthouse, Alice Carlson OLE and Thistle Hill.

I realize that all of that is a lot to cover! Please continue onto the next page for how I imagine we might be able to handle it.

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## Changes to Newsletter continued

How I envision this working is for the reporter for various areas to reach out each quarter to the leads of projects for just a quick update on what's going on. I know that Project Leads have their hands full and aren't looking to write articles on top of their other tasks.

For the Northern area, I believe that our Master Gardener office information is covered in e-blast notifications. I'm thinking one person could cover BRIT and the Japanese Garden, and one other person could cover the other FWBG areas. It is my understanding that Teen Challenge project is kept confidential, so we won't include that project.

I think that one person could report on the NE projects, 4 total. (Bob Jones Nature Center & Composting Demo, Common Ground NRH, Heritage Elementary OLE, and Durham Intermediate OLE.)

The Southeast is quite large because it includes our Demonstration Garden, Fitzgerald Elementary OLE, Meadowbrook Elementary OLE, Wildscape at Veterans Park, Samaritan House and Union Gospel Mission. I would really like it if one person could cover the Demo Garden, while one other person covered the other projects in that area.

Which brings us to the Southwest area. I think that one person could report on SW Regional Library, SW Sub Courthouse, Alice Carlson OLE, and Thistle Hill.

I will cover The Peter Rabbit Players when they are back up and running. If I have missed a project, I apologize and please let me know!

All in all, we're looking for 6 reporters to keep their thumbs on the pulse of what's happening in our Association and then pass that information on to me. It isn't necessary to create a write up if all that's happening at a project is just routine maintenance, but we do want to hear about any progress or setbacks that our projects may be experiencing.

My email address is lgrandclair@gmail.com

You can always call me with any questions at (817) 4803309. Please leave a message because I screen calls!

I am always an optimist, and look forward to hearing from any of our members who would like to help me with this!

Lorie



## Carnation and Fall Obedient Plant

The January Birth Flower is the carnation.

The general meaning of the carnation is love, fascination, and distinction.

The hidden message of the carnation, so favored during the Victorian era, varied according to color:

Color Red - My Heart Aches For You

Color Pink - I'll Never Forget You

Color Yellow - You Have Disappointed Me

A striped carnation conveyed the secret message - I Wish I Could Be With You

More info about the carnation:

- \*Definition of the carnation: A Eurasian plant with pink to purple-red spice-scented usually double flowers; widely cultivated in many different varieties and colors

- \*The scientific name of a flower species is formed by the combination of two terms: the genus name and the species descriptor in the case of the carnation the *Dianthus caryophyllus*.

- \*The carnation is also called clove pink and gillyflower.

- \*The flower has been cultivated for the last 2,000 years.

- \*The name "carnation" is derived from the words "coronation" or the Greek word "corone" (meaning flower garland.)

Fall Obedient Plant, *Physostegia virginiana*, also called False Dragonhead, is in the mint family. It grows 2-5 feet tall and 1-2 feet wide, with square stems and opposite, toothed leaves that grow up to 5" long and 1.5" wide and are smaller at the top of the stems. The plant's common name comes from the observation that individual flowers in the flower spike will stay in place if they are manipulated into a new position.

It blooms in late summer through mid-fall in North Texas. The 2/3-1" white to light- to deep-pink to lavender flowers are found on 4-6" spikes that start blooming at the bottom of the spike to the top. Several cultivars varying in flower color is available. Dead heading the flowers encourages more blooms. The flowers are followed by seed capsules with small black self-sowing seeds.

Fall Obedient Plant thrives in part shade to sun and a range of soil types, including clay and poor soil. In the wild, it can be found in marshy sites. During drought, it may go dormant.

During dry spells, Fall Obedient Plant will appreciate supplemental water, especially if planted in full sun. Unlike many other native Texas plants, it tolerates poor drainage, making it valuable for rain gardens. Fall Obedient Plant is great in border, meadow, butterfly, cutting and native plant gardens, as well as pocket prairies or close to a water feature. Taller plants may need to be staked if they become floppy. It is easy to propagate by seed or by digging up the roots. It spreads easily by rhizomes and can be aggressive, a characteristic common to mint family members. However, its shallow roots mean that it can be easily weeded out where it is not wanted. Fall Obedient Plant attracts butterflies, hummingbirds and native bees and is deer resistant. Plant in areas with good drainage. Right, carnation & Fall Obedient Plant.



## Blast From the Past – Sharecropper January 2010

### The Herb Garden

By Rita Hottel, Master Gardener Photos by Nancy Curl

One of my favorite food network shows a few years ago was a show called “Follow That Food”. It showed the origins and final culinary use of many different types of food in the world. So, follow with me as we trace the origin of the Herb Garden section of the Tarrant County Master Gardener Community/Education Garden and where the herbs grown there end up for culinary and other uses.

