



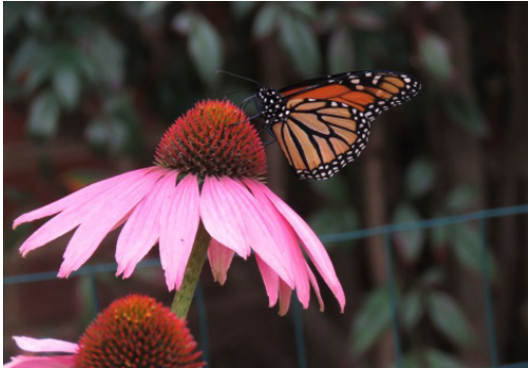
TARRANT COUNTY

Master Gardeners

A community of gardeners, learning and sharing best practices in north Texas.

VOL. 1, ISSUE 2 MAY 2023

Master Gardeners receive many hours of specialized training in horticulture through the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. The trained volunteers then contribute time in their communities on special projects and community gardens. To learn more about becoming a Master Gardener, visit www.tarrantmg.org



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EARTH-KIND LANDSCAPING



By Brittnay Meyer, M.S., Home Horticulture County Extension Agent
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension – Tarrant County

Earth-Kind gardening is used to help create the beautiful landscapes everyone desires. These techniques are not only low maintenance, but also protect our natural resources and the environment. Earth-Kind is what we call the “makes sense” approach. It combines conventional and organic gardening techniques to produce a design and care system based on real-world applications. Conserving our resources and protecting the environment are top priorities of this program.

Earth-Kind practices are science-based, tried and tested methods, not opinions. In the 1980s, county agent Steve George in Bexar County noticed the increased interest in the organic gardening movement. Coming from a more conventional gardening background, he looked at the pros and cons of each practice and developed the Earth-Kind Landscaping program. Since then, plant recommendations and maintenance practices have been tested under real-world conditions to ensure they not only are practical, but also work effectively. There is no point in changing habits if they won't work in the end.

The Earth-Kind system consists of four goals or pillars:

- Conserve water and improve water quality
- Reduce the use of chemicals and fertilizers
- Conserve energy
- Reduce solid waste materials

Each pillar coincides with the others, leading into the next without much effort. To achieve these goals, homeowners should follow the seven Earth-Kind principles laid

1. Planning and Design
2. Practical Turf Areas
3. Soil Analysis and Preparation
4. Appropriate Plant Selection
5. Efficient Irrigation and Rainwater Harvesting
6. Effective Uses of Mulch
7. Appropriate Maintenance – Achieved by following the first 6 principles

Don't be frightened by that long list. The Earth-Kind system was created to be simple to follow, with the greatest effort only at the start. The easiest way to begin is by selecting plants that are best for North Texas and are natives. **Texas SmartScape** and **Texas Superstar** are great websites to help with plant selection. I offer workshops throughout the year to go over each principle and provide you with the knowledge to create your ultimate landscape or garden. The next classes will be held on May 20 and Sept 23. To sign up, go to **shop.tcmga.org/shop/**. Also, visit **aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/** for publications and articles to help you on your Earth-Kind journey.

Photo by Marilyn Nash

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CHANGING CLIMATE



By Jeff Ray, CBS News Texas Senior Meteorologist

A meteorologist for 34 years, Jeff Ray addressed the Tarrant County Master Gardeners at the February 2023 monthly meeting.

Human activity has marked every cubic meter of air and water across the globe. Trace gases, radioactive isotopes or particulates are testament to humanity's expansion over the globe. This new era is called the Anthropocene. The industrial age changed the physical properties of the atmosphere and the ocean. It has supercharged the weather.

Looking at the climate record for the Metroplex, a record that goes back 124 years, one can parcel out many of the changes seen in other towns and cities across the nation. The growing season is getting longer. The overall temperatures are getting warmer, increasing the atmosphere's capacity to hold water vapor. Precipitation events are getting bigger. Extreme events are getting more common.

Winter is getting warmer:

Winter has shorter streaks of below-normal temperatures. The Metroplex still gets its shots of cold; it just doesn't stick around as long. Of the top 10 warmest winters ever, half have happened since we started the new century. This last winter (2022-23) was the eighth warmest on record.

