



Grow, Know, and Go

March 2024

Gardening in North Texas

DCMGA Garden Tour Preview: The Garden of Jennifer Bowers and Cynthia Asensio

By Alan Rister, Dallas County Master Gardener

Perched in her nest atop a desert willow tree (*Chilopsis linearis* 'Bubba'), a mockingbird has a literal bird's eye view of the front yard garden of Jennifer Bowers and Cynthia Asensio, showcasing dozens of varieties of native and adapted plants. Jennifer has been a Dallas County Master Gardener since 2020, and Cynthia is a current 2024 DCMG Intern. Together, this gardening duo have achieved success by wisely planting species and varieties that have the greatest likelihood of success in our Dallas black-clay soil and unpredictable Texas climate. And their smart choices have paid off in the creation of a landscape that is the envy of their neighborhood.

Jennifer and Cynthia call their yard, "The Garden of Winged Things." That's because they have purposely selected plants throughout their property to attract pollinators, especially butterflies and hummingbirds. One area of the front garden is dedicated to accommodating monarch butterflies, and it is now a [Certified Monarch Waystation](#). They also plant host plants like fennel and parsley to encourage swallowtail butterflies, among others, to their yard. All manner of birds are welcomed to their garden as well.

Apropos of creatures, they take a critter-friendly—or at least critter-tolerant—attitude toward their numerous wildlife visitors. Opossums, raccoons,



coyotes, bobcats, and a resident neighborhood armadillo make nocturnal excursions into their yard from their habitats at nearby White Rock Lake.

Dotted along the front yard landscape, several different agaves (*A. parryi* var. *Truncata*, *A. ovatafolia*, *A. americana*) call attention from the street and provide architectural interest with their bold structure. Their blue-green color is echoed by the distinctively sculptural blue atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca') located near the front door of the house. Five different kinds of ornamental grasses add height and texture to the planting schemes across the yard.

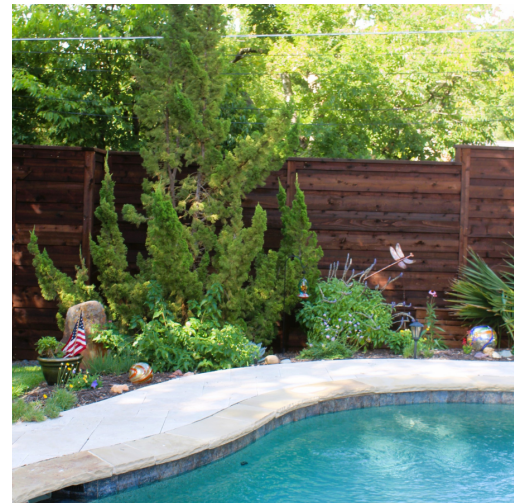
Early spring brings bountiful purple blooms to a fine specimen of the highly fragrant Texas mountain laurel (*Sophora secundiflora*). It is perfectly sited on a gentle slope at the front corner of the garden, while native yellow four-nerve daisy (*Tetranneuris scaposa*) blooms virtually year-round and self-seeds freely.



The front yard is at its best from summer into fall, when both native and cultivated varieties of Texas-hardy plants are the stars of an array of bright colors. Native Texas lantana (*L. urticoides*) grows alongside various vivid cultivars of this foolproof plant for sunny spots, and native species of salvias (*S. greggii*) and red yucca (*Hesperaloe parviflora*) are accompanied by cultivated varieties such as 'Mystic Spires' salvia and 'Brake Lights' yucca. A chaste tree, often referred to by its genus name of vitex (*Vitex agnus-castus*), not only bears copious spikes of purple-blue flowers through the

summer, but also has fragrant leaves with a delicate scent.