Two years ago, a section of the garden was designated as the herb garden. This approximately 30’ x 55’ plot was nothing but scruffy grass, an even scruffier old blackjack tree, a monstrous green concrete bench, and no topsoil. As the leader for this garden, I drafted a plan and, along with a few very dedicated volunteers, we formed the herb team. Through their determination and hard work, we now have a beautiful herb garden. The Community Workers laid the pavestone and brick to form the circular walkway through the garden. The first attempt (we called our train wreck) for a circle became, shall we say, a bit untidy. The next attempt was successful, and the bones of the garden were formed. Next the team and some TCU students laid yards and yards of newspaper, topped with compost and mulch. By the time this was all completed, summer was upon us and between the heat and the new compost many of the plants met their demise. Fall plantings were more successful and by this past spring it was rocking. A beautiful garden divided into four quarters: culinary, medicinal, silver, and butterfly herbs. The center of the circle became the thyme garden adorned with a custom-made bird bath.

As Master Gardeners, we have had a successful year. The Herb Team has acted as docents leading groups through the herb garden to educate them about how to grow herbs. We have taught classes on developing an herb garden, growing herbs, culinary uses of herbs, and how to make pesto. Still, we knew there was something missing. Who would use these beautiful herbs? Then, Nancy Curl, one of the directors of the Community Garden, came up with the answer. She contacted the Tarrant County Food Bank to see if they could use fresh herbs. Their Executive Chef, Vedat Lika, brought his class to the garden where the students learned first-hand about growing herbs. They gathered many bags of herbs to take back to the Community Kitchen where the chef would teach them about preserving, drying, and cooking with herbs.

An excerpt from the Community Kitchen brochure explains their benefits to our community: Meals prepared in the Community Kitchen make an immediate difference for community members in need of nutrition, and, at the same time, empower the culinary arts students to escape the cycle of poverty and hunger. These non-traditional students become remarkable learners and achieve not only culinary skills, but also the necessary job and life skills to help them build self-esteem and to be more successful in the workplace. The missing link was now connected. Now, beyond educational purposes, we have helped to fulfill a much greater need. Chef Lika plans to bring all future classes on a tour of the garden and the herb team is committed to providing fresh herbs to the Community Kitchen.

The TCMG Community/Educational Garden is a garden created by Master Gardeners to benefit the community through learning and education. It is an ongoing effort. Our current plans for the herb garden include labeling the herbs, painting the bench, building a new herb bed next to the building, and developing a lemon herb section, and of course, growing more herbs. Other plans include building a new fence and removing the old chain link so that the herb garden is included with the rest of the garden. The herb team works most Wednesday mornings, weather permitting.

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## Blast From the Past continued

### Herb Garden Update 2022

By Rita Hottel Lead of the TCMGA Educational/Demo Herb Garden. Carol Vance is Co-Lead

Looking back at the article written about the origin of the herb garden brought back many memories. It has been fourteen years since we broke ground and discovered a bed of rocks! We have met the goals mentioned and many more. As with any garden, it is ever changing. After all, it is a demo garden and a trial garden. The center circle has been terraced to improve drainage and has become the focal point of the garden, changing with the seasons. Cool season herbs in the circular bed include calendula, parsley, dianthus, as well as thyme and dill. Warm season herbs would include many types of basil, chives, rosemary, lemon balm, lemon grass, and many others.

The chain link fence came down and a wrought iron fence was erected, enclosing the Herb Garden into the main garden. The old Hackberry tree was removed for safety reasons. We have added a witch hazel tree and a bay laurel tree. Another walkway to the rear of the garden was added to provide better access from the 1801 building. The old concrete bench was painted, then painted again. A pergola over the concrete bench was completed in January 2021 to provide some shade as well as an inviting place to sit and enjoy the garden. Trellises on each end of the pergola provide support for a climbing coral honeysuckle and a pink climber rose. We added garden benches near the back as an added invitation to come and sit a while.

We have taught many classes on the various uses of herbs and how to grow them, using the herb garden to provide a visual demonstration of the conditions in which to grow a successful herb garden. Many Interns and Master Gardeners put in their required hours here to learn more about growing herbs. It has served as a backdrop for Channel 11 News cast and video training sessions.

The demo garden is open to the public and we especially welcome visitors to come by during our Tuesday morning work time, watch the butterflies flit about the butterfly section, enjoy the fragrance that fills the air, and learn more from the Masters!



These three photos show the development of the Herb Garden over the years.



