



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

Save The Date* All our meetings and field trips are on the NFWC calendar

February –

Field Trip – Thursday, February 2nd
Houston Botanic Garden*
***POSTPONED**

Meeting – Thursday, February 16th
NFC clubhouse 1:00
guest speaker- *Elizabeth White - Olsen*
Go Native Landscaping
Butterfly Gardening

Field Trip – Thursday, February 23rd
Buchanan’s Nursery*12:00

March –

Meeting – Thursday, March 9th
NFC Clubhouse 1:00
guest speaker- *John Panzerella*
Panzerella Citrus
Growing Citrus in Houston

Field Trip – Thursday, March 23rd
Enchanted Gardens Nursery 11:30

Garden Happenings this Month–

3 Houston Home & Garden Show
FEB Fri, Feb 3 – Sun, Feb 5
NRG Center, NRG Park, 1 Fannin St
Houston, TX



Class - DIY IRL: Growing Orchids & Companion Plants

IN PERSON - Orchids might seem intimidating, but with the proper know-how, they make excellent house plants. Belonging to a group of organisms named epiphytes, orchids, and other "air plants", grow perched upon other plants rather than rooting in t ([more](#))

<https://tickets.hmns.org/DateSelection.aspx?item=5652>

10611 FM 2759 in Richmond Texas



Saturday, February 11th, 10am

Angela Roth: Herbs We Love

Angela will be demonstrating how to make herbal butters and teas straight from your kitchen garden.



Saturday, February 18th, 10am

Ashley Grubb: Spring Gardening Prep

Ashley, a Texas Certified Nursery & Water Smart Professional, will discuss Spring butterfly gardening, veggie gardening, and bulbs.



Saturday, February 25th, 10am

Mike Serant: All-Organic Lawn Care

Mike, owner and master formulator of MicroLife Organic Fertilizers, will give us a master class in organic lawn care.



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

January 9 – Soil and Food Web

February 13– Spring Vegetable Gardening

March 20 – Benefits of Growing Native Plants

April 10– Tips for Great Lawns

May 8 – Gardening with Less Water

June 12 – Pollinator Gardening

July 10– Fall Vegetable Gardening

August 14 – Exploring Ethnic Vegetables

September 11 – Growing Roses in Texas

October 9 – Trees and Tree Care

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

Harris County Public Library Facebook Live

No reservation required. Watch on Facebook –
facebook.com/harriscountyp/live

Third Tuesday of each month

January 17 – Soil and Food Web

February 21– Spring Vegetable Gardening

March 21 – Benefits of Growing Native Plants

April 18– Tips for Great Lawns

May 16 – Gardening with Less Water

June 20 – Pollinator Gardening

July 18– Fall Vegetable Gardening



Garden to Kitchen – What to do with all your kale?

Do you have some kale growing in your garden? Kale is a winter crop in Houston and is a member of the Brassica family, which also includes veggies like cabbage, broccoli and brussel sprouts. Kale can be planted in pots and makes a nice contrast with pansies, for example. It can be planted in the landscape in winter as a decorative plant that does double duty as an edible plant. And of course kale can be planted in a kitchen garden.

There are many different varieties of kale including curly, Tuscan (also known as lacinato or dinosaur kale), and Redbor. The leaves have an earthy taste and some varieties are slightly bitter. Other varieties such as Tuscan kale have a milder, sweeter flavor. All taste better after exposure to cold weather.