In the back yard the owners have created a "personal resort," an outdoor living space centered around a beautiful, free-form swimming pool, which replaced an older pool that had been abandoned and buried by the previous owners. The house and yard had been virtually uninhabited for about ten years, and it required long, hard work to remove the poison ivy and groundcovers that have now been replaced with plants such as cannas (*Canna flaccida*), palms (*Sabal minor*, *Chamaerops humilis*), and umbrella plants (*Cyperus alternifolius*), which lend a tropical feel to this private "Zen oasis." The stand-out plants here are two very large sago palms (*Cycas revoluta*), one of which has been owned and transported from home to home by Jennifer for decades.



Both members of this gardening duo grew up in families with long traditions of vegetable gardening, so it was only natural that they would grow up to widen their horticultural scope and become passionate about their home landscape. When you visit their home, you are sure to witness their lifelong love of gardening reflected in this well-done garden—you will see and feel the passion.

The upcoming DCMGA Garden Tour on May 18 will feature eight beautiful gardens, including the garden of Jennifer Bowers and Cynthia Asensio. Please watch the [DCMGA website](#) for more information and purchase tickets [here](#).

Ready to Raise Backyard Chickens? Free Webinar Series Starts March 18th

By Susan Himes, Writer and Media Relations Specialist for Texas A&M AgriLife

**Chicken Basics for Beginners March 18-22,
Egg Grading Series April 16-19**



What came first, the chicken or the egg? We may never know, but for two upcoming webinar series, the basics of backyard chickens will come before egg-grader training.

A Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service poultry specialist will share his expertise during the free seminars March 18-22 and April 16-19. Each series will be held on consecutive days from 11 a.m. to noon. Preregistration is required, but those unable to attend the webinar live will have the opportunity to watch the recordings later. Register for chicken basics at <https://tx.ag/SpringBackyardChickens> and for the egg grading at <https://tx.ag/SpringEggGrader>.

"We are offering this course virtually because it has become so popular that I can't get around the state to teach it to all counties that request it," said Gregory Archer, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension poultry specialist and associate professor in the Texas A&M Department of Poultry Science, Bryan-College Station. "This format also allows participants to get more out of the series because I have five to six hours of information to share over multiple days, rather than trying to consolidate all that into one class." Participants will also be able to ask Archer questions and chat with other participants.



Backyard Chicken Boom

Whether you're new to raising backyard chickens, are considering raising backyard chickens or are just chicken curious — you're not alone. "We saw the popularity of backyard chickens explode in recent years and that grew even more during COVID," Archer said. "Rising egg prices have also driven the increase in backyard flocks."

But Archer said there are breeds that don't do well in the heat of Texas and certain breeds that are aggressive. So, while it may seem as basic as getting a chicken coup and some birds, it is more complex, and people need to be prepared to properly select birds and care for their flocks. "While the internet and YouTube may be great sources of information for those with backyard birds, what works on the East Coast for example may not work in Texas," he said. "It is important to understand what your birds will need to survive and thrive as well as the rules and regulations of the state."

While the backyard basics course is ideal for beginners, it is also for those with established flocks. "Even if you've had chickens for a while, these series are a great way to brush up on your knowledge and delve deeper into topics as well as learning the latest information and research related to backyard chickens," he said.

For more details about this program, check out the full article in [AgriLife Today](#).

Top Takeaways from TAMU's Landscape Design School

By Georgeann Moss, Dallas County Master Gardener Intern



The Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. and Texas AgriLife Extension hosted a two-day Landscape Design School (Series 27, Course 2) in the George H.W. Bush Library at Texas A&M University on February 11th and 12th. Here are some interesting takeaways from this fascinating landscaping design course.

Visit Gardens to Find What You Like

TAMU Executive Professor Dr. Thomas Woodfin recommends



visiting lots of gardens to discover your favorite plants and designs, especially gardens around your growing area. This is why local garden tours, like the upcoming [DCMGA's Spring Garden Tour](#), are so important. Local gardens show plants and designs that work for your climate and soils. Among Dr. Woodfin's favorite gardens to check out are:

[Besthoff Sculpture Garden](#), New Orleans Museum of Art
[Cullen Sculpture Garden](#) at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts
[Klyde Warren Park](#) in Dallas
[Myriad Botanical Gardens](#) in Oklahoma City
[Scissortail Park](#), Oklahoma City
[The Japanese Gardens](#) at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden
[The Japanese Tea Garden](#) in San Antonio
[The Leach Teaching Garden](#), Texas A&M University

Use Online Resources to Help Select Suitable Plants

The [Biota of North America Program](#) (BONAP) and the [USDA Plant Database](#) are wonderful resources to research plants that work for our area. A great resource for researching Texas native plants is the [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Database](#).

