

Tarrant County Master Gardeners



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Taddie Hamilton at Fort Worth Garden Club Flower Show



The Fort Worth Garden Club Flower Show was on Friday, April 16. Our very own Taddie Hamilton won 3 Blue Ribbons, one Red Ribbon, and the Green Rosette Growers Choice Award for Best in Class for her Begonia Baskets. The three Blue Ribbon winners are pictured left: B. Little Miss Mummy, B. Sophie Cecile, B. White Ice. Pictured below right is B. Sophie Cecile, which in addition to winning a Blue Ribbon, was also the winner of the Green Rosette Growers Choice for Best in Class. Congratulations, Taddie!



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Flower of the Month-Phlox

PHLOX—The Surprising Flower

by The Editor - Sharecropper - May 2007

Imagine strolling through a cutting garden on a balmy summer day, basket and shears in hand. As you gather a bouquet of colorful flowers, you notice a tiger swallowtail sipping nectar from a fat cluster of pink blossoms. Soon you're inhaling the plant's sweet perfume, and you are as captivated by garden phlox (*Phlox paniculata*) as the butterflies, bumblebees and moths that pollinate it.

If you like to have butterflies in your summer garden, then summer phlox should be a staple in your flowerbeds. In mid- summer, when the spring flowers have faded, summer phlox will bring clouds of butterflies to your garden and even attract a few hummingbirds. In addition, you will have bouquets of fragrant flowers that can be used as cut flowers in the house.

Phlox paniculata is native in the eastern third of the United States. In the 1700s Europeans found these plants growing wild in damp meadows, along forest edges and in the rich soils of flood plains and saw their potential as garden plants. Their showy, fragrant flowers quickly became a hit throughout Europe and by the mid 1800s they were commonly available in the nursery trade. They didn't re-cross the Atlantic until Victorian times. By the 1950s there were hundreds of varieties available as the result of breeding programs in England, Russia, Germany and Holland. As a result many varieties were planted throughout Europe and North America but in the intervening years many of these have disappeared from the commercial trade. The wildflower of muddy-purple hue had been transformed into a sophisticated garden flower, available in shades of red, purple, pink or white. Today's choices include a multitude of cultivars.

Although garden phlox (also called summer phlox) is the most common offering at nurseries, there are more than sixty species of phlox. Phlox can be tall, with thick, glossy leaves, or it can spread across the ground with needle-like leaves. It can be a midsummer sun-lover or bloom in shady woods in April. All forms have five petals, often with a colored eye, on a tubular base. In midsummer, when spring flowers have faded, summer phlox will bring clouds of butterflies to your garden and even attract a few hummingbirds.

Although summer phlox is common to old gardens throughout the southeastern United States, the number of varieties found in old Texas gardens are limited.

In general, summer phlox prefer fertile soils high in organic matter, but both 'John Fanick' and 'Victoria' (the name given to the old standard garden phlox) perform fairly well in less desirable situations. These flowers - John Fanick and Victoria summer phlox - have been named Texas Superstars™ by Texas A&M University, which means they will be top performers in the garden. In general, these perennials can grow to more than 3 feet in height but fertility will greatly influence ultimate plant height. Both varieties grow in full sun to light shade but are best in full sun. A mulch layer helps keep the root zone cool. Remove faded flower panicles to pro- long bloom period. To propagate them, you can divide clumps in the spring or take tip cuttings in spring and early summer.

The genus name, Phlox, is derived from the Greek word for flame. Phlox is sometimes called flame flower because of its intense, hot colors.

Flower of the Month-Phlox

Only one species, Phlox drummondii (*Polemoniaceae*), is an annual. The bright red flowers of this Texas native attracted the attention of Thomas Drummond, a British naturalist, in the 1820s. He sent seeds to Europe, where the plant was bred into a variety of colors. It became a popular bedding plant, returning to charm Americans four decades later. It is a short, hardy, upright annual, adapted throughout the southeastern United States and a variety that has been used extensively in European gardens for many decades. Flowers are concentrated in clusters on top of sturdy, erect stems. Average planting success with this species is 70%. They grow 8-24 inches in height.

Powdery mildew is quite common with phlox and easily treatable. Some practices will help to minimize mildew infestation: plant in full sun; water at ground level instead of using a sprinkler; thin out stems to increase air movement; and remove infected foliage in the fall so mildew spores can't over winter. The summer phlox has fragrant flowers in clusters, that come in summer through November. Summer Phlox like moist, well drained, rich soils. Steps for caring for Summer Phlox are listed below.