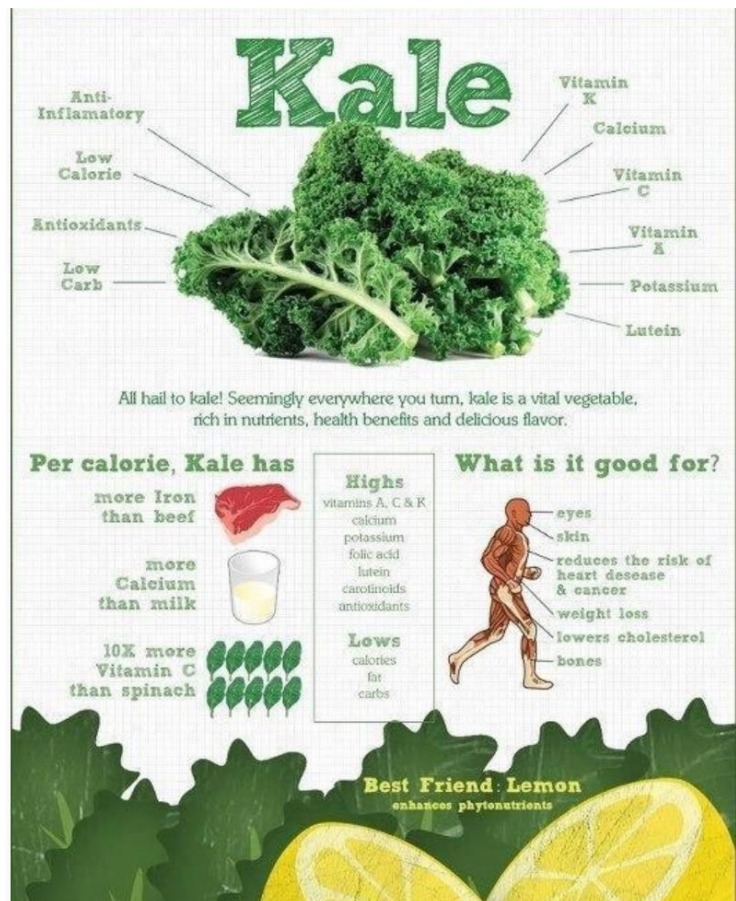
Kale is considered a superfood because it's a great source of vitamins and minerals. It also contains several other compounds that are beneficial for your health.

Kale has very high levels of **Vitamins A, C and K**—one cup of chopped kale provides well more than your recommended daily allowance of these vitamins. It is also a good source of **Vitamin B6, calcium, thiamine, folate, iron** and several other nutrients.

You can read more about kale here:

<https://thefoodiephysician.com/ingredient-911-kale-super-food/>

What can you do if you have a bumper crop right now or you just bought some at the farmer's market? Try out some smoothies from local Rooted Garden and Marica Smart from Smart in the Kitchen!



<https://lifepointacupuncture.com/blog/how-to-eat-kale>



<https://smartinthekitchen.com/2018/03/tropical-green-smoothie/>

Tropical Kale Smoothie

This is one of my favorite green smoothies, it has a clean, crisp, slightly tropical flavor. If you prefer to use your favorite nut milk instead of water or coconut water, that's completely fine. It will slightly change the flavor profile but not by much.

Prep Time
5 mins

Total Time
5 mins

Course: Breakfast or Snack Cuisine: American Servings: 2 small smoothies Calories: 195kcal
Author: Marcia Smart

Ingredients

- 2 kale leaves About 1/2 cup any variety, center stem removed (substitute spinach or chard if you prefer)
- 1 kiwi peeled
- 1/2 banana peeled, frozen or fresh
- 1/4 cup pineapple chunks frozen or fresh
- 1/2 avocado peeled and pitted
- 1 tablespoon hemp hearts
- 1 scoop collagen protein
- 2 cups water or coconut water
- 1/2-1 cup ice

Instructions

1. In a blender or Vitamix, combine all the ingredients. Start with the kale leaves so they are closest to the blade. Blend the smoothie either on the smoothie setting or on medium-high. You may need to stop the blender and stir. Add an additional 1/4-1/2 cup water if the ingredients aren't coming together or more ice if you'd like a slushier consistency.

Nutrition

Calories: 195kcal | Carbohydrates: 22g | Protein: 6g | Fat: 11g | Saturated Fat: 1g | Sodium: 26mg | Potassium: 568mg | Fiber: 6g | Sugar: 10g | Vitamin A: 1282IU | Vitamin C: 73mg | Calcium: 61mg | Iron: 2mg

<https://rootedgarden.com/blog/2022/3/9/create-a-green-smoothie-from-your-houston-garden-with-marcia-smart-of-smart-in-the-kitchen>

<https://smartinthekitchen.com/2022/03/green-garden-smoothie/>



Green Garden Smoothie

A super healthy smoothie that's full of fiber and heart-healthy Omega-3s.

Total Time
5 mins

Course: Breakfast, Breakfast or Snack, Drinks, Snack Cuisine: gluten-free, Healthy, Vegetarian

Keyword: breakfast, gluten-free, greens, kale smoothie, smoothie, Vegetarian, whole30

Servings: 2 smoothies Calories: 234kcal Author: Marcia W. Smart

Equipment

- Blender

Ingredients

- 2-4 cups kale substitute spinach or Swiss chard
- 4 cups water
- 1/2 frozen banana
- 1 cup frozen peach substitute mango, dark cherry, or wild blueberries depending on preference
- 1/4 cup frozen riced cauliflower
- 1/2 avocado
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- 1 tbsp ground flaxseed
- 1 Brazil nut
- squeeze of lemon juice optional

Instructions

1. In your blender, add the greens and then fill the blender with water up to the greens but not over. The water line will stop just under the greens. Purée well to liquify. I start at about a 3 on my Vitamix and slowly increase the speed to the highest level. Blend until completely smooth and no bits of green are left behind.
2. Stop the blender and add all the frozen ingredients, banana, peach and cauliflower. Blend well to combine.
3. Scoop half an avocado into the blender and add chia seeds, ground flax and a Brazil nut. I sometimes like a squeeze of lemon in my smoothie for acidity, about a teaspoon or two. Replace the lid and blend well to combine, making sure the Brazil nut is completely puréed and all the ingredients are combined without any "chunks" left behind.

Notes

If you prefer, you can add a whole frozen banana. Or if you don't have a frozen banana, peel and use a fresh banana and just add a 1/2 cup of ice.

Use a whole avocado if you'd like, but I feel like a half provides the creaminess I'm after!

I love this with frozen wild blueberries, frozen dark cherries, or frozen mango or pineapple.

Adapted from Rooted Garden founder Nicole Burke. Author of Kitchen Garden Revival.

Nutrition

Calories: 234kcal | Carbohydrates: 29g | Protein: 7g | Fat: 13g | Saturated Fat: 2g | Trans Fat: 1g | Sodium: 59mg | Potassium: 925mg | Fiber: 9g | Sugar: 11g | Vitamin A: 7040IU | Vitamin C: 99mg | Calcium: 179mg | Iron: 2mg



This kale blueberry smoothie is nutrient dense and yummy.

Recipe:

1/2 frozen banana (if you don't have frozen, simply add a few pieces of ice before blending).

1-2 cups fresh greens (spinach, kale, swiss chard all work great)

1/2 cup fresh blueberries

1 scoop vanilla protein powder

1 tablespoon ground flax seed (don't get me started on flax seed - it's high in fiber, a hormone regulator, helps lower cholesterol AND blood pressure, and the fat in flax seeds helps with absorption of the kale/greens: hello super food!)

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

After adding the ingredients to a high-speed blender, cover half-way with water.

Blend until smooth. If you like your smoothies really cold, you might want to add ice before blending.

Yay for starting your day with garden goodness, antioxidants, fiber, and protein!



GARDEN CREATIONS

Live Succulent Heart Wreath



MATERIALS:

Sphagnum Wreath Form–

<https://www.supermoss.com/product/living-wreath-heart/>

Variety of succulents – Local stores – Buchanan’s,

Cornelius, Lowe’s, etc.

Online sources - The Succulent Source

<http://www.thesucculentsource.com>

Leaf and Clay

<https://leafandclay.co/collections/succulents>

Succulent Depot

<https://www.succulentsdepot.com/>

Greening pins – available at Michaels or

Online

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09LCXZHQ5?psc=1&ref=ppx_yo2ov_dt_b_product_details

Knife

Scissors

Needle-nosed pliers

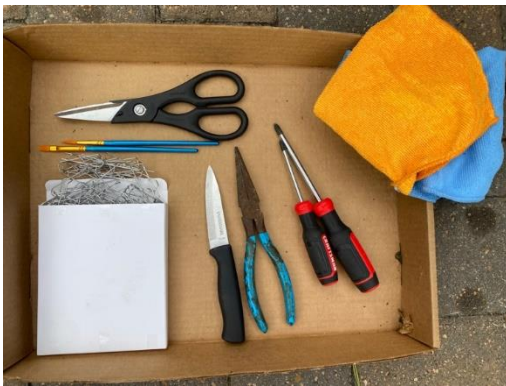
Screwdriver

Paint brush – inserting & brushing off dirt

Rags for cleaning

Box - to use as tray for cutting

Moss – Spanish moss, or other types of moss to finish off at end – can get in bayou, or buy bags of moss at Michaels or online



MAKE IT!

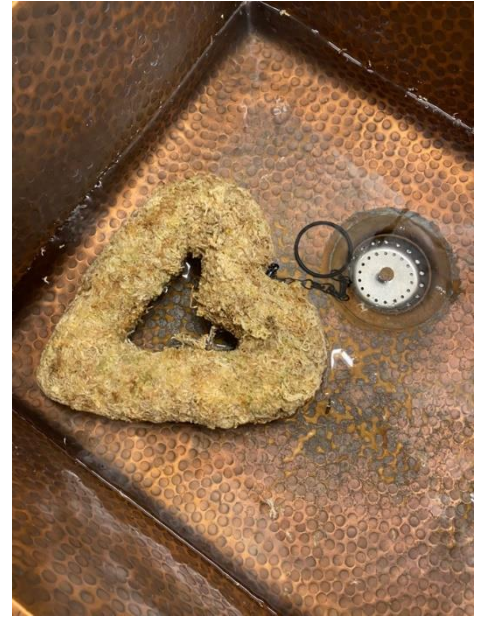
1. Prepare your succulents – need succulents of different sizes and perhaps a couple air plants if desired

Cut succulents – need about ½” of stem – pull off lower leaves – then let cut ends heal and callous over for a couple days before beginning to insert in wreath

Some people like to lay out succulents in form of wreath before beginning to have a sense of how to arrange them in wreath before inserting.

2. Soak wreath form in sink for a couple hours so the sphagnum moss becomes wet. (Can be done overnight.) Can also use the top of a plastic wreath box – this also works after wreath is finished and needs watering.

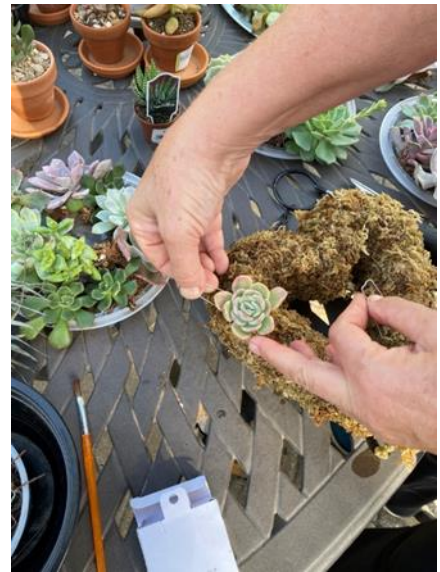
3. Allow the wreath form to drain – needs to allow to stop dripping before making holes.



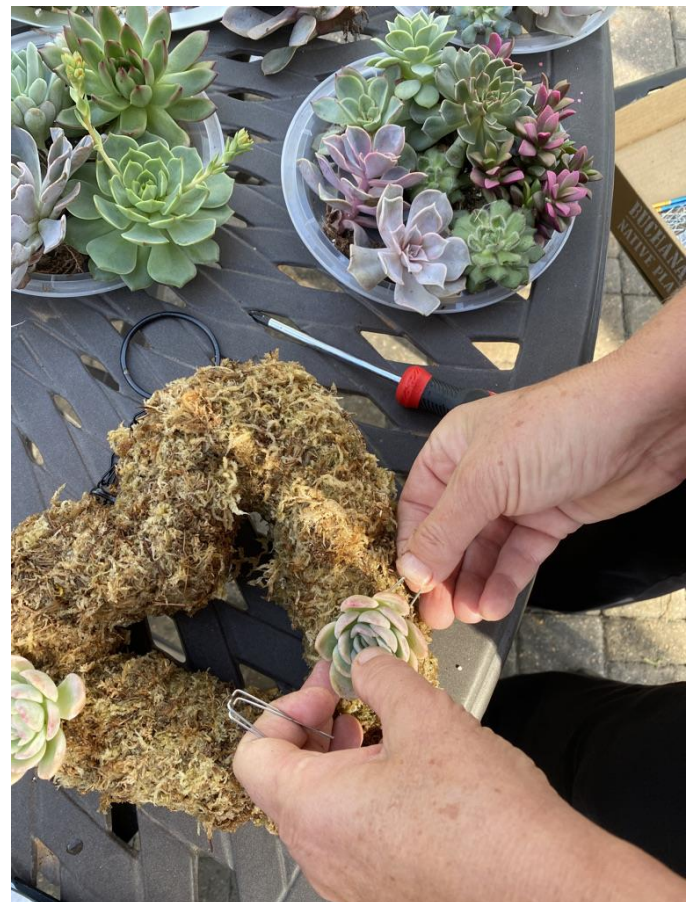
4. After choosing the first succulent, make a hole in the moss with the scissors. If necessary, widen it with screwdriver.



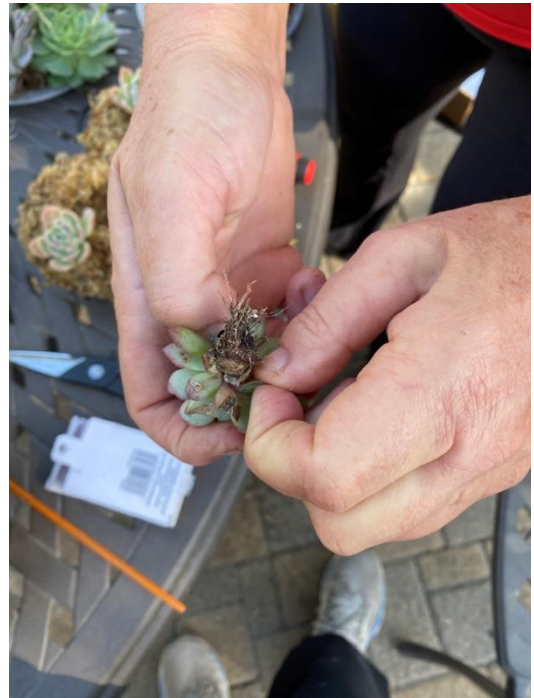
5. Insert succulent into hole. Secure as needed with greening pins.
6. After choosing the next succulent, make another hole and insert the succulent as in step #5.



In this example the first 3 succulents were the same type of echeverias and were “balanced” on 3 sides of the wreath form to “anchor” the design.



7. Continue to make holes and insert succulents. If some of the succulents have roots and no soil, the roots can be trimmed, and lower leaves removed in order to create a good stem for inserting in desired position.

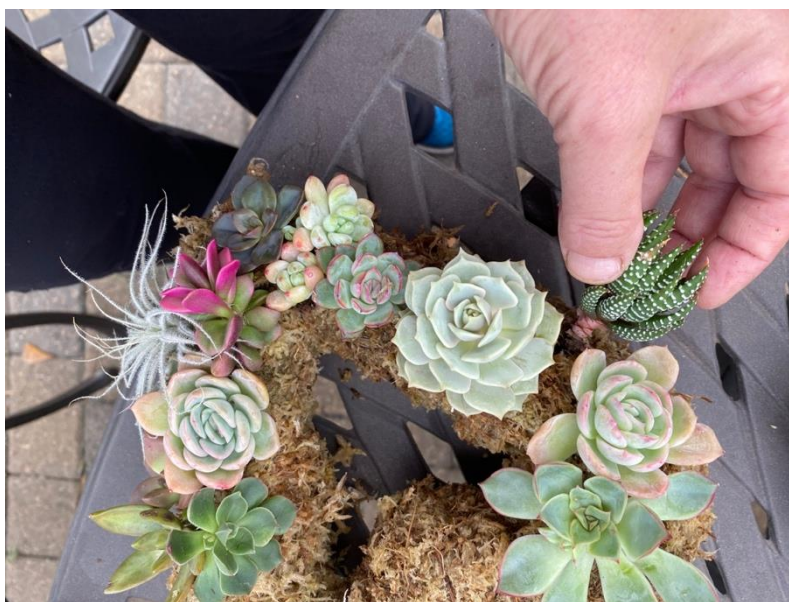
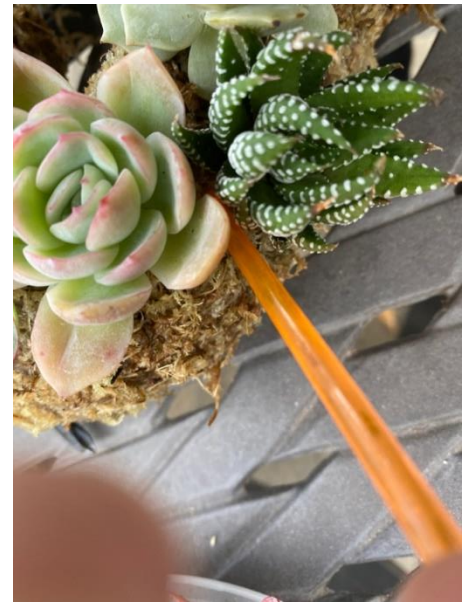


8. Continue process as in previous steps – make sure to step back and check balance of overall design. Succulents of different colors add interest. Try to balance the succulents of different sizes – think about how you want design as you go.
9. At times using needle nose pliers or the end of paintbrush helps get the succulent into the hole. Be sure to use greening pins to secure the plant in place.



10. Adding a Zebra Plant (*Haworthia fasciata*) can add an interesting texture to the overall design.

11. If the succulent is potted, gently pull off soil and trim roots – then stick into prepared hole.



12. Air plants can also add interest to the design.



13. Smaller succulents added to sides helps to make wreath seem "fuller". Succulent cuttings work well for this.

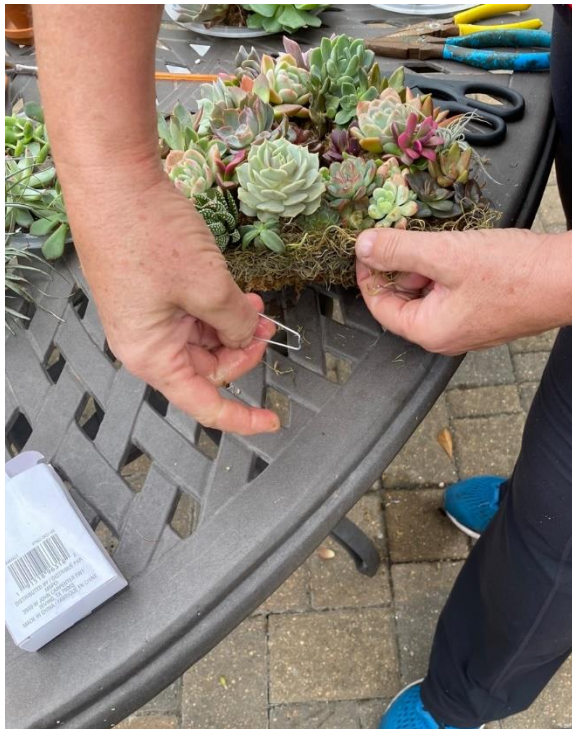


14. Once finished adding plants to wreath – double check that spaces are filled.

15. Then if desired, moss can be added to sides to “soften” the look of the overall wreath.



16. Take a strip of moss and use greenery pins to secure it in place. Repeat as needed.



17. Once finished, lay the wreath flat to “rest” for 4 to 6 weeks before hanging. This gives the succulents time to “root”. If hung right away some of the plants may fall off – need time to “settle in”.
18. Gradually increase amount of light – do not put in direct sun.
19. Water 1x a month – approximately. Frequency depends on amount of light, temperature, etc.

The top of a round plastic wreath storage box works well for this.

Add water to about a half inch up wreath’s side. Let sit 15 minutes roughly. Take out and let drain before rehanging.



Helpful video: https://www.google.com/search?q=succulent+heart+wreath&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&hl=en-us&client=safari#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:7257a62c,vid:gX_BH0W-BFM from *Garden Answer*

Plant of the Month – Mexican Flame Vine— Synonym name (*Senecio confusus*).



Gives the gardener a burst of bright orange color in sunny areas of the garden. Coarsely toothed, fleshy leaves, foliage darkens to burgundy in fall. Bright orange, daisy-like flowers bloom from spring to fall. Sun/light shade, moist, good drainage, root hardy, loves the heat. Need to protect in freezing weather. Easy to grow and propagate, caring for Mexican flame vines is simple. Once you have a Mexican flame flower started in your flower beds, you can easily grow more from cuttings.

- ★ Grows up to 6-12 ft. tall (180-360 cm) and 3-6 ft. wide (90-180 cm).
- ★ Easily grown in **average, moist, well-drained soils** in **full sun**. Tolerates some light shade in hot summer climates. **Drought tolerant.**
- ★ Excellent for **arbors, trellises** and other garden structures. Good for **hanging baskets**.
- ★ Native from Mexico to Honduras.

Pollinator Plus

This nectar plant is a favorite of monarch butterflies, but also attracts bumblebees, **eastern tiger swallowtails**, gulf fritillaries, hairstreaks, honeybees, hummingbirds, julia butterflies, native bees, painted lady butterflies, pipevine swallowtails, skippers, sulphurs, queens, zebra longwings and more...



MonarchButterflyGarden.net

These Are a Few of My Favorite Things

Wendy Houghton explains about her orchids...

Orchids!

I'm definitely not an expert but I'll share a few tips for growing and enjoying blooms for years.

My orchid journey began a few years ago when I had a work mate who could grow and rescue any orchid that came into the office. I decided that year to make "Learn to grow an orchid" my new year's resolution and my office mate was my mentor!

As it turns out they are very easy to grow and will rebloom for years. Here are a few tips I learned from the new year's resolution:

Watering properly is critical. I water my orchids every 7 to 10 days. Most orchids come planted in a plastic pot with a lot of holes. I take the plastic pot to the sink, run a lot of water over the pot and let it run freely through the planting medium and out the bottom. When all of the excess water has drained out I put them back in their decorative container. This method has kept my orchids happy for years.

Bright light is best. Direct light can burn the leaves. Many of my orchids get bright morning light and rebloom annually under these conditions.

Fertilize sparingly. I have never fed my orchids but have read that it can help growth and blooms. I need to try it!



Repot only when necessary. My mentor told me repotting often does not go well. Orchids like to be root-bound and don't like being disturbed. I found out the hard way, tried it and lost an orchid. I do add more orchid potting medium when the pot starts looking a bit empty.

Post bloom care. After the flowers fall off I leave the flower stalk on the plant. If it stays green many times new flowers/stalks grow off this original stalk. If the stalk turns brown and dies I cut it off and wait for a new one to eventually sprout.



Here is a link to Orchids 101 from the American Orchid Society web page

<https://www.aos.org/orchids/orchid-care/orchids-101.aspx>

This page will get you started and the website is full of more detailed orchid info.....enjoy!

Wendy Houghton

Some Videos of Note for February:

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

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

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCx-t5iJgHM> **Succulent Care**

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

Some Articles of Note for This Season

American goldfinches around Houston birdfeeders

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/lifestyle/home-garden/article/American-Goldfinches-17728469.php>

All About Pruning Roses in Houston – Kathy Huber

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

Discovering versatile and resilient camellias - Kathy Huber

<https://www.chron.com/life/article/Discovering-versatile-and-resilient-camellias-2752914.php>

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/>

On a Lighter Note...

You don't need to do all that hard work, Grandad. These days you can get all of your vegetables this way