# Tarrant County Master Gardeners

## Master Gardener Awards 2021

The Master Gardener Awards from 2021 are as follows:

Master Gardener of the Year - Cheri Mills

Extra Miler - Patsy Miller

Educator of the Year - Kelly Perry

Intern of the Year - Donna Smith

Intern Extra Miler—Molly Holt

Mod Squad Intern of the Year - Vincent Gaddy

Mod Squad Extra Miler Teddi Zonker

Master Gardener Rock Award - Eleanor Tuck



Photos: Above right corner is Eleanor Tuck receiving The Rock Award. First row: Left is Cheri Mills receiving the Master Gardener of the Year Award. Center is Patsy Miller receiving the Extra Miler Award. Right is Kelly Perry receiving Educator of the Year. Second Row: Left is Donna Smith receiving Intern of the Year. Center is Molly Holt receiving Intern Extra Miler. Right is Vincent Gaddy receiving Mod Squad Intern of the Year. Not pictured is Teddi Zonker, Mod Squad Extra Miler.

## From Teddi Zonker's Garden



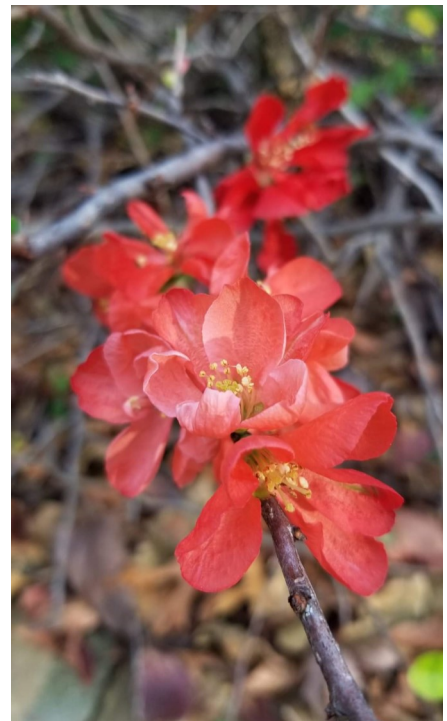
Watauga, Texas

My personal challenge was to have blooms twelve months out of the year! Camellia are beautiful in the winter!



Above: Hellebore really help with the winter bloom goal! I love seeing the bees on the pollen, working away!

Right: Flowering Quince, another favorite for bees December-March.





# Tarrant County Master Gardeners

## Brittnay's Corner



### Who is your new Horticulture Agent really?

Well as you know, my name is Brittnay Meyer, I am a Virgo who enjoys long walks on the beach at sunset..... oh wait, this isn't another dating profile is it?

In all seriousness, my name is Brittnay. Strange spelling I know. My mom says she wanted me to be different, but I am pretty sure it was because she didn't want to have to buy any of those name keychains! I have 3 ridiculous cats: The gray/white is Reggie, the Calico is Tonks, and the black one is Lupin.

I grew up just north of Houston in Tomball, TX. When I was younger it was a small town, not anymore!

I was an outdoors kid, my parents had to drag me back inside every day. Agriculture has been my passion since I was little. I lived the typical country life; riding horses, raising cattle, pigs, chickens, and goats. Planting and helping my grandmother in the garden. Growing up I always wanted to be a large and small animal vet. (Which I think is required by law for every little girl at some point.) I also played every sport in the book, including football in junior high, and was a percussionist in band for 8 years throughout school. I was the kid that wanted to do every and anything I could, wanting to learn as much as possible.



In high school I was a vet tech at a local clinic. This was where I realized I was not destined to be a vet, dealing with the death of an animal was too much for my empathic soul. My AG teacher inspired me to pursue horticulture quickly thereafter, so I turned my focus to all things Hort related. I competed on the range and pasture team and the floriculture team. I took all the hort classes available and received my floral certificate my junior year. I pursued a bachelor's degree in Horticulture and Crop Science with a minor in Industrial Design and Development from Sam Houston State University, graduating in May 2012. I thought I wanted to be a landscape architect upon graduation but needed a master's degree and I was already burnt out from finishing undergrad in 3 years. So the job search was on!

I worked in commercial landscaping for 5 years. I began at a commercial nursery for 2 years and then moved into the construction department at a commercial landscape company for 3 years in Houston, TX. After spending so much time behind a desk, I realized my passions were directing me to more hands-on outside work; thus began my search for graduate programs. I saw the disconnect between research and the public's knowledge, then extension became my calling. I have always been an Aggie at heart, SHSU just offered more money, so A&M was my top choice, another bonus, they run the Extension Service, so it was a no brainer.





