



## *As the Garden Grows*



*A Publication of the Gonzales Texas Master Gardeners  
January 2022 Issue 11*

### President's Message

Our December Winter Social was a huge success. Thanks to all that attended. The variety of sides and desserts were a perfect complement to the ham and turkey from Baker Boys.

The conclusion of 2021 brings the curtain down on a two-year period of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, we have learned that there are vaccines and therapeutics available. Unfortunately, this virus looks to be an on-going challenge like the flu and common cold.

We begin the year 2022 preparing for the Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale. A great opportunity for home lab experimentation.

Seeds naturally germinate in nature. The best example are the volunteer plants that emerge in your garden. Tiny tomato seeds can be sowed on the surface. A germination boost can be provided by soaking seeds in lukewarm water for a day. Water from a spray bottle helps seeds settle in the soil. Covering the container with clear plastic provides an ideal growing environment. Remove the plastic when green shoots appear, normally in 7-10 days. A heat mat is helpful but may not be necessary in a normal temperature-controlled home.

Sandy Llewellyn is our expert on growing plants from seed. Participating in her grow team will be time well spent.

Nick Wentworth, GMG President

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### GROW TEAM LEADERS

Annuals, Houseplants, Tropical Plants-  
Nadine Hodges-Taylor-512-492-5461

Perennials/Natives- Mike Taylor 830-  
743-3463

Succulents- Sandy Machacek- 361-772-  
2094

Herbs-Dee Senglemann-830-857-6845

Vegetables-Sandy Llewellyn- 713-408-  
4198

Trees- Donna Bell- 512-797-7646

SPS Leader- Shirley Frazier,



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## Treasurer's Message

With the New Year comes renewal of your GMG membership dues. You can bring your dues (\$20.00 cash or check) to the monthly meeting, or you can mail it to me at:

**Gonzales Master Gardeners**  
**1709 Sarah Dewitt Drive**  
**Gonzales, Texas 78629**

David Burroughs  
GMG Treasurer

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[Marcia Lambert taught the GMG Rainwater Harvesting and Conservation Class in November](#)

## In the Garden Landscape with Central Texas Gardener

<p><b>Lawns: Rake, weed, and mow if necessary.</b></p>	<p><b>Potted Plants can still stay outdoors until frost date. Water thoroughly and bring inside or cover if temperatures fall below freezing.</b></p>
<p><b>Divide and/or move shrubs, roses, trees, evergreen, spring-blooming perennials:</b></p>	<p><b>Prune freeze damaged, grapes, fruit trees, blackberries, trees, some herbs, woody plants.</b></p>
<p><b>Select and prep with compost or organic matter If your soil test indicates.</b></p>	<p><b>Plant ornaments and for wildlife, herbs, food crops and fruit.</b></p>



## Gardening with Nature

*Submitted by Mayra Guisinger*

Did you know that gardening and birdwatching are the two most popular hobbies in the United States? You are certainly a garden enthusiast, but if you also enjoy birds, you might have already taken steps to plant local native plants in your garden to support them, and make your yard interesting, and ecologically beneficial.



The three basic requirements for birds are to provide food, cover, and a source of water. But, in selecting plants for the garden, experts in *The American Gardener* say that “the key is to rely on regionally native plant species that have adapted to the climate and soil in your area. “

Why natives you ask? Planting exotic plants: plants from other continents and regions, disrupt the food web. Many of our insects can't forage on these, and the cycle cannot continue by feeding birds. But, having a biodiverse garden, with local native plants will ensure the gardener that birds will be nourished by feeding on caterpillars, cabbage worms, beetles, grubs, crickets, and many other insects.

Add natives from these 5 groups: larval insect hosts, nectar producing, berry producing, nut producing, seed producing.

So, this year, instead of putting up a bird feeder, plan to create or add to your bird friendly garden this year.

To Search for plants that you might like for your landscape, go to Earth-Kind Landscaping or click here. <http://ekps.tamu.edu/> or [http://ekps.tamu.edu/allplantsforregion?region=zone\\_f&per\\_page=20&page=6](http://ekps.tamu.edu/allplantsforregion?region=zone_f&per_page=20&page=6)





## How To Prepare Your Plants For Cold Weather

Whether winter is around the corner, or an arctic blast is blowing in, a Texas A&M AgriLife horticulture specialist has tips and tricks for taking care of your plants during cold weather.

*By Laura Muntean, Texas A&M AgriLife*

Before cold weather freezes your plants, learn how to prepare your plants for winter and temperatures that drop below freezing. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service program specialist for horticulture, Lisa Whittlesey, explains how you can prep your plants for the coming freezing temperatures.

When in doubt, move your potted plants. If you can't move your plants, cover them.

