



The Compost Bin

October 2017

A Publication of the Travis County Master Gardeners
a volunteer program of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

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Cover: It’s pumpkin season!

By Liath Appleton

Right: Colorful lettuce transplants start to show up at garden centers this month. By Patty and Bruce Leander



Meeting - Rick Van Dyke and Catherine Sewell

Topic: Succulents

The dictionary definition of this word is tender, juicy, tasty, though perhaps the plant is not all of those things.

In October speaker Rick Van Dyke, proprietor of Rick Van Dyke Studio, will share his knowledge and instruct us on the care of these popular plants. His web site <http://rickvandykestudio.com/> is a treat for the eyes. Our own Master Gardener Catherine Sewell shares with us how to turn these plants into a beautiful fall arrangement that will delight all who see it. Attached is a juicy photo that will whet your appetite for the evening ahead.

Plant Exchange this month!

It’s time for our fall plant exchange! The theme is blooming plants. Perhaps you have daylilies or iris, maybe Gregg’s blue mist or petunias to exchange. Of course, other plants are welcome, except for invasives.

Don’t forget to bring extra seeds, cuttings, garden magazines, pots and other garden related items.

We do need help setting up and cleaning up, so plan to help out. We also need 3-4 folks to stay a bit late to make sure we have put everything up. Please take home any of your extra plants.

Master Gardener Meeting information:
 Wednesday, October 4, 2017, starting at 7 pm
 Zilker Botanical Garden

Master Gardener meetings are open to certified Master Gardeners and trainees only.

In the Vegetable Garden

by Patty Leander



Harvest winter squash when the rind is hard leaving a 1 inch piece of stem attached.

varieties and every year I read about a new one that grows well in the South so there is plenty to experiment with and sample.

Look for garlic varieties in local garden centers, feed stores and online catalogs.

Signs of fall are all around us – pumpkins, football, cool mornings, shorter days and perhaps the occasional need for long sleeves. Summer has released its grip, and being outdoors is invigorating rather than exhausting. Take advantage of the mild, frost-free weather this month to get cole crops, root crops, greens and garlic established in the garden.

Garlic makes a great addition to any garden, whether planted in a row, a raised bed, a square foot garden or tucked in among the landscape. Plant cloves this month (1-2 inches deep, 6" apart, pointy side up) and you will be harvesting bulbs next June. Prepare the planting area with a 3-4" layer of well-decomposed compost. Water regularly throughout the winter and fertilize every 2-3 weeks with fish emulsion, blood meal or other high nitrogen fertilizer. Cultivate lightly to eliminate competition from weeds being careful to not damage garlic's shallow roots.

There are two categories of garlic: hardneck and softneck. Hardneck is the type that forms a flower stalk or scape as it matures. It grows best in colder climates but you might have some success growing it in Central Texas, especially if you refrigerate it a few weeks before planting. Hardneck varieties include Purple Stripe, Music, Ajo Rojo and Metichi.

Softneck garlic is better suited to our mild winters. Varieties to look for include California Early, Lorz, Inchelium Red, Creole Red, Cuban Purple and Texas Rose.

Garlic is a large family with many sub-groups. There are hundreds of garlic



At garlic planting time separate the bulb, leaving the paper wrapping around each clove intact if possible.

In the Vegetable Garden

Continued...

Here is the vegetable gardener's checklist for October:

- Keep an eye out for fall pests such as caterpillars, aphids and harlequin bugs. Look for and destroy eggs. Handpick caterpillars. Use a strong spray of water to dislodge aphids from plants.
- Fertilize garden vegetables with a water-soluble fertilizer or fish emulsion every 1-2 weeks.
- Weeds love fall weather as much as vegetables. Keep them in check by regular pulling, hoeing and mulching.
- Sweet potatoes are generally harvested this month as their growth begins to slow down. Cut back on irrigation 2-3 weeks before you plan to harvest so soil is dry. Dig carefully to avoid bruising, brush the dirt off and place in a dry, shady location to cure for 5-10 days before storing or eating.
- Plant garlic any time from mid-October thru early December.
- Start planting lettuce and spinach as the temperatures begin to cool; a little shade above the plants will help with establishment. Look for nursery transplants or plant seed directly in the garden.
- Cool-season herbs planted now, including cilantro, dill, chives, fennel, parsley and sage, will add zest to meals throughout the winter.
- Harvest winter squash and pumpkins when the rind is hard. Use pruners to cut from the vine, leaving 1-2 inches of stem attached. Be careful not to nick or scratch the skin as this could invite decay.
- Plant cover crops in fallow areas to improve the condition of the soil. Cool-season options include Elbon rye, clover, Austrian winter peas and hairy vetch.
- Use care when harvesting vegetables from the garden; produce that is nicked, damaged or bruised causes a decline in overall quality and storage life.