All the seasons are getting warmer:

- The top three warmest Springs on record have occurred in the last 15 years.
- Of the top 20 warmest Summers on record, nine have occurred since 2000.
- Fall is suddenly getting much warmer.
- Five of the top six warmest Falls on record have happened just in the last 16 years.

The years are getting warmer:

- The warmest years ever recorded have all occurred since 2000.
- Since 2008, DFW has recorded all five of the warmest years ever witnessed (2011 the hottest year ever). Last year was the eighth warmest year on record.
- The two wettest years on record happened in the last seven (2015 and 2018).

Ways to adapt:

In my garden I adapt to the summer heat by hanging shade cloth over my raised beds. My rule is no direct sun after 3-4 p.m. from June to September. My beds are raised to help protect from heavy rain events. I also put in a series of French drains to move water off my property in the downpours. If summer nights are going to stay above 80 degrees (the new "normal" over the last 10 years), I hand water a fine spray in the last light of day to cool the beds and plants.

Adapting to the longer growing season means being quick and efficient with putting out freeze cloth. If the temperatures are dropping down to the mid-20s, covering my crops overnight keeps the plants above freezing. Just think about this Spring at

The weather of north Texas is challenging enough I know, but a few extra steps help keep my garden in the green. I adapt so I can grow.

Photo by Brian Luenser

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PLANT SALES



By Terry Anseman

Tarrant County Master Gardener volunteers have held plant sales since 2009, raising more than \$200,000 to fund the numerous TCMGA projects which support our mission of outreach and education for our community. Volunteers work year-round, dedicating time and energy preparing for the fall and spring sales. The just-completed 2023 Spring Sale garnered \$15,119 net sales (before expenses) by selling 1,260 plants, including sun, shade and partial-sun plants. Adapted and native plants were sold alongside plants to attract hummingbirds, butterflies and other pollinators. *A special thank you goes to Debra Rosenthal and her committee.*

Historically the Tarrant County Master Gardener Plant Sales had been held in person at various locations. Then came the COVID experience, which shut down our in-

word of mouth. The plants are picked up by buyers on a pre-arranged date and time at the Demonstration Garden.

We have partnered with the Demonstration Garden Green Houses for each sale, not only for plants to sell, but also for storage of offered plants. Available plants include those purchased from wholesale nurseries in the DFW area, TCMGA Garden Greenhouse plants, Demonstration Garden plants and "Passalongs" from membership. Plants are listed on the TCMGA website in alphabetical order with photos, prices and pertinent growing data. Plant offerings are mostly perennial Texas natives or adaptives, as well as Texas A&M AgriLife "Super Stars." Our prices are competitive with local nurseries.

We sell about 100 varieties of perennial nursery plants in various colors and about 40 different Greenhouse plants. Most plants are one gallon, but we do sell quarts, 4" pots and a few two-gallon plants, as well as hanging baskets. With the advent of online sales, we have more than doubled the number of orders.

The Fall sale will be held online in September with an October pickup, while the Spring sale was held in March with an April pickup date. The plant sales are a major endeavor for our organization, and throughout the year, volunteers assist with maintenance of plants from the greenhouse and the Demonstration Garden, donating clean pots for transplanting, and picking up hanging baskets from local nurseries and storing them in the Demonstration Garden greenhouses. Clerical volunteers keep a current list of new and returning customers and available plants. Volunteers work for four days prior to the sales to receive plants delivered, process orders and recheck orders for errors. In addition, volunteers create an area for "pickup" day and work the day of the sales to assist with distribution of the purchased plants and load plants in the vehicles.

Volunteers are always needed, as this is a year-round undertaking, and members are now preparing for the September plant sale. If you would like to help, contact the TCMGA help line at 817-884-1944.

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COMPOST IS NATURE'S WAY



By John Cheney, project lead at the Demonstration Garden Compost Outpost

Compost is nature's best way to fertilize your plants, garden and flowerbeds. By composting, you avoid excess commercial fertilizers polluting our watersheds.

Compost is made mostly from naturally decaying plant materials, and the cost is nothing if you make it yourself. It is also commercially available for purchase.