Cold weather prep for plants in winter

"First of all, make sure that your plants are well watered," she said. "This can be great protection from light frost damage."

Drought-stressed plants are more susceptible to cold damage, so watering plants a few days in advance of a cold snap is beneficial. Watering just before the freeze can help too by creating warmth, and the water loses its heat slowly over the hours into the colder temperatures. Used with covers, this watering technique can help make a difference.

"Secondly, remember some plants are more sensitive to cold temperatures than others." For example, tropical plants will be much more sensitive to cool temperatures and often can be damaged even if the temperature does not hit freezing.

For light frost that doesn't last for too long, if possible, move potted plants close to the house and preferably on a southern exposure. Placing strands of holiday lights around the plants and covering with a tarp can also help to raise the temperature for protection, particularly if only a light freeze is expected.

How to cover your plant: keeping them warm in winter

Placing cardboard boxes, large trash cans, or even plastic tubs over outdoor plants will provide some protection for sensitive plants, she explained. When covering plants, it's key to cover them from the ground up. The warmth of the soil is what actually helps keep the plant warm. Since the soil takes much longer to freeze, it offers warmer air than the freezing temperatures surrounding the plant.

To cover plants effectively, drape things over the top of the plant all the way to the soil, then secure the drape with boards or rocks. This will essentially trap warmer air in with the plant.

“If a heavier freeze is expected and watering, lights and covering isn’t enough, moving plants to a southern/western exposure and applying a very heavy layer of mulch or straw in the container can be helpful,” she said. “Anything that can help blanket or cover the plant is beneficial.”

For a long duration of freezing temperatures or if a hard freeze is expected, then it will be best to move plants to the garage or inside.

In flower beds, covering sensitive plants with a heavy covering of leaves can also help provide some frost protection.

### Caring for plants indoors during winter

Plants that have been outside often will not receive the light they prefer when moved indoors.

“Try to provide light by placing plants by a window,” Whittlesey said. “Keep well watered and just try to maintain the plant during the colder winter months.”

Plants will not need as much water or fertilizer when indoors. When watering indoor plants, take plants to sink and thoroughly water, allowing water to drain out the bottom of the container. This will prevent as much build-up of salts within the pot.

Rainwater is ideal if you are able to collect it for watering. Using a water-soluble fertilizer about once every four to six weeks will be adequate to provide nutrition for the plant.

### Know your plants – are they poisonous?

If you’re moving plants inside, it is always good to know what types of plants you are bringing into your home. “Some popular house plants can be toxic to children and pets,” she said. “Placing plants up higher on a cabinet or a shelf can make them less accessible.”

Knowing something about the plants you have and whether or not they could be toxic to children or pets can be helpful, particularly as you bring them into close quarters with your family and furry friends. Aggie Horticulture has put together some poisonous plant resources.

For more information about frosts and freezes, visit [Aggie Horticulture](#).



## Protecting Your Plantings from Cold



- Hot caps keep your plant by maintaining the warmth from the sun, and lets the soil release it during the nighttime.
- Cut-off milk cartons work the same as Hot caps but need to be secured with pins or stakes.
- Special “grow covers” lay over young plantings and trap the warmth.
- Wrap plants in cloth to protect them, don’t use plastic it heats up to quickly. A 60-watt bulb under the cover gives it a little extra warmth.

# January 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	<b>4</b> <b>Turf Class</b> 	<b>5</b> <b>December hours due today</b>	<b>6</b> <b>Monthly Meeting</b> 	7	8
9	10	<b>11</b> <b>Containers Class</b> <i>(Greenhouses Class rescheduled for February 1)</i> 	12	<b>13</b> <b>First Grade Project: The Tiny Seed</b>	<b>14</b> <b>Alternate Date for the 13<sup>th</sup>.</b>	15
16	17	<b>18</b> <b>Butterflies Class</b> 	<b>19</b> <b>Set-up for Papier Mâché 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Project</b>	<b>20</b> <b>Papier Mâché 2nd Grade Project</b>	<b>21</b> <b>GMG Board Meeting</b>	22
23/30	<b>24/31</b> <b>You can begin to send your V. Hours (needed by the 5<sup>th</sup> of Feb.)</b>	25	26	<b>27</b> <b>First Grade Project: Seed Experiment</b>	<b>28</b> <b>Alternate date for the 27<sup>th</sup></b>	29

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ALL OUR BIRTHDAY MEMBERS AND STUDENTS!**







Sources: [The American Gardener Nov./Dec. 2021](#) , [Texas Gardening by Neil Sperry](#)

Editor: Mayra Guisinger

Co-Editors: Nicholas Wentworth

Calendar: Carolyn Parratt

GMG Webmaster: Jo Swiger

Ag Extension Webmaster: Marcella Perales