Don't overlook fresh weeds as a nitrogen source for the compost bin.

In the Vegetable Garden

Continued...



Top left: If you notice caterpillar droppings, look UP! The culprit can often be found munching on the leaves directly above.

Top right: Aphids, also known as plant lice, are a common sight on tender new growth. Wash them off with a strong spray of water or suffocate them with a spray of insecticidal soap.

Bottom left: Watch for harlequin bugs; search for and destroy their black and white barrel-shaped eggs usually found on the underside of leaves, especially among kale, broccoli and other brassicas.

photos by Patty and Bruce Leander

Larger Canna Leafroller

by Wizzie Brown



Have you been puzzled before when looking at your cannas you discover rolled up leaves? Or possibly you have found circular holes chewed in a line across a leaf? If so, then you may be dealing with leafrollers.

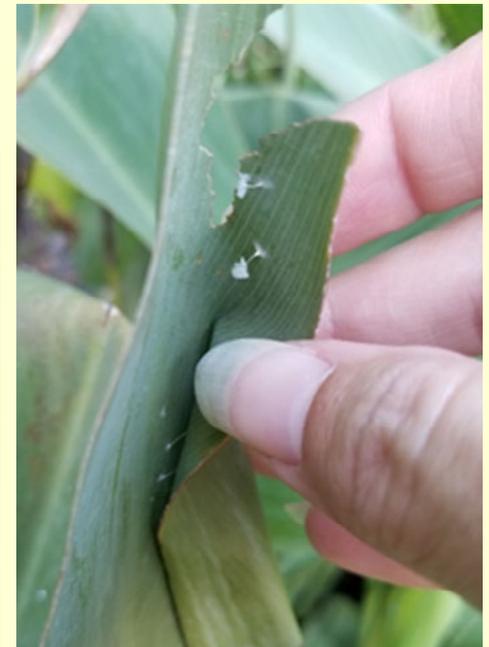
The larger canna leafroller is a type of caterpillar that, in the adult form, is called a Brazilian skipper. Skippers are similar to butterflies, but they hold their wings differently and have hooks at the end of their antennae. The Brazilian skipper is brown, medium in size, with 5 transparent spots on the front wing and three transparent spots on the hind wing. Larger canna leafroller caterpillars have a well-developed, bi-lobed head capsule. The body is yellowish-green in color and can reach up to almost 2 inches in length.

Leafrollers consume the leaf around their leaf roll and then move to a new spot when necessary. Numerous large larvae on a plant can cause defoliation. Larvae have an interesting behavior of flicking their fecal material (frass) out of the roll so that it collects on the ground instead of where they reside. Pupation takes place within the leaf roll after covering the shelter area with a thin silken mat. The pupal case is bright green with a dark spine at the end.



Leafroller control is up to the person managing the landscape. If you want your cannas to be pristine and not have any chewing insect damage, then you may want to consider control. On the other side, if you want to observe a complete insect life cycle and have Brazilian skippers, then you may need to sacrifice a bite of your foliage. Management can be as simple as squishing and/ or removing the caterpillars from the plant, or you could choose a pesticide. You can use naturally-derived active ingredients such as *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki*, spinosad, azadirachtin, pyrethrins, or synthetic pesticides. Make sure to read and follow all label instructions.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com



Flashback Favs

by Daphne Richards

As a contributor to **Central Texas Gardener** (CTG), I love to answer your questions and share knowledge on new and tried and true plants for our area. Here are some Flashback Favs



Daphne and Augie. Daphne Richards is the county extension agent for horticulture at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office for Travis County

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yavqXmDdGbo> (CTG 2012)

Do you water shrubs and large rose bushes at the dripline, the same as is recommended for trees?