1. Divide your Summer Phlox every couple of years, and check them for powdery mildew and spider mites after mid summer.
2. Cut old stems to the ground late fall or early spring and allowed to resprout with new stems.
3. Apply a light application of organic fertilizer to the top of the soil in early spring.
4. Mulch around, but not on top of, plants with 3 inches of organic mulch.
5. Water well weekly - until soil is completely moist - in summers with no rainfall.

The preference is partial sun, moist conditions, and fertile loamy soil. Light shade is tolerated, but flowers will be produced less abundantly. In full sun, the leaves have a tendency to turn yellowish green and the plants are in greater danger of drying out. Remember, "You're in Texas."



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MG Specialist Speaks Out: What is Organic?

By Lance Jepson and Edited by Dr. Mark Merchant

What is Organic?

When I took the Entomology Specialist Course, I went with an idea of what I thought organic means. Many of us gardeners believe that if we do not apply synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, we are growing organically. I believed that if I was only using soaps, oils and certain juices that I was gardening organically, etc. At a minimum I thought that organic is organic, at least that's what I thought.

During our classes in Conroe, Texas, I learned that, scientifically speaking, an organic molecule is defined as containing one or more carbon atoms, as well as hydrogen and oxygen. Compounds that do not contain these elements are inorganic. These include water, sulfur, silicon dioxide or diatomaceous earth and boric acid. I am going to let the chemists sort out the differences in the compounds. Our instructors taught us what we should be most interested in is the other way the term "organic" is used. The word has a different meaning when applied to a system of organic gardening.

Organic gardening is part of a philosophy which has been practiced for centuries, focusing on preparing the soil with a high organic content using materials of a natural origin. Something that is "organic", from the gardener's perspective, means that it comes from a natural source and can be found in nature. The opposite of this sense of the word "synthetic" or made by man.

It's important to know that all pesticides are regulated by the EPA, regardless of whether they are organically or synthetically produced. In fact, any substance that repels, kills or discourages a pest is considered a pesticide by the people who regulate pesticides. Products that contain only certain "exempt" ingredients as garlic, garlic oil, citronella, citronella oil or citric acid are not subject to federal regulations.

When it comes to our home garden, we all expect to have some insect damage, but when we get too much damage, we look for a product that kills, or at least discourages pests. Organic, to me, implies the use of non-regulated pesticides and the use of biological, mechanical, physical, or mechanical methods only. If I, as an organic gardener, want to use a pesticide, I look for an organic product of natural origin to control insect problems. Unfortunately, I have personally found there are relatively few effective products of plant origin on the market.

Interestingly, Dr. Merchant notes one can find organic pesticides that are just as toxic as synthetic ones. Just because something is organic does not mean it is safe or without risk. For this reason, it might be better to look for pest control products that are *safer, rather than limiting ourselves to only organic products*. Dr. Merchant refers to such products as "low-impact" pesticides.

LOW IMPACT PESTICIDES are defined as those products that are low in toxicity and have minimal impact on the environment, including beneficial organisms. Low impact pesticides can be either organic or synthetic. Some examples of low-impact pesticides include insecticidal soaps and dormant oils, and insect growth regulators. Because growth regulators are more selective, they are less harmful to the environment and more compatible with pest management systems. Low impact pesticides include some plant-derived insecticides, most of which are problem-specific, degrade quickly in the environment and pose little risk to beneficial insects. For a more complete list, see the Extension publication on low-impact pest

MG Specialist Speaks Out: What is Organic?

control at [http://citybugs.tamu.edu/FastSheets/Low% 20impact%20pest%20control% 20brochure.pdf](http://citybugs.tamu.edu/FastSheets/Low%20impact%20pest%20control%20brochure.pdf). These pesticides are widely available, effective and provide a low-risk way to keep our homes and gardens relatively pest free.

Many gardeners get great satisfaction talking about using only natural substances in our gardens or being all organic or not using any conventional pesticides.

This can be a good thing but remember that even organic insecticides are regulated by the EPA. Also, any insecticide sold in Texas must also be approved and registered with the pesticide division of the Texas Department of Agriculture. Finally, Dr. Merchant states not all “organic” methods are necessarily safer than synthetic insecticides. A topic that we will discuss another time.

I want to thank the Master Gardeners for all your positive comments on the first Entomology Article. It was gratifying to find your interest in Entomology and desire to improve our knowledge regarding the science of Entomology.