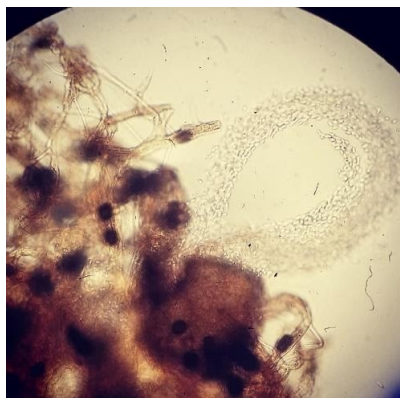
### **Brittnay's Corner continued**

Since I began my search in late 2017, I had to wait until the Fall of 2018 before I could start my program in Plant Pathological and Microbiology. I wanted, and still want, to be able to help the future of Agriculture by being able to feed the world, but with growing pathogen resistance and shrinking crop area, producing enough food has become an ever-growing concern.

I joined Dr. Kevin Ong's lab since his lab focused on extension applied research. I loved getting to work not only in the field, but directly with producers and interacting with the public on education programs. Over my 3 years in the department, I worked on pathogens of Stone fruit and Palms in Texas, with my thesis work focusing on fungal pathogens of watermelon in Texas. During my research I discovered 3 new fungal pathogens found in Texas and 3 new fungal pathogens found to cause disease in watermelon. I am still working on my publications currently, and I cannot wait to share those with you when they are finished.

During my master's work I found another passion of mine, working with youth. From my years of volunteering with FFA, at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, and participating in educational programs with my department, I was shocked that most children had no idea where their food came from, other than buying it from the store. I know for the future of not only agriculture but for our planet overall, children understanding the process of how their food gets to the table is crucial.

I love getting my hands dirty and I am not afraid of hard work. I hope to have a working farm and ranch one day, if I can find my own piece of Texas in the future. I am excited to work with this amazing group of volunteers and help provide opportunities to make TCMGA the best and most effective group in Texas!



# Tarrant County Master Gardeners

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## Dividing Your Landscape into “Use Areas”

By Steve Chaney  
Sharecropper January 2011

***“It may be argued that real beauty is neither in garden nor landscape, but in the relation of both to the individual, that what we are seeing is not only a scenic setting ... but a background for life,” remarked Sir George Sitwell.***

Landscapes are more than looks, they reflect on the places where we live and tell us who we are and how we like to spend our lives. The most important part of a landscape is a point of view.

Some folks just want to relax in the yard after work; others expect a landscape to make a statement. The front yard (also the side yard if you live on a corner) is the most visible to neighbors and passersby. Most people want it to be at least neatly kept. The fellow that was taken to court for having a weedy lawn insisted that it was a wild- flower garden, but even wildflowers can be in tidy borders.

While you are at the planning stage, divide the landscape into different use areas, considering the view from inside and from outside. You will probably want the front to be for public view, the back for private use, and the work area to stay out of sight from all angles. The public area should be made to fit somewhat into the scheme of the neighborhood, with the architecture of the house dominant and everything else visually secondary. Drives and parking ought to be directly accessible from walkways, which in turn should lead to a door – something people often forget, leaving visitors to guess how they should approach the house.

The plants around the front should need little maintenance, with minimal pruning. Basic landscapes have entirely too many evergreen shrubs, most of which demand pruning several times a season. At the corners place a shrub or shrubs that upon maturity will only reach about a third, no more than a half the height of the house, then accent the entrance with an unusual plant or unique accessory. A few low maintenance borders here and there will go a long way to- ward filling any gaps left. Add a nice tree or group of trees no closer than 15 feet to help frame it and all the basics are done. Avoid the most common mistake homeowners make of cluttering the front of your home with too many plants. The problem will only worsen with time as the plants mature.

Hedges and fences both will often help hide the garbage cans, the old car, the tool shed, the woodpile, and the dog’s yard. People frequently fail to consider such camouflage, but a simple wooden lattice on posts with a vine or two can go a long way toward concealing the work area and anything else that lacks aesthetic appeal.

The last big use area of the landscape is the private area, the patio or deck with its bird feeder, swing, grill, pool, sandbox, vegetable garden and everything else you enjoy. You probably have these things near a window (so that you can keep an eye on the kids and the flowers) and a door, through which guests and food may flow freely. You should be able to breathe easily, or even to rant and rave, in the privacy of your own back- yard without wondering who is peeking in.

The private area should visually pull you out- doors when you view it through a door or window. As you gaze across the backyard in the wintertime, the birds should seem nearby as if they were in the kitchen or den. A small salad garden or bed for herbs or cut flowers should be handy and visible. The private area should be inviting and fun! Enjoy your planning this winter and harvest the benefits the rest of your life!