

In Season

The Urban Harvest Newsletter

Hope Abounds at Community Garden



The note next to the mailbox at the Helping Hands Garden invites volunteers and visitors to “buzz on in.” Learn how this garden flourishes in Magnolia, Texas. See page 8.

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Spring Fling 2009

Saturday, April 18, 2009, 11:00 am-1:00 pm
Levy Park, 3015 Richmond Avenue at Eastside

This year's Spring Fling will be hosted by the Upper Kirby District Community Garden at Levy Park. Park behind the building and enter the fenced area. Come early and visit the Bayou City Farmers Market located across the street. The market, with emphasis on the community gardens, will be the topic of this year's program.

The annual event allows Houston area community gardeners a chance to come together and share gardening stories. We'll enrich our minds with great conversation and nourish our bodies with a pot-luck feast. All community gardeners, as well as teachers and volunteers in school gardens are invited to this spring celebration. ■



Urban Harvest

*Working with Gardens and Orchards to
Build Healthy Communities*

The Director's Dirt

The spring season is the perfect time to learn some new skills and to make some new friends. Volunteering with Urban Harvest is a great way to broaden your horizons while doing some good and having fun along the way. Consider these outstanding volunteer opportunities.



Community Gardens

Join one of our affiliated neighborhood community gardens so you can benefit from a hands-on learning process while enjoying some great company. Check out our network of community gardens on our website and let us know where you would like to start. Or if you like the idea of helping support the community gardens program in general, join the community gardens committee and help us organize events and activities. Contact Community Gardens Coordinator, Becky Blanton.

School & Youth

Assist any of our school garden instructors that help run our School & Youth Garden Program for enrolled HISD schools. You could be a regular assistant that helps with an instructor's hands-on gardening classes, or be a volunteer that specifically helps with cooking activities or curriculum assistance. Contact School & Youth Program Coordinator, Carol Burton.

Classes

Opportunities include helping organize the classes program as a member of the classes committee, facilitating gardening classes, editing and proofing publications and class listings, posting classes and copying handouts. Regular volunteers with this program are eligible to attend some free classes. Contact Director of Education, Gary Edmondson.

Bayou City Farmers Market

Greet visitors and help operate the Greeters Booth at the Urban Harvest Bayou City Farmers Market. Our market features local farmers who sell veggies, fruit, honey, coffee, tea, meats, baked goods and more. Volunteers are needed from 8:00 am to noon on Saturdays. Contact Farmers Market Manager, Julia Trainer.

Program Support Services

The following activities keep Urban Harvest going, and they represent a great way to get started as a volunteer. Opportunities include answering phones, signing people up for classes, answering gardening questions, managing our garden library, archiving press clippings, attending outreach events and maintaining our office recycling system. Contact Program Services Specialist, Indica Loggins.

To find out more about these and other volunteer opportunities, visit the "get involved" link on our website and then click "volunteer." For additional information about volunteer placement e-mail me, mark@urbanharvest.org. ■

Yours in community gardening,
Mark Bowen, Executive Director



Urban Harvest

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Community Gardens Committee – What Does it Do?

by Debbie Leflar



Urban Harvest has a clearly stated purpose: Working with gardens and orchards to build healthy communities. So how is this accomplished? One of the many ways this happens is through work done by the Community Gardens Committee. The founders of Urban Harvest made up the original committee and taught classes, planned and often built many of the older community gardens in Houston.

Such hands-on assistance is not possible today with almost 100 gardens to support. Instead, the committee is composed of volunteers who act as liaisons who assure the benefits and programs provided by Urban Harvest are well understood by the community and school gardens. Many committee members work in one or more community and school gardens, so a wealth of gardening expertise is available. Other committee resources include event planning, writing, teaching and horticultural therapy.

Each committee member is assigned specific school and community gardens. Support includes maintaining information about the garden: who is the main contact and how to reach them, who are the gardeners, when they work, whether volunteers are needed and what type of garden it is. When a garden chooses to become an “Affiliate Garden”, the committee member assigned to that garden plays a key role in the process.