You can compost many things found around the house, such as:

- Leaves
- Grass clippings
- Food scraps
- Coffee grounds and filters
- Shredded paper
- Shredded cardboard
- Natural animal manure (but not cat or dog manure)
- Weeds
- Chopped up twigs
- Fish (chopped up)

You want to avoid putting these in your compost pile:

- Oils of any kind (especially cooking oils)
- Cat and dog manure
- Meat or meat products

You may ask, “How do I make compost?” There are a variety of methods, with some taking two to three months, others up to a year. The shortest results can be attained by using a 3 by 3 by 3-foot metal or wood bin. Fill it to the top and put in the contents by what we call the “lasagna method.” In other words, alternate layers of the materials listed above. Most people use almost all leaves and grasses. The goal of filling the bin to the top is so that it will heat up in the first two weeks to between 130 and 160 degrees. This temperature will kill the weeds and start the decomposition process.

Your ratio in the pile should be one part nitrogen (green like fresh grass) to three parts carbon (like dried leaves). If you are not composting on bare ground, don’t forget to put a couple shovelfuls of local dirt into the pile. This dirt adds microbes and beneficial things to help the pile begin the process. This recommendation also applies if you use a barrel that turns with compost material inside.

To speed up the composting process, “turn” your compost every two weeks. Composters usually turn the compost by picking up the bin, moving it to the side and then shoveling the material from the pile into the empty bin. Try to get the material that was on the outside into the middle of the pile, and then move the interior material to the outside of the bin. You will notice the pile shrinking in size as time goes by, which shows that the process is working. If you are a lazy composter, you can even just pile up your compost materials and leave them, and in a year, you will have compost. Compost is ready when it does not smell at all, or it has an earthy smell. It will normally be black or sometimes brown.

Compost will not normally attract unwanted bugs or animals. When you add kitchen scraps, pull back some of the composting materials, and cover the kitchen scraps with it. Do not just throw the kitchen scraps on top of the pile.

Once you have compost, you can use it as an amendment to your flowerbeds, gardens and potted plants. It is a natural slow-release fertilizer, so apply it any time.

Volunteers create compost at the Demonstration Garden Compost Outpost area, led by John Cheney, on the second and fourth Tuesday each month and at the Fort

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INVASIVE SPECIES



By Nancy O'Malley, Newsletter editor

Invasive species have become a serious and costly problem in Texas, according to Ashley Morgan-Olvera, the guest speaker at the April meeting of the Tarrant County Master Gardeners. Ms. Morgan-Olvera, M.S., is the director of research and education/outreach at the Texas Invasive Species Institute at Sam Houston State University.

According to texasinvasives.org, every Texan should care about invasive species because unless we can reduce or stop their spread, they will continue to require significant dollars to treat, control and remedy damage to our public resources. Also, if you love and recreate in the Texas outdoors, or are in a business that depends on the health of the natural resources of Texas, you should care about invasive species.

What are invasives?

Invasive species include a wide variety of plants, insects, animals and pathogens, many of them familiar to North Texans. Plants, such as nandina, privet, Tree of Heaven and Chinese Tallow tree; insects, such as the Red Invasive Fire Ants (found now in 95% of Texas counties), Emerald Ash Borer, and the Asian Longhorned Beetle; and other creatures, such as Asian Jumping Worms, Red Lionfish and zebra mussels, are invasive and becoming very expensive to prevent, monitor and control.

An invasive species grows/reproduces and spreads rapidly, establishes over large areas and decreases biodiversity by threatening the survival of native plants and animals. The damage to crops, fisheries, forests, and other resources is extensive, with invasives now costing the U.S. \$137 billion annually.

How do invasives spread?

Often, invasive species are spread by humans who do not realize that these newly introduced plants, animals and insects are highly destructive. This spread may happen, for example, when gardeners plant garden ornamentals or buy imported nursery stock. A species may be carried on vehicles, in packing materials and shipping containers, and via animals and insects are introduced to be used to control other organisms (particularly in agriculture). Other species, such as giant Salvinia and zebra mussels enter lakes and interfere with boating, fishing and general water recreation. Zebra mussels also can clog water pipes, which can cost millions to replace or repair.

Dirty Dozen Terrestrial Invasive Species (Cross Timbers & Prairies)

These plants have been identified as particularly worrisome terrestrial invasive species in the Cross Timbers and Prairies ecoregion. Click on the links below to go to the Invasive Plant Database and learn more.