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Whak-a-Dillo Time: My Week Long Descent into Nuttiness

By Nora Coalson

Disclaimers: The events described below occurred prior to the time that becoming a master gardener was a nascent thought. And, in defense of Mr. Chaney, I did not disclose this episode to him during the interview. It all began with a few small diggings in my back yard. Probably a squirrel retrieving a forgotten nut. Larger excavated patches appeared in my previously relatively manicured lawn over the next several days, grouped in about a fifteen foot square area. Now I'm convinced an armadillo is the culprit, an idea solidified by a perimeter search which revealed a newly dug access hole under the west fence line. I plugged the hole with a brick bat, smoothed dirt over that, and went to bed that night visualizing a frustrated armadillo with broken toenails. Slept like a baby.

The next morning, fresh coffee in hand, I carried my morning paper out to the back deck for an anticipated victory party. My husband arrived on scene to witness his agitated, bathrobe-clad wife traipsing around the yard attempting to repair the new damage barehanded and damning armadillos to the seventh circle of hell. His annoyingly calm inspection of the west fence line revealed a new access hole about three feet from the previous one.

Blame for what happened next rests squarely on my husband's shoulders since it was he who first mentioned that only a concrete barrier would keep armadillos out of the yard. For the next three days, I mixed bag after heavy bag of Sakrete, slowly filling a trench under about 30 feet of fence line. Should you ever want to do this, one bag covers only about 4 feet of fence. The more I dug the less concerned about perfection I became. China seemed an appropriate depth, and that's what I aimed for. Task completed, I invited my husband onto the deck for a victory glass of wine.

Next morning: Yes, armadillos are officially brighter than I. They had moved operations to the east fence line. Before I could embark on another expensive trenching operation, my husband volunteered to stay up that night, flashlight & bat in hand, prepared to catch the offending animals red-handed and bash them to smithereens. I briefly feared he might catch leprosy in the process, but assumed that by now the biblical disease was probably curable.

John's smug smile the next day surely foretold a successful mission. Not so. Now even larger patches of turf had been peeled back. Since no dead armadillo appeared in the ruined area, I hurled an accusing, "You fell asleep, didn't you!" at my husband. He simply handed me a cup of coffee and steered me to a comfortable chair in the living room to tell his tale.

"I did not fall asleep," he declared and went on to describe the large raccoon that meandered into the yard and with its human-like, opposable-thumbed hands peeled back the sod and dug through the soil feasting on the bugs beneath. Apparently more fascinated than outraged, John watched the critter repeat his peeling actions several times before chasing him off. I complained that surely he could have gotten the message before so much damage was done.

The consensus from nearby garden stores was that I had a serious grub worm problem, which you probably already knew. I spent the afternoon poisoning every square inch of my lawn, front and back, a process only

Whak-a-dillo Time: My Week Long Descent into Nuttiness

marginally cheaper than concrete trenching.

I'm sure the planet sighed with relief when I signed up for Master Gardening classes. Remorse at my own ignorant actions has turned me into an assertively familiar shopper in the insecticide department. When I see someone reaching for the grub control chemicals, I blurt with confidence: "You do know not to treat your whole yard with that stuff, don't you." Then, whether they ask or not, I'm likely to give them the whole check-a-square-foot-area-for-grubs spiel.

The Catholic side of me, ever mindful of the importance of doing penance, will now-a-days just show up at any garden store wearing my Master Gardener logo shirt. The visit then becomes an impromptu question answering session, much like phone duty. If I don't know the answer, I just give them the handy www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu reference and the all-important 817-884-1944 phone number. If only I had met up with one of you Master Gardeners when I made my first grub control product purchase...



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Our Spring Time Gardens



Left: From the garden of Sian Rees.



From Eleanor Tuck:

Sorry I didn't think to get the picture before I cut it!! This Amaryllis grows in my front bed--fairly well protected--but a lot of full sun and it has spawned a baby plant whose flowers are just now opening. When my Daddy raised them, they were inside in pots, but Ginger Bason told me to put this guy outside and LOOK: !!!

ET

Our Spring Time Gardens



From Teddi Zonker:

The Cosmos are beginning to bloom!

From Teddi Zonker:

PEONY!

Normally I get 2-3 blooms. This year 12!



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Our Spring Time Gardens



From Sheryl Whited: Gardening with a feral cat colony.

Background: In late December 2020, a feral cat appeared in my garden with four kittens...and then 3 more adult cats joined them. Seven have been TNRed (trapped, neutered and released) but the momma cat refuses to enter a trap. I'm still working on that problem!