Irv Robbins said, “I’ve served on this committee for 11 years and have made life-long friends. At first our involvement was merely setting up the Houston Arboretum for the Harvest Celebration, but under the direction of retired ED, Dr. Bob Randall, we became more and more involved.”

The committee orchestrates two popular annual events. The fall Harvest Celebration honors special gardens, volunteers and gardeners with 5, 10, 15 and 20 years of service. The event includes a guest speaker and a potluck lunch. The second event, the Spring Fling, highlights a community or school garden. A guest speaker leads a discussion of gardening topics. This event, held in the featured garden, includes a potluck lunch.

Other committee goals include tracking the numbers of people served and food provided by donation gardens and encouraging development of handicapped-accessible and therapy gardens.

This committee works together, staying in touch with Houston’s community and school gardens to share tips and resource information. “We believe that this contact inspires gardeners and strengthens their community through learning how to grow food together,” said Co-chair, Scott Howard. The Community Gardens Committee meets the second Wednesday of each month and welcomes anyone with a desire to become more involved in communication with and support of community gardens. ■



Committee members, Front row (left to right): Becky Blanton, Mary Sommers Pyne, Garland Kerr, Jean Fejer, VJ Dispensa. Back row (left to right): Irv Robbins, Betty Baer, Miguel Villarreal, Richard Lund, Suzy Shapiro, Carol Smith, Scott Howard, Warren Christian, Debbie Leflar. Not pictured: Terry Garner, Kay Harnden

Growing Communities

Programs: Community Gardens

Harvest Celebration Honors Garden Volunteers

by Scott Howard & Carol Smith

The 2008 Harvest Celebration continued its annual tradition of bringing together Urban Harvest gardeners who volunteer in Community Gardens and Outdoor School Classrooms for fellowship and food. Approximately 120 people attended the annual gathering, which was held at the United Way Center on Saturday, November 8, 2008.

“We hold the Harvest Celebration each year to thank the people who work in community and school gardens,” explained Debbie Leflar, Community Gardens committee co-chair. “These volunteers put in hours and hours of hard work, and this is their day to shine.”

“The celebration was a huge success,” said Scott Howard, committee co-chair. “Everyone had a good time, and it was great to see the gardeners catching up on their news.” Brent Moon, Houston Parks and Recreation Department Urban Garden Manager, was the guest speaker. He highlighted the city’s urban garden plans and accomplishments in the past year.

Following Moon’s presentation, all gathered for the harvest feast. “The potluck lunch is always a big hit,” said Mark Bowen, Executive Director. “Several people were asking for recipes because the food was so good.”

After lunch, the program continued with the presentation of the 2008 major awards by Mark Bowen and Gary Edmondson. The following is the recipient list with a brief description of each major award.



Irv Robbins (left), Founders Award recipient, and Miguel Villarreal at Cedar Brook ES.

Irv Robbins: The Founders Award honors an individual who has made a major contribution to Urban Harvest over many years.

The Turning Point Center Community Garden: The Nutgrass Roots Award recognizes a community garden that has established a thriving garden through persistent efforts over many years.

The Garden Club of Houston: The Community Partner Award acknowledges an enterprise that has significantly contributed to the Urban Harvest mission over the last year.

Barbara Botsford: The Green Jeans Award is presented to an individual who contributed significantly to the horticultural education of youth.

Jean Fefer: The President’s Leadership Award honors an individual who has provided long-term leadership on one or more of the Urban Harvest committees to help achieve the overall vision of the organization. ■



Jean Fefer, recipient of the President’s Leadership Award, in the garden.

Field to Fridge

Programs: Market

Citrus to Soup

by Julia Trainer

The Urban Harvest Bayou City Farmers Market has always been an incubator for backyard gardeners, larger scale farmers and small business owners. This winter, we have had a particularly successful Gardeners Corner, which is a section of the market reserved for the backyard or community gardener with an excess yield of produce.

This winter, our market was overflowing with every kind of citrus when our Citrus Festival was held on December 13th and 20th, with visits from citrus experts Bob Randall and Ray Sher.

In October, our market was visited by CBS's The Early Show. They were telling the story of the Arroyos family who have committed to a year of eating food produced within one hundred miles of Houston. The family shops every week at our market, and the program's producers were interested in studying the locavore movement.

Our market was able to rebound well after Hurricane Ike, and we have added four more vendors. We have also been working with area chefs in expanding the Cook's Corner. Randy Evans, the former executive chef of Brennan's Restaurant, has been a regular volunteer chef at the Cook's Corner. He is a big fan of Arugula Soup and shared with us the recipe he used at our market

Arugula can be grown ten months out of the year in the Houston area. The leaf is most commonly used in salads, although the entire plant is edible. The flowers can be used as a garnish or added to the salad. It is rich in vitamin C and potassium and is beneficial for the digestive tract. ■



Cream of Arugula Soup Serves 2-4

Ingredients

2 tbsp salted butter
2 medium red onions (or 1 large), finely chopped
3 celery stalks, finely chopped
2 whole garlic cloves
4 cup vegetable stock
1 lb arugula, rinsed well with stems removed
1/2 cup of Swede Family Farm goat milk
salt and pepper to taste
Blue Heron goat cheese

- 1. Melt butter in a stockpot over medium heat. Add red onions, celery, and garlic. Simmer until vegetables are soft, about 15 minutes.**
- 2. Add vegetable stock and arugula leaves. Bring pot to a boil, partially cover, and heat until arugula is wilted, about 10 minutes.**
- 3. Add goat milk. Puree soup to desired consistency using an immersion blender or do so in batches with a food processor and then pour it back into the stockpot. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground pepper.**

Optional: Serve garnished with a little arugula leaf, a sprinkle of goat cheese or some pancetta.

Come to a Garden Party

by Susan Reedy

The underwriter letters have been mailed, and tables are being snapped up. On Wednesday, March 11, 2009, Urban Harvest celebrates once again, and this year, The Garden Party honors our own Wendy Kelsey.

As a founding member of Urban Harvest, Wendy has been with us every step of the way and her quiet dedication has helped shape all that we do. So make your reservation now and join us at the Houstonian Hotel for

seasonal delicacies from local market farms, a lively auction and a raffle you won't want to miss. Be on the look out for your invitation or contact Callie Hastings at the office 713/880-5540 or callie@urbanharvest.org. ■

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The construction of a new nonprofit — *As Urban Harvest's first employee, Wendy Kelsey cleared the way for a community garden explosion throughout our Greater Gulf Coast region. She convinced funding organizations that community gardens not only served to feed the hungry, but they could also be used as outdoor classrooms, to transform neglected urban lots into vibrant community centers, to empower the elderly and disabled, to provide locally grown foods to green markets and supplemental income to area gardeners. Anyone working for a new nonprofit must wear many hats, and Wendy wore them all; including, at times, the one that went with the boots, gloves and kneepads.*



Hope Abounds at Helping Hands Garden

by **Becky Blanton**

Last month I found myself making a trip to Magnolia to visit the Helping Hands Community Garden and had no idea what a wonderful place I was about to encounter. I met with Judy Rose the director of the garden. She is a very focused and wonderful woman who has tirelessly dedicated herself to helping mitigate hunger in her area. She has inspired the surrounding community and businesses to support the Helping Hands Garden in a myriad of amazing and moving ways. She does it all — planting, weeding, harvesting and fundraising. I don't think a moment goes by that Judy Rose is not thinking about or working in her garden.

The History

Living in Nigeria in the 1970s, Judy saw so much need, which brought the issue of hunger to the surface for her. Years later, after her daughter was diagnosed with complications of an eating disorder, Judy was inspired to address hunger locally. She started a search for idle land to start a garden. Her hope was to use her gardening skills to aid those who were hungry and wished to eat.

The first location for the Helping Hands Garden was in the Tomball Museum district, in March of 2000. Later the garden was

moved to the property of Mrs. Ella Louise Hill in Rosehill. The garden remained in Rosehill until the fall of 2002 when they were granted land for a permanent home for the garden at the West Montgomery County Community Development Center (known as “the CDC”) on Friendship drive. The birth of the Garden in Magnolia came just weeks after Judy's daughter's death from complications of Anorexia. Helping Hands Community Garden has grown beautifully in its permanent home and continues to be a beautiful and productive garden.

The Volunteers

During my visit in early November I didn't get a chance to meet any of the gardeners, but as Judy and I walked the garden I did hear a few stories. Many of the gardeners are from fami-

lies who come to the West Montgomery County CDC for services. The center houses a food bank, Meals-on-Wheels, Society of Samaritans community assistance, Friendship Center seniors program and is a place for many other activities.

Many of the families who come to the West Montgomery County CDC for assistance spend hours there. While there they come into Helping Hands Community Garden and spend time viewing or helping in the garden. These family always go home with whatever is ready in the garden—an added incentive to return. There are also a number of families from the surrounding community who volunteer at the Garden.

Helping Hands Community Garden also welcomes students doing commu-





nity service hours for school or college applications, Eagle Scouts completing projects and individuals completing judgment hours. Each person brings different skills and perspectives to the garden. I was delighted to see the bits of art and sculpture scattered through out the garden. Everything from a creatively used tractor seat that became a permanent seat to rest a weary gardener right in the middle of the herb bed, to charming bird houses and bricks painted with gardener names and decorated to reflect different personalities.

This is a multigenerational garden and with the continued support of families, students, scouts, seniors and many others, the Helping Hands Community Garden will be around to serve the needs of the community for many generations to come.

The Donations

As Judy showed me around the garden and pointed out different things, I

heard her say over and over again “and this was donated by ...”. They benefited from donations of everything, bricks to make a path, a leftover fiberglass culvert to make two raised beds, paint for a shed and chairs for gardeners to rest. They have relied on donations for most of their needs.

Judy shared with me that she prefers people donate items for use in the garden rather than funds. Recently an exception was made to this policy when an elderly supporter of the garden inherited a small amount of money and insisted on making a contribution to the garden. Judy brought the unopened envelope to a meeting of the Garden Board. When they all saw what this woman had given to the garden, it was quite an emotional moment because everyone knew that even though she didn’t have much and really could have used the money for herself, she chose to support this garden and the work that they had done there.

Coming Up

Every year Helping Hands Garden holds their Mega Sale, this year it is the first weekend in April. It is a huge garage sale with donations from supporters in three counties — furniture, bikes, clothing, books, plants, toys, videos, craft items, glassware, household items — you name it. The proceeds this year will go to purchase and install the rainwater collection system and drip irrigation the garden needs to go “green” and to be better stewards of their resources.

The Mega Sale will be held on April 3 and 4, 2009 at The Old Magnolia Community Center, 422 Melton, Magnolia, Texas. The hours are 8:00am – 5:00pm. On April 2, donated items can be dropped off for Helping Hands Garden Mega Sale from 2:00 – 7:00pm at this same location. They can also be brought to the sale anytime April 3, or in the morning hours of Saturday, April 4. If you have questions please e-mail Judy at helpinghandsgarden@sbcglobal.net. ■



Spring Classes

Programs: Education

Classes are held at 2311 Canal Street (unless otherwise noted); visit our website for directions. Please register at least three business days before the class by calling 713/880-5540. We accept walk-ins unless the class is full.

HOW TO START A GARDEN SERIES

Over 100 gardens are growing throughout our area at schools, places of worship, parks and on vacant lots. In this series, learn how to start a community or school garden.

Class 1: Getting Started — Explore goals for your garden, begin organizing volunteers and looking for funding.

Class 2: Design — Learn the criteria needed to choose a site, design the garden and develop a budget.

Class 3: Implementation — Review and modify the design and budget. