



This month in your garden:

- **Freeze** - Continue to keep an eye on the weather and stay informed on night time lows. If the temperature drops below 32, double wrap tender plants to ensure proper insulation. Avoid using plastic against foliage, but it can be used as the second exterior layer when covering plants. Remove plastic during the day.
- **Water**- Maintain watering on newly planted seeds and transplants. Continue to deep water trees and shrubs. A well-hydrated plant holds up to frosts and freezes better than a drought-stressed plant.
- **Move** -Now is the time to move shrubs or young trees to a new location if needed
- **Feed** - Fertilize pansies and other cool season flowers
- **Plant**- Strawberries hanging baskets are an ideal way to grow the berries to avoid fungus and insects attacking the fruit.
- **Plant** -Tomatoes can be transplanted into pots that can be brought inside for frosts and freezes; later on (after last frost) they can be planted in larger pots or in the ground
- **Plant**- Lettuce can be started from seed, for continual harvesting. Set out fresh seeds every 2-3 weeks through the cool season.
- **Plant Citrus** - Now is the time to purchase new fruit and citrus trees. Wait to plant until after the danger of freeze, around the end of February (*Or after our March speaker*)
- **Help the birds** - Keep bird feeders stocked for both winter residents and migrating species. Keep bird baths scrubbed and filled with clean water. Get nest boxes ready
- **Cut** - Cut ornamental grass to within inches of the ground. New shoots will emerge before long
- **Prune** – After Valentine’s Day prune the following -grandifloras, floribundas, hybrid teas and miniature roses. Climbing roses bloom on last year’s growth and are only pruned after their spring bloom
- **Prune** -If freeze-free at the end of the month, prune duranta, esperanza and hibiscus back to live (green wood)
- **Fertilize** – fertilize established trees and shrubs, except Azaleas and camellias with a good all-around organic fertilizer like MicroLife

January 2024

Save The Date*

February

Meeting – Thursday, February 8th

NFC clubhouse 1:00

guest speaker- *Alex Lekometros*

Bungalow Blooms

<https://www.bungalowbloomshtx.com/about>

Summer Cutting Gardens

Garden Workshop – Thursday, February 15th

NFC Clubhouse

Seed workshop - To be confirmed

guest speaker- Kim Meyer

Shamba Ya Amani Gardens

<https://www.famhoustontx.org/shamba-ya-amani>

Field Trip – Thursday, February 22nd*

Buchanan's Nursery

*12:00 at the nursery

March –

Meeting – Thursday, March 7th

NFC clubhouse 1:00

guest speaker- *Lauren Simpson*

St. Julian's Crossing

Creating a Pollinator Paradise at Home

Field Trip – Thursday, March 21st?

Houston Arboretum Working on this

*1:00 at the Arboretum

Garden Workshop – Thursday, March 28th

Location: NFC Clubhouse

Make Your Own Easter Floral Arrangement

guest speaker- *Pondersosa Blooms*

April –

Meeting – **Thursday, April 18th**

_____ 's garden 1:00

guest speaker- *David Creech*

President Azalea Society of America

Azaleas 101

Garden Workshop – Thursday, April 11th

Location: *to be determined*

Planting a pretty container pot? –

working on this

guest speaker- ?

Field Trip – April 25th?

John Fairy garden?

May –

Meeting – Thursday, May 9th

NFC Clubhouse 1:00

guest speaker- *Tricia Bradbury*

Fort Bend Master Gardener

Shade Gardening

Easter Floral Workshop - Save the Date

March 28, 2024

Nottingham Forest Club

Cost: Still to be calculated

Time: To be determined – most likely 1:00 start time

Ponderosa blooms will come and lead a floral workshop! Details are still being worked out – idea is to make an arrangement for Easter.



ABOUT OUR MARCH MEETING.... Open to all NFWC members

"Creating a Pollinator Paradise at Home"

Calling all neighbors! Pollinators and other wildlife face many challenges to their survival, and they need our help. The good news is that we can take simple steps to help them—right here, right now, right in our own gardens. In this presentation, Lauren Simpson introduces our pollinators and shares simple techniques for transforming our own garden into a beautiful, native-plant paradise—one that supports wildlife and pleases neighbors!



(Native-plant seeds from the speaker's own gardens will also be shared.)

*Photo courtesy of University of Houston Law Center

BIO: Since early 2015, and in her individual capacity, Lauren Simpson has transformed her home gardens into a wildlife-friendly habitat, currently a Certified Wildlife Habitat, Monarch Waystation, Certified Monarch Garden, and Certified Butterfly Garden. She promotes insect conservation and habitat gardening through presentations, events, interviews, and articles, as well as through a website and Instagram and Facebook communities under the appellation "St. Julian's Crossing Wildlife Habitat"—the name adopted for her family's Monarch Waystation. Ms. Simpson is a member of local chapters of the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT), Native Prairies Association of Texas, and North American Butterfly Association. She has also received Level 1 and Level 2 certifications through the NPSOT Native Landscape Certification Program (NLCP), has attended the "Monarch Conservation Workshop: Train the Trainer" training, and chairs the NPSOT subcommittee for the NLCP Advocacy companion class. Independent of her naturalist activities, Ms. Simpson is a Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Houston Law Center, teaching Lawyering Skills and Strategies (LSS). She is a spring 2016 recipient of the University of Houston Teaching Excellence Award (Instructor/Clinical category); one of three 2018 AALS Teachers of the Year selected by the Law Center; and the 2017, 2018, 2019 (co-recipient), 2021, 2022, and 2023 Student Bar Association Professor of the Year for Law Center faculty teaching in the part-time program. In spring 2023, her LSS team had the honor of receiving the 2023 UH Group Teaching Excellence Award

Garden Happenings Coming Up

HOUSTON HOME + GARDEN SHOW

February 2-4, 2024
NRG Park
Houston, Texas

Plant Market



Explore the Plant Market, an area featuring more than 30 exhibitors focusing on plants, seeds, and everything else you need to help your garden grow.

<https://www.houstonhomeandgardenshow.com/show-features/all-features>

SAT., FEB. 24: RAIN BARREL WORKSHOP by GALVESTON BAY FOUNDATION, 10–11:30am, Mercer Visitor's Center, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., \$40, Register: galvbay.org/events

The 87th RIVER OAKS GARDEN CLUB AZALEA TRAIL



Branch Out

SHARING HOUSTON'S GARDENS SINCE 1935

Gardens only this year

MARCH 8, 9 & 10, 2024

FRIDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY

11AM - 5PM

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR INFORMATION

@riveroaksgc.org

riveroaksgardenclub

<https://www.riveroaksgc.org/azalea-trail-2024/>

Let's talk gardening. Come see us!

@gardengirlstx

2024 EVENTS



Grow More
in '24
Expert Panelist
NRG Park

FEB
03



Soil to Salsa:
Growing Tomatoes

Berings Hardware
6102 Westheimer

FEB
22



Azalea Trail Market
River Oaks
Garden Club
The Forum
2503 Westheimer

MARCH
08

Brush & Beak

Brush & Beak is a 4-part workshop series at Edith L Moore Nature Sanctuary offered once per month on Wednesday mornings. Participants will study bird anatomy, feathers, and field marks while trying different artistic techniques. Classes will utilize preserved bird specimens, photos, and art prints for reference. Participants in each 2-hour workshop will create a work of art to take home with them. This series is geared towards adults, all artistic skill levels welcomed.



BIRD ART SERIES
HOUSTON AUDUBON PROGRAMMING

Although we will provide all materials, participants are welcome to bring their preferred supplies if desired. Each session is \$15 for Houston Audubon members and \$35 for nonmembers. If you have any questions, please contact Nature Programs Manager Amber Leung at aleung@houstonaudubon.org

<https://houstonaudubon.org/programs/adults/brush-beak.html>

THE JOHN FAIREY GARDEN



BUDDING OUT PLANT SALE & FESTIVAL
MARCH 16TH, 2024

2024 PLANT SALES

SHOP MERCER!	IN-PERSON	VIRTUAL
	March Mart	February 9 & 10
	March 21 VIP ONLY March 22 – 23	Tomato & Fruit Tree Sale
	April 11 & 12	May 3 & 4
	Member/Volunteer Sale at the Northside	Mother's Day Sale
July 13	July 19 & 20	
Tropical Symposium and Plant Sale	Summer Plant Sale	
November 2	Members shop early! Join today!	
Autumn Plant Sale	Shop virtual sales at FriendsOfMercer.com	

FRIENDSOFMERCER.COM

713-274-4166

<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfMercer/>

<https://ifgarden.org/budding-out-plant-festival/>

February 2024



10611 FM 2759 in Richmond Texas



February 10 @ 10:00am

Dany Millikin, "All About Tomatoes"

Join us for a cup of coffee or hot chocolate as Dany, Director of Education for the Houston Botanic Garden, walks us through a fun and informative session about growing tomatoes this spring and summer. Dany will lay out his integrated system for tomato triumph and answer all your questions about this beloved crop.



February 17 @ 4:00pm

Carol Burton,

"Plant Guilds, Roses & Rosé"

Join Carol for a glass of rosé and an intro to permaculture design through the lens of plant guilds and roses. Carol, Urban Harvest's Director of Permaculture, is passionate about creating beauty, resilience, and community in the garden while reducing effort & inputs over time. Learn how to create a plant guild, how to integrate native plants, fruit trees, and other edibles, and discover how the resilience of roses can anchor our gardens.

2 – 5pm: Soledad's Tamales



February 24 @ 10:00am

Mike Serant, "Organic Gardening"

Join Mike Serant, owner of San Jacinto Environmental Supplies and master formulator of MicroLife Organic fertilizers, as he teaches us how to work with nature to create thriving garden spaces and lawns built on healthy soil with a diverse microbiome.

11am – 2pm: Free seedlings from

Trees For Houston

10am – 1pm: Holy Smoke BBQ



March 2 @ 10:00am

Destin Noak AKA Texas Garden Guy, "Springtime Gardening"

Explore the ins and outs of spring vegetable gardening with Destin Noak (@texasgardenguy), whose online content has become a source of inspiration to so many across our state. He'll be joined by horticulturist Jay White. Together they will outline the fundamentals of successful raised bed gardening in our region.

Pop-Up: OMG Baked Potato



<https://buchanansplants.com/events/>

BUCHANAN'S SPRING CLASS SERIES



Spring Veggie Garden Class
with Stash Koloskov & Missy Cirlos

When:
February 3rd
10am-11am

Location:
Buchanan's
Native Plants

Free Class



Spring Veggie Garden Class

Saturday, February 3rd, 10am – 11am

Join us for a spring veggie garden class to learn everything you need to know about getting your g spring ready!

In this class you will learn how to prep your beds, what veggies to grow and how to successfully grow them!

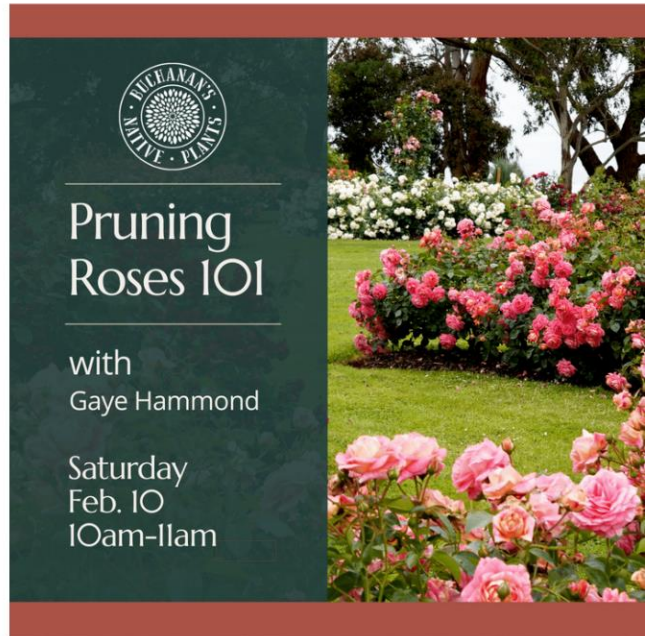


Pruning Roses 101

Saturday February 10th, 10am-11am

Join us for a morning of all thing's roses!

In this free class past President of the Houston Rose Society, Gaye Hammond will show you how to properly prune your roses. After this class you will feel more confident going into rose season.



The poster features a dark green background on the left with the Buchanan's Plants logo at the top. The text reads: "Pruning Roses 101 with Gaye Hammond Saturday Feb. 10 10am-11am". On the right, there is a photograph of a lush garden with various pink and white roses in bloom.



The poster has a green background with a white text box. It features the Buchanan's Plants logo at the top. The text reads: "MEET & GREET WITH ROBERT 'SKIP' RICHTER". The background image shows gardening tools like shears and a trowel on a workbench.

Meet & Greet

Saturday, March 16th, 11am-1pm

Join us for a meet and greet with Robert "Skip" Richter! Stop by and chat all things gardening. Whether it's questions about your lawn or garden bed!

Skip has served the community as the National Gardening Association's regional horticulturist for the southeastern U.S. and is a contributing editor to Texas Gardener magazine. He is now the host of GardenLine where he gives advice on how to keep your garden happy year round!

<https://buchanansplants.com/events/>

6420 Farm to Market 359 Road
Richmond, TX 77406



Take advantage of our great lineup of educational seminars on **Saturdays at 10am** in January & February and you're sure to get off to a great start! We will have covered tents with plenty of seating to keep you warm and comfortable while you learn!

February 10th

**Rose Care in the Gulf Coast Region
with Marie Jenkins from The Antique Rose Emporium**



CITRUS TREES FROM PLANTING TO YEAR 3

📍 Zoom Live Class

🕒 Feb 17 2024 09:30am - 11:30am



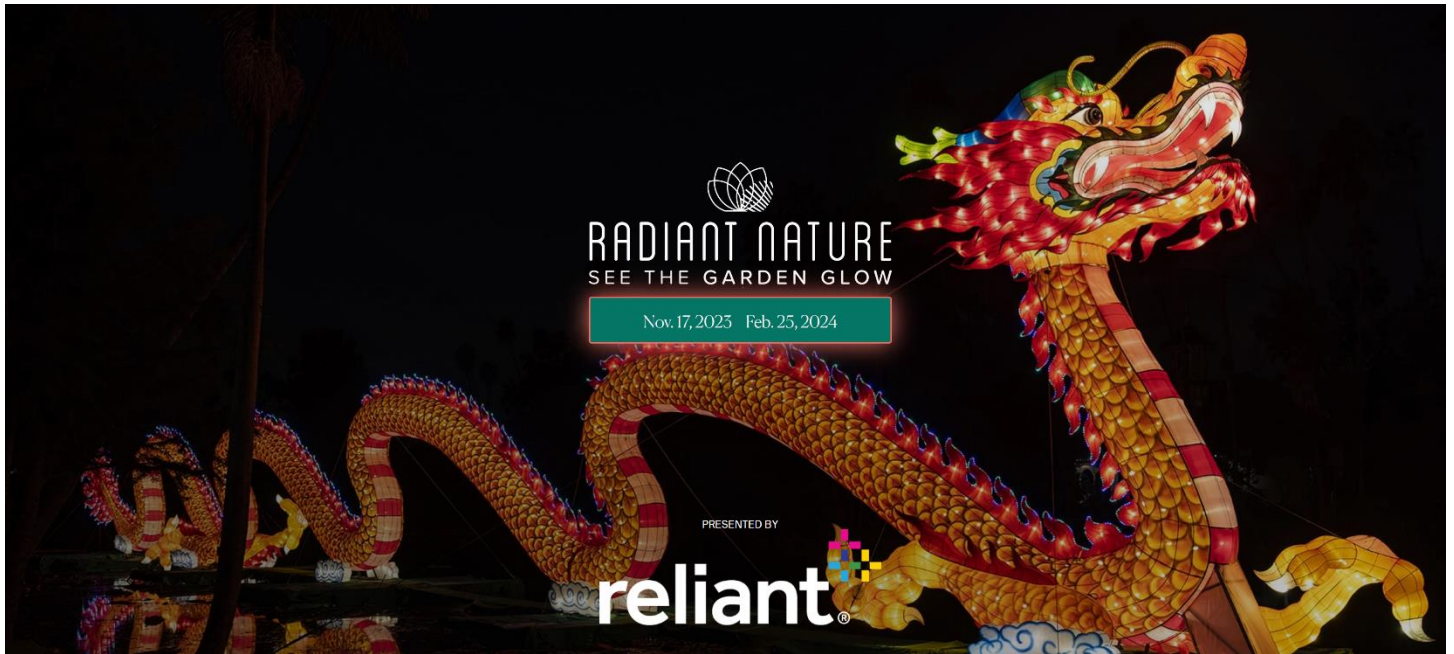
SPECIALTY HERBS

📍 Bauer Education Center

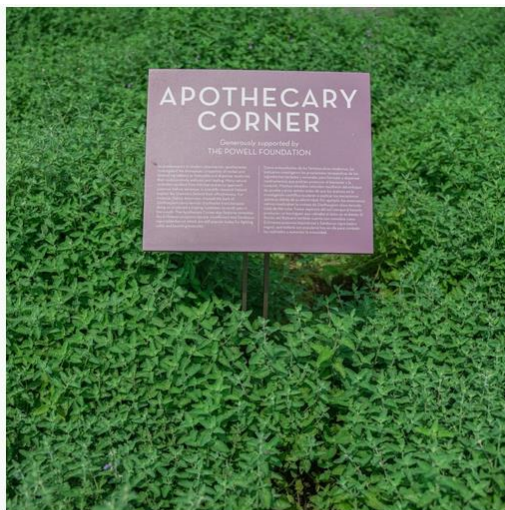
🕒 Feb 24 2024 10:00am - 11:30am



https://www.urbanharvest.org/stec_event/specialty-herbs/



<https://hbg.org/series/radiant-nature/>

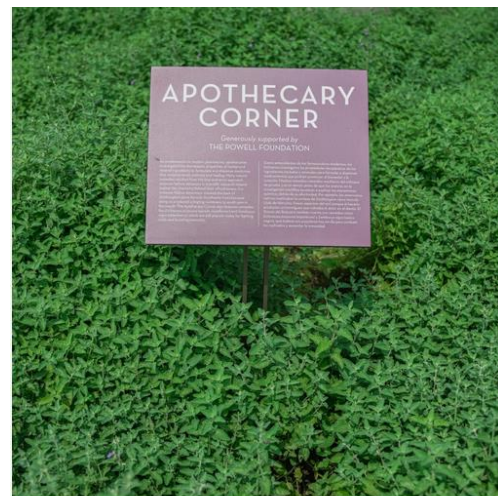


Back to the Roots: Herbalism

Digestion & Gut Health

February 24, 2024 9:30 am

Health & Wellness



Back to the Roots: Herbalism

The Nervous System

March 23, 2024 10:00 am

Health & Wellness

<https://hbg.org/event/back-to-the-roots-herbalism-2/>



Harris County Master Gardener's Free Gardening Classes

The Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Harris County Master Gardeners are pleased to offer the **FREE Green Thumb Gardening Series of Lectures** now provided [virtually](#) twice a month. We have collaborated with the Harris County Public Library and Houston Community College. Join us for one or both!

Every month, there is a new topic presented by experienced Harris County Master Gardeners. We share in-depth information for beginners to experienced gardeners. To access a printable version of the 2023 Green Thumb schedule, click [HERE](#).

Green Thumb Lecture Series

Second Monday, 10:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.

Houston Community College

Register in advance to receive the link:

hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops

Second Monday of each month

February 12– Success with Spring Vegetables

March 18 – Edible Landscaping

April 8– Gardening in Containers

May 13 – Identifying “Good and Bad Bugs”

June 10 – Seed Saving and Starting

July 8– Fall’s Best Vegetable Gardening

August 12 – Growing Bulbs in Texas

Third Tuesday, 11:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

Harris County Public Library Facebook Live

No reservation required. Watch on Facebook –

<https://www.facebook.com/harriscountyppl/events>

Third Tuesday of each month

February 20– Success with Spring Vegetables

March 19 – Edible Landscaping

April 16– Gardening in Containers

May 21 – Identifying “Good and Bad Bugs”

June 18 – Seed Saving and Starting

July 16– Fall’s Best Vegetable Gardening

August 20 – Growing bulbs in Texas

Garden to Kitchen – Make Your Own Salad Dressings

For those who missed hearing Janna Varughese at the January NFWC meeting about plant based eating, one of the topics that came up was about homemade salad dressings. It is a perfect way to use the citrus and herbs in your garden as well as jalapenos. So this month's topic for Garden to Kitchen is "Make Your Own."

Why Make Homemade Dressing? If you read there ingredients on bottled salad dressings you will see additives that are unfamiliar - some are to thicken the dressing and others are to preserve it. Making your own dressing avoids these items and who can resist adding some items from your own garden?

This recipe comes to us from Janna of NOURISH Cooking Co.

"I would love to share a recipe with you! Below is one of my favorite cashew based ones"

Creamy Cilantro-Lime Salad Dressing

1/2 cup raw cashews

1/2 cup filtered water

1/2 cup fresh cilantro leaves

1 tbsp fresh lime or lemon juice

1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper

1/4 tsp sea salt

1/4 tsp cumin

dash of your favorite hot sauce (optional)

1. Place all the ingredients in a high-powered blender. Blend together on high until creamy.
2. Store in an airtight glass jar in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Note: If you are not using a high-powered blender, add a little extra water to get a smooth consistency.



Joanne Collier shared this recipe,

“This is my new favorite recipe”:

<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/241148/avocado-dressing/>

Avocado Dressing

Prep Time: 10 mins

Total Time: 10 mins

Yield: 1 1/2 cups

Ingredients

- 1 avocado, peeled and pitted
- ½ cup plain yogurt
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon hot pepper sauce
- ⅛ teaspoon ground black pepper

Directions

Step 1

Blend avocado, yogurt, olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, sea salt, hot sauce, and black pepper together in a blender until smooth.

Recipe Tip

You can use canola oil instead of olive oil if desired.

Nutrition Facts

Per serving: 77 calories; total fat 7g; saturated fat 1g; cholesterol 1mg; sodium 158mg; total carbohydrate 3g; dietary fiber 1g; total sugars 1g; protein 1g; vitamin c 4mg; calcium 22mg; iron 2mg; potassium 113mg





Many of you may be familiar with Marcia Smart of Smart in the Kitchen. Perhaps you have taken a cooking class with her (she is located in Memorial).

This salad dressing is from her blog:

“It takes five minutes to make a super simple salad dressing, which uses only four ingredients that you should have stocked in your pantry or fridge. The return on flavor, not to mention the health benefits of ditching bottled salad dressing, is immeasurable.”

<https://smartinthekitchen.com/2017/02/super-simple-salad-dressing/>

Super Simple Salad Dressing

“This dressing is equally delicious with mild butter lettuce as it is with spicier greens, such as arugula or watercress. You can also drizzle it over a rice or quinoa bowl or grilled vegetables.”

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar, champagne vinegar or white wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon minced shallot (you can substitute 1 teaspoon minced garlic if you prefer)
- Sea salt and fresh ground pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Instructions

1. In a mason jar with a tight fitting lid, add all the ingredients. Seal tightly and shake to emulsify.
2. Alternately, in a medium size bowl add the first four ingredients. Slowly whisk in the olive oil to emulsify.
3. Keep covered in the refrigerator for up to a week. Let the salad dressing come to room temperature before shaking it well and drizzling on your greens.





This is another dressing from Smart In the Kitchen – and if you happen to have some jalapenos in your garden, it would be a great way to put them to use!

As Marcia says, “For a night of soup and salad at home, there would be nothing easier than [slow cooker chicken tortilla soup](#) and jalapeño buttermilk ranch over greens. Add some cornbread and a [jalapeño mint margarita](#), and your night is looking up.”

<https://smartinthekitchen.com/2017/08/jalapeno-buttermilk-ranch/>

Homemade Jalapeno Ranch



5 from 2 votes

Use regular Hellman's mayonnaise for this recipe, healthy avocado oil-based mayos will work, but lend a slightly different taste to the finished dressing. Low-fat or non-fat plain Greek yogurt will work fine, but I prefer it with full-fat.

Prep Time
15 mins

Total Time
15 mins

Course: Salad Dressing Cuisine: American Author: Marcia Smart

Ingredients

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup low-fat buttermilk or more for a thinner consistency
- 1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 lemon juiced, or more to taste
- 1 tablespoon minced chives
- 1 tablespoon minced cilantro
- 1 jalapeño deseeded and chopped, or more to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

Instructions

1. In the bowl of your food processor, add all the ingredients. Pulse. Lift up a spoonful of dressing and pour it back into bowl. It should run freely; if not, thin it out with additional buttermilk. Taste for salt and lemon juice; adjust seasoning if necessary.
2. Refrigerate for up to one week.

Notes

Serve this tangy homemade ranch with a variety of raw vegetables, including English cucumbers, colorful peppers, radishes, cherry tomatoes, carrots and celery. Ingredients make a big difference here – use Hellman's or Duke's mayo. When finished, taste for seasoning and add more salt or lemon juice if you'd like. Last but not least, the herbs should be fresh, not dried.

Substitutions:

If you don't have buttermilk, use regular milk and an extra squeeze of lemon juice.

Here is a dressing perfect for using lemons from your citrus tree. It is sourced from *Love & Lemons* internet cooking site.

“Of all of the homemade salad dressings out there, this lemon tahini dressing might be the one I make most often. It’s really versatile – it tastes just as good with tomatoes and cucumbers in the summer as it does with roasted sweet potatoes, cauliflower, or broccoli in the fall.”

<https://www.loveandlemons.com/tahini-dressing/>

Tahini Dressing

Prep Time: 10 mins

Serves 4 to 6



This tahini dressing is fantastic on almost any salad, but your options for using it don't end there! Drizzle it over roasted veggies, grain bowls, and more. Find additional suggestions in the post above.

Ingredients

- ¼ cup smooth tahini*
- 3 tablespoons water, more if needed
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- 1 small garlic clove, grated
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt

Instructions

1. In a small bowl, whisk together the tahini, water, lemon juice, olive oil, maple syrup, sesame oil, garlic, and salt until smooth.
2. If the dressing is too thick, add more water, ½ tablespoon at a time, until it's a drizzleable consistency.

Notes

*For the best results, use really smooth, runny tahini here, not the dry, stiff stuff that you might find at the bottom of a jar. Tahini's consistency can also vary from brand to brand; my favorites are Soom, Cedar's, Trader Joe's, and Seed+Mill.

You can explore more of her salad dressings here:

<https://www.loveandlemons.com/healthy-salad-dressing-recipes/>



This last recipe is a good way to use some of your basil. It is sourced from *Skinnytaste* internet cooking site.

<https://www.skinnytaste.com/basil-green-goddess-dressing/>

Basil Green Goddess Dressing Recipe

★★★★★ 5 from 7 votes

YIELD: 16 servings COURSE: Lunch, Salad CUISINE: American

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup light mayonnaise (such as Hellman's (regular for Keto))
- 1/2 cup scallions (chopped)
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh basil (packed)
- 1/8 cup fresh squeezed lemon juice (1 lemon)
- 1 clove garlic (chopped)
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tsp anchovy paste
- 1/2 cup light sour cream (full fat for Keto)

Instructions

1. Place all ingredients except for sour cream in a blender and blend until smooth.
2. Add sour cream and process until blended.
3. Keep refrigerated until serving.

Notes

Makes about 2 cups.

adapted from Barefoot Contessa At Home

GARDEN CREATIONS - Pinecone Heart Feeders – perfect for your “tweetharts” this Valentine’s Day.

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2lekkYJ2vi/?igsh=MTF2M2Rlb295enZoaw%3D%3D>

This is a great activity for a cold day or for making with kiddos...

MATERIALS:

- Glue gun
- Scissors
- Nyjer seeds
- Pumpkin seeds
- Sunflower seeds
- Jute twine
- Wood beads
- Pinecones
- Sticking agent (honey or suet)

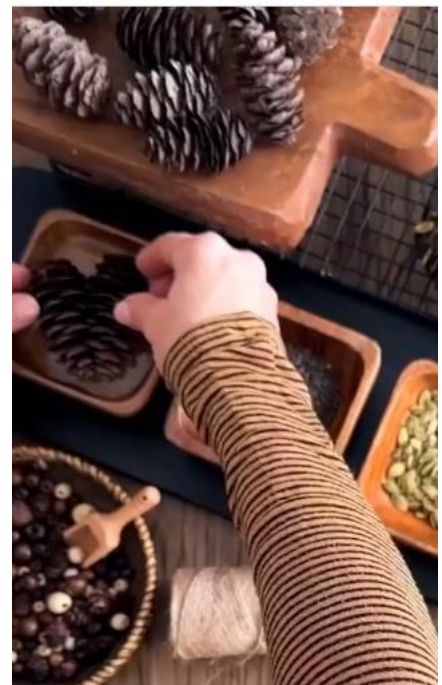


INSTRUCTIONS:



1. Glue two pinecones together to make a heart shape

2. Coat the pinecone heart in the sticking agent





3. Coat the sticky stuff with seeds starting first with the smallest – nyjer, sunflower and then pumpkin seeds
4. Wrap twine around middle 2xs and tie a knot – Leave enough twine ends to add beads and for tying up outside.



5. Slip a couple wooden beads over ends and knot into place



6. Tie ends and it is ready to hang outside for our feathered friends.



Plant of the Month – Dianthus – one of Lucinda Owen’s bulletproof plants

Perennial dianthus is often called Sweet William, due to its spicy fragrance with hints of clove and cinnamon. Related to carnations, but much smaller and more delicate, dianthus plants make a cheerful addition to any garden.

Although some species can get up to 18” tall, most dianthus are usually only about 6” tall and about half as wide, so plant along the edges of borders and beds for best effect.

Flowers are most often pink, white, or variegated, some even with red hues, blooming from spring all the way through fall.

They can take full morning sun but will perform much better if given afternoon shade.

The most challenging aspect may be your soil, as dianthus prefer growing in loosely textured soil with plenty of organic matter.

These delicate looking plants are not as hard to maintain as their appearance might suggest, but you do need to be careful with watering. Dianthus need regular irrigation, but develop disease issues if they remain too wet. Water regularly, especially in the hottest, driest time of summer, but do so only in the morning and try to keep the leaves dry at all times,



Dianthus Overview

Genus Name	Dianthus
Common Name	Dianthus
Additional Common Names	Pinks, Carnation
Plant Type	Annual, Perennial
Light	Part Sun
Height	4 to 36 inches
Width	4 to 24 inches
Flower Color	Pink, Purple, Red, White, Yellow
Foliage Color	Blue/Green, Gray/Silver
Season Features	Late Winter (Houston), Spring Bloom, Summer Bloom
Special Features	Attracts Birds, Cut Flowers, Fragrance, Good for Containers, Low Maintenance
Zones	10, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Propagation	Division, Layering, Seed, Stem Cuttings

The Good the Bad and the Ugly – insects in the garden -

The workshop on 1/25/24 with Jen Rose and her bee saucers and cups as well as Nicole Buerger of Bee2Bee inspired me to read up on bees. Below is simple info or a bit more of an explanation sourced from Texas A and M [Field Guide to Texas Insects](#). Bees are interesting and very much the GOOD!

Bees aren't just for making honey, these insects are among the most lucrative workers in the United States, contributing at least \$15 billion to the economy annually, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture.



Honey Bees (*Apis* spp.)
Family: Apidae, 15-20mm

-  **Nest:** Social, man-made hives or natural cavities
-  **Description:** Medium size, brown body with banding on abdomen, lightly fuzzy, pollen carried in pollen basket on hind legs
-  **Random Fact:** Not native to the United States; brought to North America by European colonists

Texas is home to over 800 types of bees, including the Western Honey Bee. The Western honey bees, also known as European honey bees, are the most common bee found in Texas. These bees are responsible for pollinating many of our crops and plants. They are also the primary source of honey production in the state.

The Following is from Texas A&M's Field guide to Texas Insects.

Life Cycle: Honey bees are social insects. There are three castes of bees: queens, which produce eggs; drones or males, which mate with the queen; and, workers, which are all non-reproducing females. The queen lays eggs singly in hexagonal cells of the comb. Larvae hatch from eggs in 3 to 4 days and are fed by worker bees and develop through several stages (instars) in the cells. Cells are capped by worker bees when the larvae pupate. Queen and drones (that develop from unfertilized eggs) are larger than workers and require enlarged cells to develop. Only one queen is usually present in a hive.

New queens develop in enlarged cells by differential feeding by workers when the existing queen ages or dies or the colony becomes very large. Virgin queens fly on a nuptial flight and are mated by drones from their own colony or other colonies. Queens mate with several drones during the nuptial flight. New colonies are formed when newly mated queens leave the colony with worker bees, a process called "swarming." Swarms of bees are often noticed and sometimes cause concern until they find a suitable nesting location. A queen may live three to five years; drones usually die before winter; and, workers may live for a few months. A colony may typically consist of 20,000 to 90,000 individuals.

Habitat, Food Source(s), Damage: Honey bee workers visit flowers to collect pollen and nectar. During transport to the hive, pollen is held in a structure on each hind leg called the "pollen basket" and nectar is carried in a structure in the front part of the digestive system, called the "honey sac." They return to the hive, where pollen is stored in the cells of the comb within the hive. In other cells ("honeycombs"), nectar is converted into honey when the bee regurgitates the nectar, adding an enzyme (invertase) that facilitates the conversion. Nectar must also be concentrated by evaporation. Worker bees feed the larvae, drones, and queen. Wax is produced between the segments of the worker bees' body wall in small flakes. It is chewed and reshaped to form honey comb. Worker bees communicate with other worker bees, conveying information about the type of nearby nectar source, distance and direction from the hive using "dances." They also regulate the temperature (thermoregulate) in the colony and collect water to use as an evaporative coolant during hot time of the year. Worker bees are generally not aggressive (defensive) during foraging or swarming activities. However, when the hive contains developing larvae and pupae, they (particularly Africanized honey bees) will aggressively attack intruders to defend their colony. They also communicate with sound, queen pheromone and alarm pheromone.

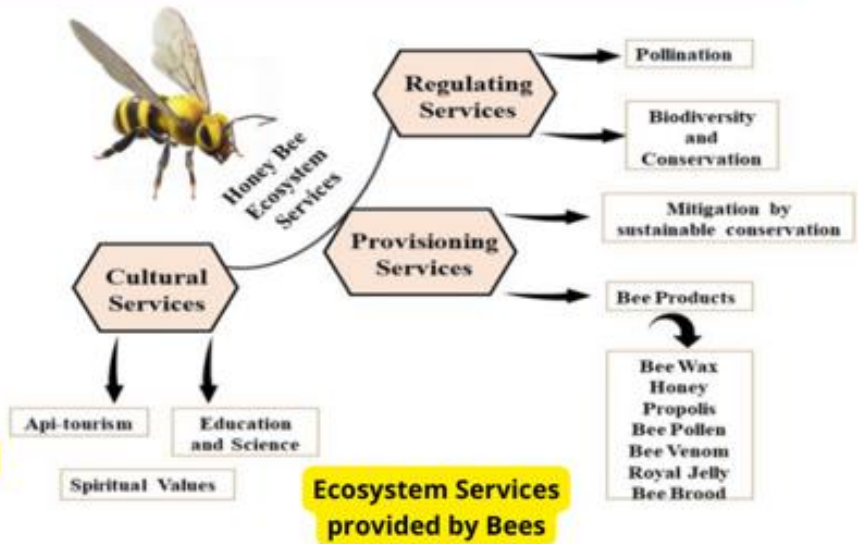
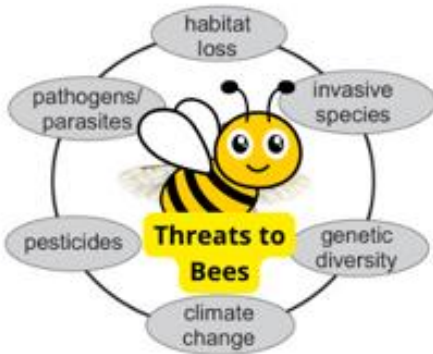
Pest Status: Mostly considered beneficial because they pollinate many fruits, vegetables and ornamental flowers; they produce honey, beeswax, pollen and royal jelly; adult bees can sting, making them a nuisance to man and animals. They are a hazard only to sensitive individuals. Recently the **Africanized honey bee** (sometimes called the "**killer bee**"), a race (some consider it a subspecies) of honey bees has entered Texas; their stings are no more potent than stings of "domesticated" commercially-produced and kept **European honey bees**, which were originally introduced into North America by early European settlers; the Africanized honey bees also tend to be more aggressive in defending their hives and thus are more inclined to sting in mass. Historically in Texas, an average of one human per year dies from insect stings.

<https://texasinsects.tamu.edu/honey-bee/>

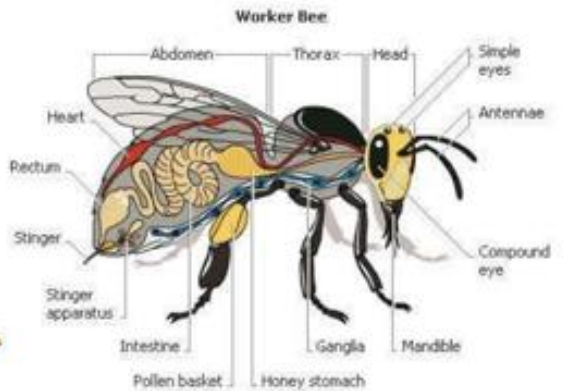
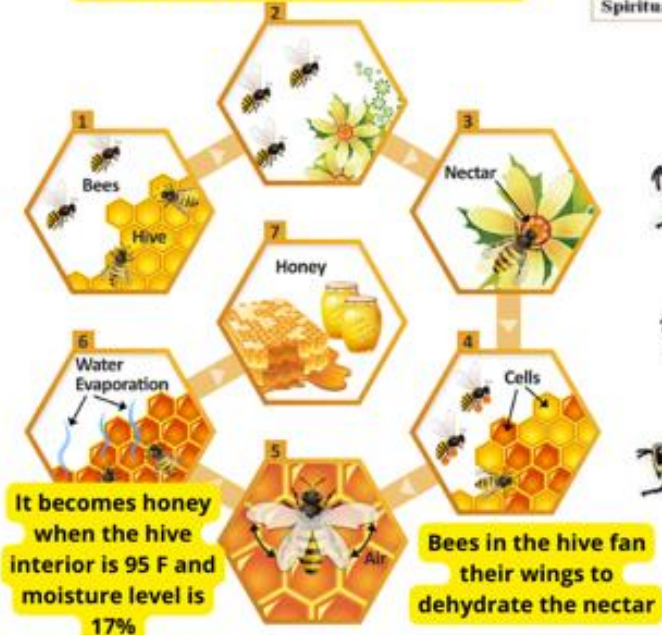
Bees



A report highlighted, that the **biodiversity of the bee population** is essential to preserving the **ecosystem function** of crop pollination, which is crucial to the availability of food for humans



The Journey from Nectar to Honey



Visit Insights IAS Daily CA for detailed News

These Are a Few of My Favorite Things

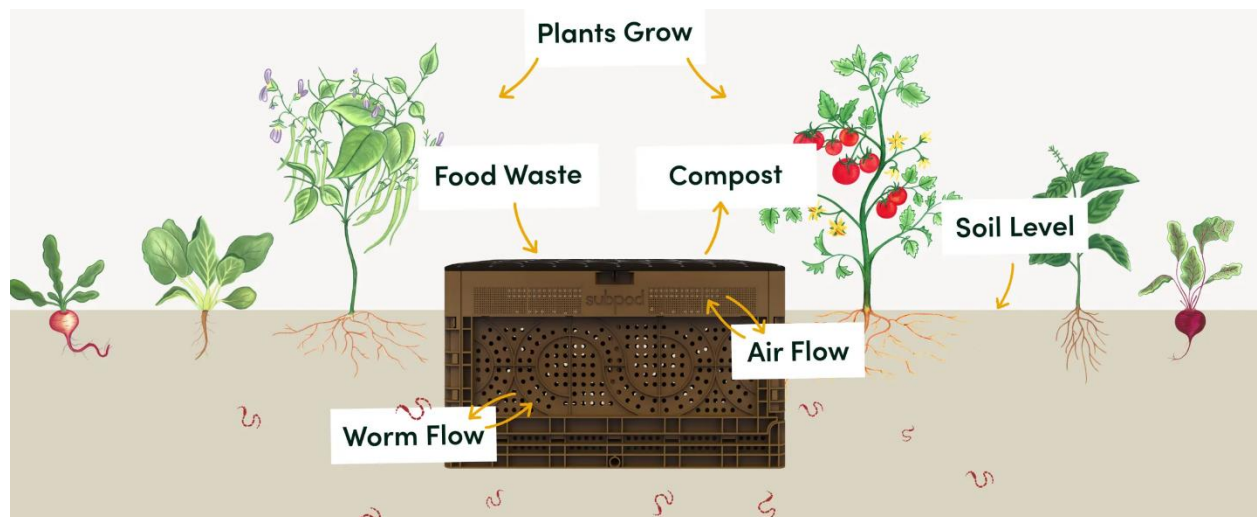
Sarah Vasut explains about her Worm Composting...

Worms!

Worm Composting

My husband and I have tried a few different methods of composting over the years, trying to find something that worked for us. We started with the traditional plastic compost bin that you turn, which was semi-successful, but without the correct moisture balance, it took a long time and only partially composted our lawn clippings and leaves. Our next effort was a soldier fly composting bin. The benefit was that soldier flies are everywhere, will find and lay eggs in your compost, where the hatched larvae will eat anything - you can compost meat, dairy, and other food waste that can't go in traditional composting bins. It worked fairly well, but it smelled bad and became a tub of sludge over time. As I was researching composting I came across the Subpod, a product from a startup in Australia that utilizes worms for composting. We installed the subpod in our herb garden, where it's mostly buried below ground level. It took a bit of digging, but it wasn't too bad. We also ordered worms online (recommended types are Red Wiggler worms and European Night Crawlers), and they came in the mail! The pod has two sections so that you can alternate feeding sides and eventually harvest castings from one side while still feeding the other. There are holes in the bin so that the worms can move freely in and out of the surrounding soil, which not only helps your soil but allows the worms to travel out of the bin when it gets too hot or dry. We put our food waste (mostly veggies and fruit, not meat or dairy) and some cardboard in the pod, but even after the worms filled the pod, they couldn't handle much yard waste, so we purchased a second, unused subpod on MAT. This one came with a galvanized raised bed surround - no digging required! The pod sits in the center and we grow herbs around the edges. So we now have two of the pods functioning and compost as much as we can from our kitchen and some yard waste as well. It takes a while to fill a side and have it composted, we pull out a few gallons of worm castings every 4-6 months, which is a nice side benefit while also not sending as much waste to the landfill.

https://subpod.com/pages/how-does-subpod-work?gclid=CjwKCAiAtt2tBhBDEiwALZuhADQNe-R25cKs-ZUiPPKCsZQTKCGzLNo8aQvJ_gMqJN264wB7yWTcFBoc3mIQAvD_BwE



Some Videos of Note for February:

<https://www.facebook.com/ArborGate/videos/2339815509377256> **Succession Planting**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dynHID-AhY> **How to Prune a Rose Bush**

<https://buchanansplants.com/video/tomato-planting-basics/> **Tomato Planting Basics**

<https://www.facebook.com/ArborGate/videos/501055178261860/?flite=scwspnss&mibextid=Eq0813Yl7RdOGad4> **Mulch**

Some Articles of Note for This Season

Purple Martins Move into Houston's Nesting Boxes for the Winter

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/lifestyle/home-garden/article/purple-martins-live-in-nesting-boxes-18622478.php>

Starting Over in the Garden After the Freeze – Kathy Huber

<https://www.ctpost.com/life/gardening/article/Starting-over-in-the-garden-after-the-freeze-15983170.php>

All About Pruning Roses in Houston – Kathy Huber

<https://www.chron.com/life/gardening/article/All-about-pruning-roses-in-Houston-1540592.php>

Your Houston Garden Needs Native Bees

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/life/gardening/article/Your-Houston-garden-needs-native-bees-15287310.php>



Tomato Tips

Tomato tips from Monarch Gardening Company

<https://www.monarchgardenco.com>

The following is from their Spring Tomato Planting Guide

PLANT AT THE RIGHT TIME

Plant transplants the week of Valentine's Day through mid-May

USE THE RIGHT TRELLISES

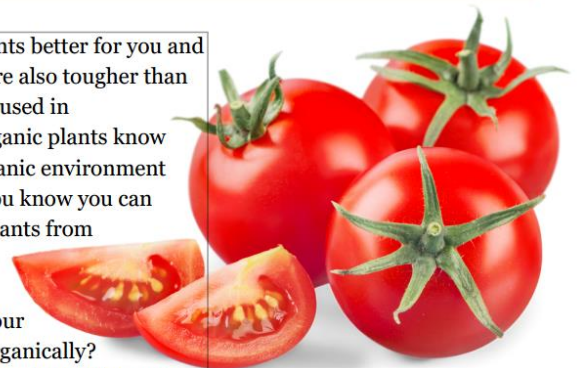
Tomatoes will not naturally climb, but they need to be tied up properly or limbs will break, fruit will rot, and plants are more disease prone. Most tomatoes, even determinate tomatoes (tomatoes that stop growing), need a trellis larger than the typical "tomato cage" you find at most stores. Our obelisks, panels, and arches are all good options that can handle the weight of the fruiting plants the entire season! See our trellis options [Monarch Living!](#)

START WITH FRESH COMPOST

Tomatoes are heavy feeders. This means they need a lot of nutritional support to produce the beautiful fruit we all can't wait to eat! We recommend adding fresh compost to your container or garden boxes before planting spring tomatoes. Need compost? We can help. Visit our [online order form](#).

BUY ORGANIC TOMATO PLANTS

Not only are organic plants better for you and the environment, they are also tougher than plants that have been doused in synthetic fertilizers. Organic plants know how to survive in an organic environment like your garden! Did you know you can purchase your tomato plants from Monarch and we personally know our grower and guarantee your plants are grown fully organically? Visit our [online order form](#) to purchase our favorite tomato varieties.



<https://linktr.ee/monarchgardenco>

PLANT TRANSPLANTS DEEPLY

A tomato stem is full of root buds waiting to spread out in the soil! When the tomato stem contacts the soil, it produces adventitious roots, which are roots that form on the upper part of the plant. More roots lead to more capacity for water and nutrient uptake, and a faster growing/healthier plant. You want more roots! This is why it's best to bury a tomato plant until only a few sets of leaves are showing above the soil! Remove any lower branches before burying the stem. We recommend planting tomato plants as deeply as possible, while leaving enough branches above ground to properly perform photosynthesis.

FOR AVERAGE SIZE PLANT



This line should be the soil level when you plant. Remove all stems below this line before planting



FOR TALL PLANT



For tall or "leggy" plants - position them on their side before burying stem.



Position the tip of the plant upright. Roots will grow all along the buried stem!



FERTILIZE WELL

Tomatoes are heavy feeders, so we always recommend adding amendments to your soil when planting. We like to add blood meal and an organic all-purpose slow-release fertilizer to the bottom of the hole when planting tomatoes. Then one-two times per month we apply a liquid fish emulsion and seaweed spray. These products can be found at MicroLife, our favorite organic fertilizer that happens to be local to Houston! Check out our [Amazon store](#) to purchase exactly what we use to get tomatoes off to a great start!

CONTINUE PRUNING

The first 4-6 weeks, make sure to trim the leaves at the base of the plant along the stem. The goal is to form one stem. As the stem grows, remove the lower leaves along the base of the stem so it's bare for about a foot from the soil. As the plant continues to grow, you'll remove more of the lower leaves along the stem. This increases the airflow around the plant (less disease) and decreases the amount of soil-borne pests from pests climbing onto the lower leaves (they act as an entrance ramp for pests). Follow along on [Instagram](#) where we will keep you posted on how to prune your tomatoes this spring!

TOMATO RECIPES

Did you know we post seasonal recipes regularly on Monarch Living? Find or favorite ways to use tomatoes this spring!



[Easy Weeknight Tomato Basil Pasta](#)

[Nour's Tomato Bruschetta](#)

[Nadine's Lebanese Salad](#)

[Tomato, Basil, and Feta with Crusty Bread](#)

Links:

<https://www.monarchgardenco.com/recipes/hwm73hgpu523pk5nlp4mzth7239odn>

<https://www.monarchgardenco.com/recipes/nours-tomato-bruschetta>

<https://www.monarchgardenco.com/recipes/nadines-lebanese-salad>

<https://www.monarchgardenco.com/recipes/summer-tomato-basil-and-feta-with-crusty-bread>

Some resources from Randy Lemmon Houston gardening guru who passed away on January 4, 2023...

<https://randylemmon.com/lawns/randys-lawn-care-schedule-organic/>

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">RANDY LEMMON'S LAWN FERTILIZATION SCHEDULE</h2> <p style="margin: 0;">Approved for all southern turngresses - St. Augustine, Bermuda and Zoysa</p> </div>												
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
F E R T I L I Z E R		<p>Apply a fast-acting 15-5-10, but NOT a weed-n-feed. Ex: Nitro-Phos Imperial 15-5-10 - Works for 30 days.</p>	<p>Apply optional trace minerals Ex: Azomite, Nature's Way, Soil Mender</p>	<p>Apply slow- or controlled-release fertilizer with a base ratio of 3-1-2 or 4-1-2. Ex: Nitro-Phos Super Turf 19-4-10</p>		<p>Apply slow- or controlled-release fertilizer with a base ratio of 3-1-2 or 4-1-2. Ex: Nitro-Phos Super Turf 19-4-10</p>			<p>Apply optional trace minerals Ex: Azomite, Nature's Way, Soil Mender</p>	<p>Apply fall feeding or winterizer for hardiness. Ex: Nitro-Phos Fall Special 8-12-16. Nitrogen (first number) should be low. Potassium (last number) should be highest.</p>		
F U N G I C I D E							<p>Treat gray leaf spot (blotches on grass blades) using fungicides with active ingredients like Daconil, Consan or Banner.</p>		<p>Control brownpatch with a systemic lawn fungicide containing myclobutanil, Terrachlor, PCNB, Banner or benomyl.</p>			
H E R B I C I D E		<p>Apply a pre-emergent formula containing Barracade, Dimension or pendimethlin as a 2-in-1 control for both broadleaf and grassy weeds.</p>			<p>Apply a pre-emergent formula containing Barracade, Dimension or pendimethlin as a 2-in-1 control for both broadleaf and grassy weeds.</p>					<p>Apply a pre-emergent formula containing Barracade, Dimension or pendimethlin as a 2-in-1 control for both broadleaf and grassy weeds.</p>		

Randy Lemmon's Mulch Ten Commandments

I – Thou must understand that “wood chips” don’t equal mulch – Mulch isn’t shredded wood. Mulch is anything that covers the soil to retain moisture and nutrients and prevent weeds. Wood chips or shredded wooden pallets don’t do this. They actually rob the soil of nutrients as they attempt to break down.

II – Thou must never use wood shavings as mulch – Too often, I get questions about how to use wood shavings or sawdust from a freshly cut tree, woodwork projects or a ground-out stump. Fresh wood starves plants. Wood is high in carbon, and carbon seeks out nitrogen as it breaks down into the soil. Fresh wood shavings will immediately deplete the area of nitrogen, and the plants will start turning yellow as in the picture.

III – Thou must keep mulch away from foundations – It’s extremely important to keep mulch several inches below the point where the house and the foundation come together. Otherwise, insects or moisture can use the mulch as a conduit to weep holes and thereafter enter the house.

IV – Thou shalt not believe charlatans who claim mulch attracts termites – Yes, termites might use mulch near a weep hole as a path in, but just having mulch doesn’t attract termites. This is a crock perpetuated by rubber-mulch purveyors and shady pest-control operators.

V – Thou shalt not make mulch “volcanoes” around trees – In the subdivision where I live, someone recently piled dyed mulch nearly two feet deep around the base of a tree. My head almost exploded! Mulch rings around trees are good, if you use the right kind. But it only needs to be several inches tall at best. (And while I’m on the subject, stop planting flowers in mulch rings.)

VI – Thou must ask one’s self, “Would I let my kids play in this?” – This is sort of a trick commandment. While I wouldn’t recommend wood mulch (with no compost) for landscapes, I think they’re good in playgrounds and on running trails. But as for dyed mulches, just stick your hands in a batch and rub them around. Then, look at your hands and tell me if the residue doesn’t look like ashen soot or dye. Really ... would you let your kids play in that? I know kids don’t usually play in flower and landscape beds, but look what it does to your gloves, hands and clothes when you spread it out!

VII – Thou shalt not be fooled by “good deals” – You get what you pay for! Good mulch is seldom less than \$3 a bag. It’s always more cost effective to buy in bulk quantities. But you’ll see tons of signs and ads that say “Mulch: 5 Bags for \$12!” or “5 Bags for \$10!!” That is almost always wood-chipped mulch or dyed wood-chipped mulch. And nothing good can come from that. A recent offer of three bags for \$10 at a reputable nursery WAS a good deal for great mulch ... but that’s \$3.33 per bag.

VIII – Thou must avoid dyed (unnaturally colored) mulch -always – Most dyed mulches are made from questionable wood supplies, like shredded pallets, and nothing else. Plus, no dye is good for the soil, plain and simple ... even if it is supposedly organic. It’s still dyed, and the dye will leach into the soil – not good for the soil or the plants in the long run. Other ash-infused mulches are just plain caustic. Nitrogen immobilization is what causes all that yellowing in the picture. That’s a result of all the nitrogen being employed to break down the wood mulch. Then, there’s no nitrogen left for the plants to keep their leaves green.

IX – Thou must understand that rubber mulch is the worst – Bet you didn’t think I could slam anything harder than dyed mulch, did you? But let’s defend the use or rubber mulch in a couple areas. I can see the need to recycle old tires. I just don’t want them in my landscape. I have seen rubber mulch used successfully in dog runs, hiking trails and kids’ playgrounds. However, in the landscape, what leaches from rubber mulch is 10 times worse than the leaching from dyed or ash-infused mulches. It introduces dangerous levels of zinc and other harmful chemicals that can kill root systems. Plus it heats up unmercifully in our summers, also killing roots.

X – Thou must believe there is no better mulch than compost – Dyed mulch has become so dang popular along the Gulf Coast because them-there Yankees done moved here from other states. Seriously, people in northern states like Ohio and Pennsylvania are accustomed to darker soils than ours, and I think this may have been their attempt to get a soil shade to offset the colors of their plants. In truth, those northern soils are not really black, just really dark brown. In fact, black does not occur in nature. You can get that dark color by using really good compost as a mulch. And before you complain that weeds will set up in it, there is lots of research that proves otherwise. I’ve seen it for myself, and I love the idea of good compost for mulch, mainly because it’s feeding the soil, feeding the roots and feeding the plants.

So, what mulches can you use? Here are my top five:

1. **Compost** – By far the standard in Houston is Nature’s Way Resources’ Two-Year-Old Leaf Mold Compost. A close second is the vegan compost from The Ground Up, followed by Landscapers Pride compost and Top Shelf Organic Compost.
2. **Shredded and double-shredded hardwood mulches** – They will have a bit of compost in them as well. Nature’s Way, The Ground Up and Landscapers Pride make several varieties.
3. **Mixed (blended) mulch** – These mixes of shredded hardwood and shredded pine bark mulch give you a darker color longer. Landscapers Pride Black Velvet may be the perfect example of this. Nature’s Way Resources and The Ground Up have similar examples.
4. **Texas native mulch** – Anything you can certify as “Texas Native” is good. Nature’s Way has it. And Landscapers Pride sources all their ingredients locally.
5. **Pine straw** – Sounds simple, and there’s usually plenty of it around. It should be used more often, especially around evergreen shrub beds that include such plants as azaleas, gardenias and camellias.

<https://randylemmon.com/mulch/mulch-the-ten-commandments/>

PLANTING TIME!

February

Transplant Veggies	Seeds - Direct Sow	Transplant Herbs
arugula	arugula	chives
artichoke	green beans	cilantro
cabbage	carrot	lemon balm
celery	lettuce	mint
fennel	radish	oregano
kale	sweet pea	parsley
lettuce		rosemary
onion		sage
*peppers	*wait til after last frost	thyme
potato		
spinach		
swiss chard		
*tomatoes		



**GARDEN
GIRLS**

ENCHANTED GARDENS

@ENCHANTEDGARDENSARICHMOND

SPRING SEEDING GUIDE

indoors: ● outdoors: ● Earliest Sowing Date:

- Arugula — mid-February
- Beets — late February
- Cantaloupes - early February
- Carrots — late January
- Chives — early February
- Cilantro — early March
- corn — early March
- cucumber - early February
- Dill — early February
- Green Beans - mid-March
- Lettuce — late January
- Okra — mid-March
- Onions — early February
- Parsley — early February
- Parsnips — mid-February
- Potatoes — late February
- Pumpkins — early March (SOIL JULY FOR MATURE)
- Sweet Potatoes - early February
- Turnips — mid-February
- Watermelon - early February
- Zucchini — early February

	Vegetable Garden Planting Dates for Harris County											
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
ASPARAGUS, Crowns												
BEANS, Lima & Snap Bush												
BEANS, Lima & Snap Pole												
BEETS												
BROCCOLI, Plants												
CABBAGE, Plants												
CAULIFLOWER, Plants												
CARROTS												
CHARD, Swiss												
CHINESE CABBAGE												
COLLARDS												
CORN												
CUCUMBER												
EGGPLANTS, Plants												
KOHLRABI, Plants												
LETTUCE												
MUSKMELON, Cantalope												
MUSTARD												
OKRA												
ONION, Bulb-type sets												
ONION, Transplant for scallions												
ONION, Multipliers												
PARSLEY												
PEAS, English & Snap												
PEAS, Southern												
PEPPER, Plants												
POTATO, Irish												
POTATO, Sweet												
PUMPKIN												
RADISH												
SPINACH												
SQUASH, Summer												
SQUASH, Winter												
TOMATO, Plants												
TURNIP												
WATERMELON												

FACT SHEET
 Texas AgriLife Extension Service
 3033 Bear Creek Dr, Houston, TX 77084
 281.855.5600 • <http://harris-tx.tamu.edu>

On a Lighter Note...