I've had to be very creative as I've planted my vegetable garden this season to ensure beds & planters do not become litter boxes.



Our Spring Time Gardens

From Patti Maness:

Pick a few from this list. The beloved plant we lost was the gardenia.

Thank you.

Patti



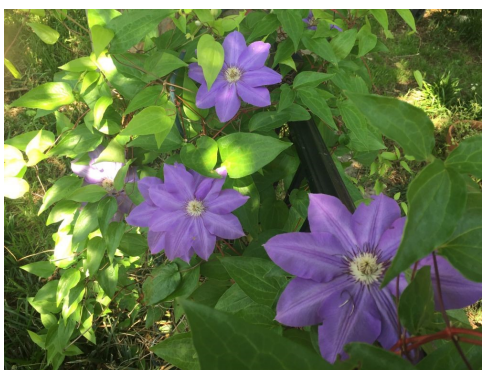
4 Nerve Daisy



Calylophus



Our lost Gardenia.



Clematis



Black Foot Daisy

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Our Spring Time Gardens

Lorie-

I am so excited to get my first rose of Spring - "Shiela's Perfume."

Sherelyn Mitchell

2021 Intern



Memories! Our First Plant Sale!

Quote - The world's favorite season is the spring. All things seem possible in May. - Edwin Way Teale

OUR FIRST PLANT SALE by Taddie Hamilton
Sharecropper May 2009

What a wonderful day! The First Annual Master Gardener Plant Sale was a grand success. At 9 a.m., the sun came out, the day warmed and the wind that almost blew us away on Thursday decreased to a breeze! A line of people with their wagons were waiting when we opened the gate! We sold more than 3000 plants, 250 roses, and 25 rain barrels! More than 75 MGs volunteered to help almost 300 families who came to admire our Community Garden and purchase plants.

We had great publicity from the Star Telegram, Dallas Morning News, Neil Sperry, Dotty Woodson and multiple flyers placed in schools and businesses and emailed by you to hundreds of friends and neighbors.

It was amazing to hear people say they didn't know the Garden was there. Several families indicated they would like a bed to tend to teach their children the thrill of growing their own food.

On Thursday, after the Master Gardener meeting, many MGs came to the garden to support our organization. It was thrilling to see all those plants going out of the gate to MG landscapes! Thank you for supporting the sale.

It took a big team who worked extremely hard to make the day a success.

Jeanie Browning chose Texas Super Star plants, easy to grow and beautiful! Larry Matl, Donna Morris and their team collected the money at a steady pace. Claire Alford led a team who helped people learn about the Heritage plants and how to care for them. Marilyn Sallee created the signs we used along the roads and created instructions of care for many of the Heritage Plants. Ginger Bason and her team answered questions from the public on taking care of their landscapes. Cathy Sabin distributed flyers all over the area and even into Mansfield! Susan Stanek made sure the Garden Clubs in the area had flyers and information. Eleanor Tuck oversaw the distribution of various Extension publications and even recruited people for the next Master Gardener Class. Pat Higgins and Lynn Hayes kept watch over the plants in the Holding Area. Tom Scott and his team built 25 rain barrels and sold them all! And of course Steve Chaney, Nancy Curl and Pat Higgins did all the behind the scenes work to make the sale a success.

This was such fun. Thanks for all your support and we'll do it again next year!!!

Thanks to Theresa Thomas for providing content from archived Newsletters, and thanks to our members for sharing pictures of their own gardens.



Final Thought from Eleanor Tuck

The following is the philosophy of Charles Schultz, the creator of the "Peanuts" comic strip. You don't have to actually answer the questions. Just read the email straight through. You'll get the point.

1. Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
2. Name the last five Heisman trophy winners.
3. Name the last five winners of the Miss America Contest.
4. Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer Prize.
5. Name the last half dozen Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
6. Name the last decade's worth of World Series winners.

How did you do?

The point is, none of us remember the headliners of yesterday. They are not second-rate achievers. They are the best in their fields. But the applause dies. Awards tarnish. Achievements are forgotten. Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners.

Here's another quiz. See how you do on this one:

1. List a few teachers who aided your journey through school.
2. Name three friends who have helped you through a difficult time.
3. Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile.
4. Think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated and special.
5. Think of five people you enjoy spending time with.

Easier?

The lesson: The people who make a difference in your life are NOT the ones with the most credentials, the most money, or the most awards. They are the ones who care.

Pass this on to those who have made a difference in your life.... "Don't worry about the world coming to an end today. It's already tomorrow in Mornington, Victoria, Australia.