[Japanese honeysuckle](#) - *Lonicera japonica*

[Glossy privet](#) - *Ligustrum lucidum*

[Chinese privet](#) - *Ligustrum sinense*

[Giant reed](#) - *Arundo donax*

[Chinese wisteria](#) - *Wisteria sinensis*

[Lilac chastetree](#) - *Vitex agnus-castus*

[Brazilian vervain](#) - *Verbena brasiliensis*

[Guineagrass](#) - *Urochloa maxima*

[Common periwinkle](#) - *Vinca minor*

[Chinaberry tree](#) - *Melia azedarach*

[Chinese tallow tree](#) - *Triadica sebifera*

[Johnson grass](#) - *Sorghum halepense*

Early detection is crucial to stop the spread of invasive species and protect native plants and animals from severe damage. Ms. Morgan-Olvera invites us master gardeners to sign up for iWire to get breaking news about invasives and to learn how to get involved. Go to Texasinvasives.org, as well as TSUSinvasives.org and galvbayinvasives.org for more information.

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INTERNS 2022 GRADUATE



By Mary Beth Lampe

On March 29 at the Fort Worth Botanical Garden, 16 interns in the class of 2022 became the newest members of the Tarrant County Master Gardener Association (TCMGA).

Welcome to new members: Leigh Allen, Ray Brantley, Michelle Burrows, Jennifer Clarkson, Jude Dainton, Jessica Dazey, Chris Geisel, Joann Grope, Rick Heim, Keri Hemrick, Sherry Key, Mary Beth Lampe, Linda Mac Ahan, Jim Matthews, Bob Siglin, Mindy Whittenburg

Led by Cheri Mills and Craig Holland, the interns met for 10 weeks, from March 8 – May 26. Each Tuesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., the interns were divided into small groups and were mentored by current TCMGA members Angela Hathaway, Betty Starnes, Teresa Landfield, Diane Musfeldt and Dave Wilson. Each trainee group sat together at the training sessions, which gave them instant connections to their group members and their mentor.

The occupational backgrounds of the interns included the professions of business owners, health care workers, teachers, bankers, project managers, military intelligence, engineers, office managers, restaurant managers, pastors and manufacturing. Many are active volunteers in other community organizations. Most members are retired, or are retired and work part time. Most class members are in their 60s, with a few younger members. Each trainee paid \$325 to participate and receive the TCMGA training manual and other materials.

The class usually met at the downtown Texas A&M AgriLife office in a large meeting room, and occasionally met at the TCMGA Water Works Learning Center at 1800 Circle Drive. They also took field trips to the City of Fort Worth Tree Farm, the Botanic Garden and several retail nurseries. Lectures were given by Texas A&M professors, Texas A&M AgriLife staff, local landscape designers and TCMGA members. Hands-on activities of planting, pruning and propagating also were part of the classes.

Internclasses usually apply their learning to a particular project, and this class chose Alice Carlson Outdoor Learning Environment, working March through October, well beyond their scheduled classroom requirements. They improved the irrigation system, cleaned and selected plants for the pond, weeded, pruned, added a gravel path to the area to make it safe for children, and replaced the existing patio with a new high-quality paved patio. This ambitious class put in almost 3,000 hours of volunteer effort and continuing education, in addition to the required 72 hours of classwork instruction. Their commitment was remarkable, with 13 people completing more than 100 hours, four completing more than 250 hours and one completing more than 500 hours. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension awarded them the Darlene Myatt Friend of Children Award for dedicating their time, talents and treasure to teaching children with dynamic enthusiasm and loving leadership.

Class members weighed in on the many benefits of their training:

Things I learned as part of the class:

- Get my soil tested.
- Not all insects are bad.
- Gardeners are happy people and like to have a good time.

What made the training classes so enjoyable for you?

- It was all new information for me.
- I use my manual ALL THE TIME to look up information (not to mention the tamu.edu site).
- The classes were a mixture of in-class learning, hands-on doing, and field trips to nurseries, tree farms and city horticultural operations I never knew about.

I never thought I would learn about:

- Tools – How to use them, maintain them and sharpen them.

One intern summed it up:

- Who knew I would find my tribe?

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