The answer is yes. Although shrubs and even smaller plants do not have the same root mass as larger trees, the roots still grow in a similar fashion; away from the trunk or main stem. The larger the plant, the further away from the trunk the "feeding" roots will be. These roots are newer and covered in root hairs, which are responsible for water and nutrient uptake by the plant. Older, often woody roots, don't have any root hairs, and therefore don't take up any water. With shrubs and smaller plants, the dripline won't be anywhere near as far away from the trunk as it is with a tree, so I generally water my shrubs all around the base and up to about half the height of the plant away. So if a shrub is 6' tall, watering out to at least 3' to 4' from the trunk would be sufficient. A slow, thorough soaking of the soil is much better than a quick burst of water. You're after deeper moisture for the plant to encourage the roots to grow nice and deep so that it will have access to a larger soil profile. The deeper you go, the cooler the soil is, and the more protected it is from the environment, the longer it will hold on to the water. In the hottest part of the summer, if we're getting no rain, established shrubs may need water once a week, but usually not more than that, as long as you water properly.

White boneset, *Ageratina havansis*

Also known as fragrant mistflower, or its more exciting name, Havana snakeroot. A shrubby plant that may get up to 6' tall, boneset is covered in highly fragrant, fuzzy white blooms from fall through early winter. These flowers are a magnet for hummingbirds, butterflies, and other insects since they are a rare source of late-season nectar and pollen. Boneset normally grows to about 2' tall and wide. It is native to rocky, limestone areas where the soil holds very little water, so it prefers good drainage, but it also easily tolerates poorly drained soils as long you don't overwater it. It will also tolerate shady areas, but will perform better and bloom more profusely in the full, bright sun. Once blooming starts to slow down with the onset of winter, give boneset a good, heavy shearing to encourage denser new growth in the spring and more profuse blooms next fall. If you don't shear the plant, blooming will be very sparse since boneset only produces flowers on new wood. This plant requires very little water once established and is a great addition to any Central Texas landscape.

Flashback Favs

Continued...

THINGS TO DO IN OCTOBER

FERTILIZE: Fertilize existing beds of iris with well-rotted manure or balanced fertilizer. Reduce houseplant fertilizer by 1/2 for winter.

WATER: Water areas as needed.

TRANSPLANT: Divide and transplant crowded perennials. Dig and store caladium bulbs. Dust with fungicide.

PREPARE SOIL: Mulch ginger and other tropicals that overwinter outdoors to retain warmth and moisture and to control weeds. Falling leaves make autumn a good time to start a compost pile. Shred (or mow) leaves to speed decomposition. Turn compost pile periodically and keep it moist.

LAWN CARE: Fertilize with 3-1-2 ratio fertilizer. In newly-plugged lawns, sow 8 lbs. of ryegrass per 1,000 sq. ft. to help hold soil. The seed grass will make a bright green carpet until spring, when hot weather will kill rye. Not recommended for established lawns. Mow every 5-7 days and leave the clippings on the lawn.

DISEASES/PESTS TO LOOK FOR: Check for cabbage loopers in the garden; spray with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt). Make second treatment for brown patch on lawns with a history of the disease.

PRUNE: Prune shrubs as needed, but save major pruning for the winter. Remove dead and damaged wood from shrubs and trees. Make cuttings of tender plants before frost.



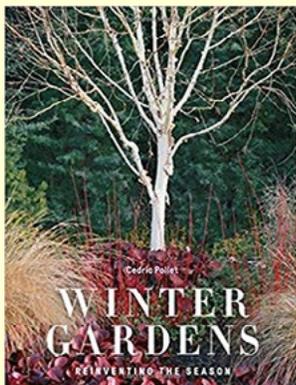
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Weeds and Reads

by Liath Appleton

There's a lot of reading material out there, and new books are being published faster than anyone could ever possibly keep up! Hopefully these lists will help myself and others find fun and insightful new books to enjoy between the weeding and the watering.

October 2017

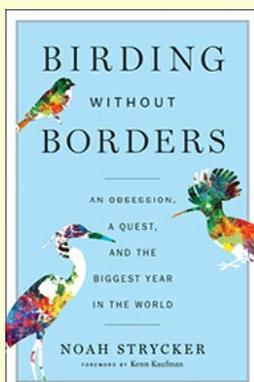
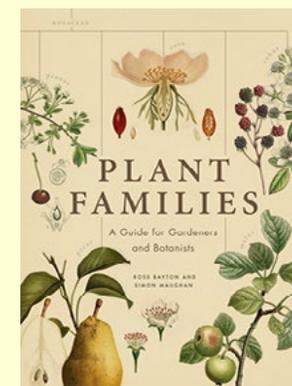


Winter Gardens: Reinventing the Season - October 5, 2017
by Cedric Pollet

Cedric Pollet is the author / photographer of the acclaimed book *Bark: An Intimate Look at the World's Trees* (over 50,000 sales worldwide). In his next book, he visits 20 of the most beautiful winter gardens in France and the UK, showing with stunning photography the ways in which they delight in this often neglected season ... [\[more\]](#)

Plant Families: A Guide for Gardeners and Botanists - October 7, 2017
by Ross Bayton, Simon Maughan

Most of us lump plants together in one big family, and when pressed can only explain their grouping by what they're not—not an animal, not a mineral, and so just a plant. In reality, there are hundreds of different plant families, each grouped logically by a unique family history and genealogy. [\[more\]](#)



Birding Without Borders: An Obsession, a Quest, and the Biggest Year in the World - October 10, 2017
by Noah Strycker

Traveling to 41 countries in 2015 with a backpack and binoculars, Noah Strycker became the first person to see more than half the world's 10,000 species of birds in one year. [\[more\]](#)

Austin Area Events

Monarch Appreciation Day

Saturday, October 21, 2017

9 am - 4 pm

Zilker Botanical Garden
2220 Barton Springs Rd
Austin, TX

An Austin- Area Butterfly Celebration that offers fun for the entire family!

Family Friendly Event | Free with Admission!

- Nature Crafts
- See a Monarch eye to eye
- Learn how to attract pollinators year-round
- Learn how you can be a Pollinator Pal

Event Parking: 2300 Stratford Dr. Austin, TX 78746

Every fall people all over North America carefully catch monarch butterflies, and place a tiny paper ID tag on one wing. The tagged butterflies are released and continue their journeys. It is always exciting to find a tagged butterfly and wonder when and where it was tagged. Tagging Monarch Butterflies helps researchers answer questions such as:

- What pathways do migrating monarchs take?
- How does weather influence migration speed and stopover behavior?
- What differences in migration occur from year to year?

Come to Monarch Appreciation Day for a first-hand experience of tagging Monarch Butterflies!

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS:

- Cap Metro Trip Planner: <http://www.capmetro.org/> - click on "Plan Your Trip"!
- Hike or Bike to the Event- Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail, more trail information
- Get information on Biking in Austin. <http://www.austintexas.gov/bicycle>
- Go Green - the City of Austin encourages carpooling use of mass transit when attending all events. Many events provide bike rack or a designated bike parking area on site.
- Non-park/Other Street Closure Information: <http://www.austintexas.gov/citystage>

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The Compost Bin Submissions

We are always looking for Travis County Master Gardeners who are interested in writing for our monthly newsletter, and we would love to see your articles, photographs, book reviews and gardening ideas.

General Guidelines

- Please first email the editor to discuss potential article ideas.
- Email contributions as attachments (preferably in Word with a .doc or .rtf suffix).
- Please send images as separate attachments (preferably .jpg suffix). Don't forget to include photographer acknowledgments and captions.

Send your submissions, announcements, questions and suggestions to: editor.compostbin@gmail.com



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"October, the extravagant sister, has ordered an immense amount of the most gorgeous forest tapestry for her grand reception." - Oliver Wendell Holmes