Embrace Bio-Diversity

Diversity in your garden offers a greater possibility of plant survival during a changing climate. No more than 20% of your plantings should be within the same family.

Use Compost Instead of Bark Mulch

Landscape Architect Alan King says his firm layers compost over planting beds rather than using the usual bark mulch. The compost fertilizes the soil and creates a habitat for ground-nesting bees and other beneficial insects.

Try Goldenrod

Prairie goldenrod supports 82 species of pollinators and wildlife in Texas. Make a place for it somewhere in your landscape..

Watch [Selah, Water from Stone](#)

This is a seven-minute documentary about David Bamberger, founder of Church's Chicken, who took his company public and then used the capital to purchase 5,500 acres of overgrazed land that was considered some of the poorest acreage in the Texas Hill Country. Bamberger devoted the rest of his life to restoring the property. He cleared overgrown, woody vegetation, allowed native grasses to grow, and literally created water from stone by using native grasses to soak up rainwater and pour moisture into porous rock to fill aquifers. An inspiring documentary highlighting the importance of property management.

Testing Soil Nutrient Levels

By Rick Coke, Dallas County Master Gardener



The Help Desk receives many questions about soil testing. Everyone has heard of it, but many are unsure how to go about it and what to do with the results. In Texas the process is very easy, and not very expensive, thanks to the soil testing laboratory operated by Texas A&M.

Your starting point is to download the [Urban and Homeowner Soil Sample Information](#)



[Form](#). Page 1 gathers information about you and your sample(s) and lists all testing options

you can request and the cost of each option. Page 2 gives detailed instructions on collecting a sample and packaging it for shipping, along with shipping addresses and payment instructions. Note that special bags for your samples are not required. Any sturdy zip closure bag with a sample identification written on it that corresponds to the Sample ID entered on page 1 of the form is acceptable.

You can submit multiple samples using one order form. Each sample should represent a type of soil in your landscape. For example, you might have areas of turfgrass, flowerbeds with heavily amended soil, and raised beds filled with a commercial soil mix. Collect samples from each of these areas because the soil and what you grow in each can be significantly different. Package each sample in a separate bag marked with a name useful to you and listed on page 1 of the form in the "My Sample ID" column.

A Routine Analysis (#1 on the form) is the least expensive test, and the one most homeowners should use. It will tell you how much nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, calcium, magnesium and sulfur your soil contains, and it will advise on any required supplementation. In addition, it will list the sodium content (related to salinity), pH (acidity or alkalinity), and the soil conductivity (also related to salinity).

In most cases, the levels of nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium are the most important results you will get. These elements are listed on fertilizer bags as the levels of N-P-K. For example, a 5-10-5 fertilizer contains, by weight, 5% nitrogen, 10% phosphorous, and 5% potassium. When you receive your soil test results, it will advise how much of each of these nutrients your soil needs. Take your soil report to a full-service garden center and ask for help selecting an appropriate fertilizer.

If you test your soil and have questions about the results—or if you have any other lawn or garden questions—contact the Help Desk at dallasmg@ag.tamu.edu for assistance.

Soil, Water and Forage Testing Laboratory
Department of Soil and Crop Sciences
Texas A&M University Extension Service

Urban and Homeowner Soil Sample Information Form

Please submit this completed form and payment with samples. Mark each sample bag with your sample identification and ensure that it corresponds with the sample identification written on this form. Please carefully read and follow instructions on the back of the form. (PLEASE DO NOT SEND CASH)

IMPORTANT: Also include a copy of this form with your sample(s).

Name _____ City where sampled _____
 Mailing Address _____ Phone _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Email _____

Payment (DO NOT SEND CASH)
 Check/Money Order (send your M.O. number)
 Amount Paid \$ _____ Check Number _____
 Payment on Apple Marketplace Payment
 Order Number _____ \$ amount _____
 A/C 2027 (payments account number 55000000) _____ \$ amount _____ (P.O. # 104-014)

*A \$1.00 mail fee will be charged for all invoices and sample results mailed via USPS. Results and invoices can be emailed in PDF form to the client. **Central results - \$3 per mailing.** Please email the laboratory at soil@ag.tamu.edu to confirm email address. These results are subject, but no automated response should be expected. Discounted emailed reports will incur an additional \$3 mailing fee, to be paid prior to postal mailing.

1. Routine Analysis (#1) (N, P, K, Ca, Mg, S, Na, & Conductivity) (includes Test 1 plus nutrient analysis)	\$12 per sample	11. N + P + K + Calcium + Magnesium + Sulfur + Sodium (includes Test 1 plus nutrient analysis)	\$37 per sample
2. N + P + K + Calcium + Magnesium + Sulfur (includes Test 1 plus nutrient analysis)	\$19 per sample	12. N + P + K + Calcium + Magnesium + Sulfur + Sodium + pH (includes Test 1 plus nutrient analysis)	\$31 per sample
3. N + P + K + Calcium + Magnesium + Sulfur + Sodium (includes Test 1 plus nutrient analysis)	\$26 per sample	13. N + P + K + Calcium + Magnesium + Sulfur + Sodium + pH + Conductivity (includes Test 1 plus nutrient analysis)	\$41 per sample
4. N + P + K + Calcium + Magnesium + Sulfur + Sodium + pH (includes Test 1 plus nutrient analysis)	\$46 per sample	14. N + P + K + Calcium + Magnesium + Sulfur + Sodium + pH + Conductivity + Sodium (includes Test 1 plus nutrient analysis)	\$51 per sample
5. N + P + K + Calcium + Magnesium + Sulfur + Sodium + pH + Conductivity (includes Test 1 plus nutrient analysis)	\$56 per sample	15. N + P + K + Calcium + Magnesium + Sulfur + Sodium + pH + Conductivity + Sodium + pH (includes Test 1 plus nutrient analysis)	\$61 per sample
6. N + P + K + Calcium + Magnesium + Sulfur + Sodium + pH + Conductivity + Sodium (includes Test 1 plus nutrient analysis)	\$66 per sample	16. N + P + K + Calcium + Magnesium + Sulfur + Sodium + pH + Conductivity + Sodium + pH + Sodium (includes Test 1 plus nutrient analysis)	\$71 per sample
7. N + P + K + Calcium + Magnesium + Sulfur + Sodium + pH + Conductivity + Sodium + pH + Sodium (includes Test 1 plus nutrient analysis)	\$76 per sample		
8. N + P + K + Calcium + Magnesium + Sulfur + Sodium + pH + Conductivity + Sodium + pH + Sodium + pH (includes Test 1 plus nutrient analysis)	\$86 per sample		

SAMPLE INFORMATION (REQUIRED)

Laboratory # (For Lab Use)	My Sample ID	Sample Name	Sample Size	Test Results	Sample Location	Requested Analyses

Price valid until 12-31-2024. The client form can be downloaded at the laboratory's website: soiltest.tamu.edu



March 18, 2024 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm [Container Gardening](#) Dallas Public Library - Audelia Road Branch, 10045 Audelia Road, Dallas This demonstration talk covers the four basic elements of container gardening: pots, soil, plants and time. Plant combinations for shade, sun, and different seasons are discussed, as well as new container systems. Speaker is CA Hiscock.

March 20, 2024 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm [Ground Covers for North Texas](#) The Jewish Community Center, 7900 North Haven, Dallas. Ground covers reduce turf area, introduce texture into the landscape and solve a variety of problems. During this talk you will learn where to use ground covers and how to maintain them. You will also learn which ground covers do well in North Texas. Speaker is Kevin Burns. Sponsor: Garden Club of Dallas.

March 21, 2024 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm [Container Gardening](#) Lakewood Library, 6121 Worth St., Dallas. This demonstration talk covers the four basic elements of container gardening: pots, soil, plants and time. Plant combinations for shade, sun, and different seasons are discussed, as well as new container systems. Speaker is CA Hiscock.

March 23, 2024 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm [Homegrown Herbs for Healthier Home Cooking](#) Garland Public Library, 713 Austin St., Garland. Explore 10 favorite herbs that are easily grown in North Texas and discover culinary tips and techniques to create delectable, healthy dishes. Speaker is Barbara Gollman.

March 23, 2024 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm [All About Seeds](#) Dallas Public Library - Oak Lawn Branch, 4100 Cedar Springs Road, Dallas. Our very existence depends on seeds and seed production. In this class you will learn the ABCs of seed production, seed storage and seed propagation. Speaker is Roseann Ferguson.

March 28, 2024 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm [Unveiling the Hidden Wonders of Planting a Pollinator Garden](#) Bath House Cultural Center, 521 East Lawther, Dallas. Growing a pollinator garden is fun, beautiful and good for nature. But it's more than just a few pretty flowers. Come learn some of the surprising things that happen in a real pollinator habitat. The Bath House Cultural Center (presentation in lower level). Speaker is Nancy Wilson.

March 28, 2024 12:00 pm to 1:30 pm [DCMGA Monthly Meeting](#) St. Barnabas Presbyterian Church, 1220 West Belt Line Road, Richardson. We will be meeting for a second year at St. Barnabas Presbyterian Church for our monthly meeting. Our own Cindy Bolz will be joined by Scott Hubble to talk about Japanese Maples and answer any questions you might have.

March 29 11:00 am to 12:00 pm [Insects in the Garden - Good or Bad?](#) Dallas Arboretum, Test Pavilion, 8525 Garland Road, Dallas. This talk discusses the importance of allowing the good bugs to help control the few bad bugs, thus creating a garden environment that requires little or no insecticide. Speaker is Judy Meagher.

April 6, 2024 11:00 am to 12:00 pm [All About Seeds](#) J Erik Jonsson Central Library, 1515 Young Street, Dallas. Our very existence depends on seeds and seed production. In this class you will learn the ABCs of seed production, seed storage and seed propagation. Speaker is Roseann Ferguson.

April 6, 2024 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm [Container Gardening](#) Dallas Public Library - Timberglen Branch, 18505 Midway, Dallas. This demonstration talk covers the four basic elements of container gardening: pots, soil, plants and time. Plant combinations for shade, sun, and different seasons are discussed, and new container systems. Speaker is CA Hiscock.

April 10, 2024 9:30 am to 11:30 am [Wicked Plants](#) Global Spheres Campus, 7801 S. I35, Corinth. This fun presentation covers plants that are deadly, illegal, intoxicating, dangerous, painful, and destructive/invasive. This presentation uses interesting historical anecdotes, photos to identify the plants and facts so gardeners can avoid these plants in their landscapes. Speaker is Kevin Burns. Denton County Master Gardeners Assn.

April 12, 2024 11:00 am to 12:00 pm [Easy Landscaping Ideas For Your Garden](#) Dallas Arboretum Test Pavilion, 8525 Garland Road, Dallas. The reds, oranges and golds of Japanese maples are breathtaking in the spring and fall. These trees can be easily grown in the shade here in North Texas and they are perfect understory trees. Learn about the vast variety of sizes and colors and how and when to plant them. Speaker is Cindy Bolz.

April 13, 2024 10:00 am to 11:00 am [What Are Good Bugs?](#) City of Garland Earth Day Events, 300 N. Fifth St., Garland. Learn the importance of allowing the good bugs to help control the few bad bugs, thus creating a garden environment that requires little to no insecticides. Speaker is Judy Meagher.

April 13, 2024 11:00 am to 12:00 pm [Texas Native and Adapted Plants](#) City of Garland Earth Day Events, 300 N. Fifth St., Garland. Provides an overview of the plants that do well in North Central Texas and good horticulture practices that help ensure success. This presentation includes photos of the speaker's yard and garden. Speaker is Kevin Burns.

April 15, 2024 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm [Let It Rot](#) Dallas Public Library - Audelia Road Branch, 10045 Audelia Road, Dallas. Learn about composting and how to give the soil what it wants. Speaker is John Hunt.

April 18, 2024 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm [Successful Seed Starting](#) Lakewood Library, 6121 Worth St., Dallas. Save money and feel accomplished while you grow the varieties you want by starting your vegetables from seed. This demonstration shows step-by-step how to successfully propagate seeds and care for seedlings before planting them outdoors in the garden. Participants learn about the tools, supplies, and procedures. Speaker is Glen McGee.



April

Spring has sprung ... finally!

Planting

- Plant ground covers and warm-season annuals and perennials such as cannas and gladiola corms as soil temperatures warm and the danger of frost has passed. It's best to wait until next month to plant hot-weather annuals such as caladiums, elephant ears, periwinkles, and zinnias.
- Plant warm-season turf grasses (Bermuda, St. Augustine, and Zoysia) starting in mid-April. Plant Bermuda grass seed only when nighttime temperatures average 65 degrees.
- Early April plant: tomatoes, snap beans, radishes, cucumbers, corn, lima beans, mustard, peppers, and squash. Late April plant: watermelon, southern peas, okra, cantaloupe, sweet potatoes, eggplant, and pumpkin.

Plant Care

- Check roses, ornamentals, and vegetables for powdery mildew, prevalent in mild, moist spring weather.
- Fertilize azaleas according to soil test recommendations after they finish blooming.
- Check new growth on ornamental plants weekly for aphids and scale insects and treat, if necessary.
- Apply first fertilizer treatment to established warm-season turf grasses (first to mid-April). Use a fertilizer based on a soil test (which may cost as little as \$10) and follow recommendations. "Weed & Feed" products are not recommended.
- Mow established warm-season turf grasses weekly or as needed.
- Use broad-leafed weed control products to eliminate spring weeds such as dandelions, henbit, and chickweed. Some types can damage St. Augustine. Always read and follow label directions.
- Begin harvesting cool-season vegetables.
- Water all your plants when they're dry, but be particularly diligent with new plantings that can quickly dry out in our persistent spring winds. Use 3-4 inches of mulch on all flower, shrub, and vegetable beds.

Pruning

- Prune spring-blooming shrubs and vines after they finish flowering.
- Allow foliage on spring bulbs to die back and dry before removing, so they can store food for next year
- Shade trees may be pruned. **However, to avoid oak wilt disease, do not prune live oaks and red oaks between February 15th and June 30th.**

New this month on our DCMGA Website:

DCMGA Garden Tour Preview: The Garden of Suzy Renz

By Alan Rister



The upcoming DCMGA Garden Tour on May 18th will feature eight beautiful gardens, including the fabulous garden of Suzy Renz, as one of the stops on this year's tour. [Read more...](#)

Should I Prune My Red Yucca?

By the DCMGA Help Desk Team, Margaret Ghose



Red Yucca (*Hesperaloe parviflora*) is a great native plant that blooms on stalks that can grow from 3 to 5 feet high or higher. After flowering, you have the choice of cutting back the bloom stalk in order to stimulate more blooms and create a tidier appearance, or you can leave the stalk to set fruit. [Read more ...](#)

Plant of the Month - Aquilegia chrysantha hinckleyana 'Texas Gold'

By At Home Botanist Team



The distinctive Texas gold columbine, more formally known as *Aquilegia chrysantha hinckleyana* 'Texas Gold', is an entrancing, perennial herbaceous plant that radiates with vibrant, golden-yellow flowers. Often in bloom from late spring to early summer, its striking flowers present a delightful visual spectacle, drawing attention from both humans and pollinators. [Read more...](#)

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Monthly Newsletter, March 2024

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