



Liberty County Master Gardeners Newsletter

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

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Welcome to the NEW Liberty County Master Gardener Newsletter. Our hope is this will be enjoyable and educational reading. Any LCMG can contribute and document their volunteer hours for doing so.

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CALENDAR of UPCOMING EVENTS

April 25 – Saturday – Group visit to New Gardens at Houston’s Hermann Park

May 14 – Thursday – LCMG Meeting – Presentation by Noreen Ferrill “Identifying Gingers”

June 11 – Thursday – LCMG Meeting – Presentation by Maxine Mosley, “Proper Canning”



Join us on Facebook at:
[Liberty County Master Gardener Association](#)

- *Share the news: tell family and friends in the area about this easy way to stay connected!*
- *Sharing of frequently asked garden related questions for Agrilife*
- *Garden tips and educational articles; of interest to residents of Liberty County*
- *Status updates for current or planned projects, pictures of previous events*
- *Educational and Volunteer Opportunities*
- *...and an occasional bit of humor*

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Liberty County Master Gardener Association

COOL GARDENING BOOKS, Part I

Contributed by Nancy Brandli

Carrots Love Tomatoes, by Louise Riotte. This is an old book (40+ yrs.) but the companion gardening concept remains true today. It has gardening information, garden layouts and lots of interesting information about gardening.

Chile Peppers, by the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. This is a comprehensive book about the growing and eating chile peppers. Lots of recipes and color photographs. Give the history of growing chiles and how to grow them in all climates.

Epic Tomatoes, by Craig LeHoullier. This is a comprehensive work on tomatoes. The author has grown more than 1,200 varieties. This book tells stories about the varieties, shares his 10 most favorite tomatoes and surveys 200 others. Runs the gamut from collecting seeds to harvesting.

Fermented Vegetables, by Kirsten Shockey & Christopher Shockey. This book gives instructions for making 200+ types of fermented veggies and recipes for using them. Lots of full color photos. We were watching one of the food channels last night and they were making chow-chow. Which my grandpa ate on boiled potatoes. The long-suffering spouse remembers his mother putting up 100's of jars of food and pickles.

Hot Sauce!, by Jennifer Trainer Thompson. Hot pepper sauces are very 'in' right now. (I think I have 7 kinds in my kitchen.) Again, this is a book full of how to make and how to use in recipes.

Plant Breeding for the Home Gardeners: How to Create Unique Vegetables & Flowers, by Joseph Tychonievich. The author is a geneticist who has a passion for creating new varieties. If you're into

making better tomatoes or roses, this is a good how-to book. Lots of illustrations.

What would you name your special tomato? I'd want the size of Beefsteak with the taste of Paul Robeson and the curly shape of the Cherokee.

Put 'Em Up!, by Sherry Brooks Vinton. I gag at the thought of GMO food. My grandmothers, my aunts and my folks all created pickles, jams, jellies, sauerkraut, and everything that would hold still. I have mixed memories of my father arriving with cases of tomatoes, peppers and onions to put up. This book gives instructions for every kind of food preservation, from canning to freezing and drying. I still have some of last year's tomatoes in the freezer. Time to use them up!

Starting Seeds, by Nancy Bubel. This new and expanded edition is for starting more than 200 vegetables, fruits, herbs, shrubs and trees. (I was fortunate to find it on Amazon for \$2.) It has detailed information on seed starting, transplanting and dealing with pests. It gives a lot of information on how to grow and properly harvest the most popular vegetables, including eggplants, peppers and tomatoes.

Tantalizing Tomatoes, by the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Another in their series of gardening handbooks, discussing terminology, getting started, growing and staking. If you think about the fact that New York City has more than 5,000 urban gardens, and use this series for successful growing, it will work for you here. It discussed 75 varieties and has a section on difficult climates with regional advice on strategies and plant selection.



The Potager

Contributed by Lindsay Ruschel

More than likely most of us do not have a potager, or formal kitchen garden, which is designed for looks as well as productivity. We tend to have, either a large garden which is “a far piece from the house” or we have a small vegetable garden or a few raised beds devoted to vegetables.

However, the potager offers the gardener a chance to design an ever-changing kitchen garden with artistic license. Not only is it a garden that makes the most of the ornamental qualities of vegetables, herbs and fruits, but also provides great appeal by turning the vegetable area into a decorative feature. With a geometric layout of beds often bordered by low evergreen hedges or even tiles, and intersected by pathways, potagers usually have a centerpiece such as a pyramid-trained pear tree or a metal gazebo covered with grape vines. The beds, whether raised or traditional ground level, can be arranged to point to the centerpiece plant or gazebo. The pathways should be aesthetically pleasing to the eye and easy to walk on by using tiles or stepping stones, gravel, or mulch as the pathway materials.

So what does one grow in a potager? The possibilities are as endless and as varied as are personal palates. Growing traditional vegetable crops are one way to go or you can step outside the norm and add some unusual elements and plants. Some crops such as

lettuce, whether for edible purposes or for aesthetics, and plump red strawberries can be grown in traditional rows or as edgings, while others such as sprawling zucchini, squashes, a mound or two of a variety of potatoes and tall towering tomatoes can be situated in block arrangements. To add depth and height, climbing French green beans and running green beans can be grown up on cane wigwams. Even the newer foot-long purple beans can be planted to grow up onto lattices. Other plants to consider growing include curly kale, leeks, red cabbage, bunching onions, cardoon, or broccoli. Think of companion herbs such as fennel, dill, oregano, basil, lemon grass, sage, or thyme. And don't forget the parsley which can be used as an edging plant.

Careful thought and planning are needed to map out your potager. Once the plans are drawn, and you have labored to put the garden into actuality, you will soon have a different view from your kitchen window. As the plants grow and the veggies mature, the view will reward your senses of smell, sight and taste. Bon appetite!

From [Garden Wisdom: Gardening Hints & Tips from Yesteryear](#) by Jenny Hendy, Anness Publishing, London, 2009.

Improving Your Soil

Written by Larry West

When I started thinking about what I wanted to write about for this newsletter I had to write about my favorite subject – Improving soil. I have become obsessed on how to improve my BLACK GUMBO. I have done research in several ways, including internet (too many sites to list here), and reading books. I have read several books but the most informative has been Teaming with Microbes, by Jeff Lowenfels & Wayne Lewis. The authors stated in the book they became amateur microbiologists during their research, I feel the same way some days.

For years I have tested various philosophies in my garden. These included use of a poor compost (didn't know it at the time) and the building of raised beds. Results included a lot of weeds, low yield and basically lots of work.

Now I have found very high quality naturally produced compost. Fellow LCMG's are aware of this company; because the owner gave a presentation and then we toured his facility. That is my sole supplier now. No it is not cheap and I have only used it for two years but results were visible after the first month.

I have fewer weeds because the soil is so much better. There was a bumper crop of Tomatoes, Bell Pepper (first time ever to have grocery store quality).

Actually all results were great on the peppers, including cubanelle, sweet banana, and three

different jalapeno (hot, mild and no heat), as well as a large production of kale, yellow squash, zucchini and watermelon.

I always take my trailer and purchase in bulk (4 – 6 yards). I only put about 2 inches on the raised beds and use mulch between the rows.

I have also started purchasing the coarse cut and use it in the flower beds as mulch. It has improved the soil to the point there are very few weeds.

Also I aerate the yard and put about an inch layer of the fine compost over it. During recent droughts, I have not had to water more than 3 times each year.

I know this is not a highly technical report, but I hope you get some good ideas for soil improvement.

Does Your Employer Support Volunteer Work?

A number of companies will make a financial contribution when their employees or retirees volunteer for nonprofit organizations.

The Liberty County Master Gardener Association is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization, so financial contributions are tax deductible.

If your employer does this; please contact Sandy Gammon or Alexis Cordova at (936) 334-3230 for information needed to get these funds for LCMG Association.

The Texas Master Gardener Association of Texas activities are coordinated by AgriLife Extension. Texas Master Gardener Association programs serve all people regardless of socioeconomic level, ethnicity, color, gender, religion, disability or national origin.

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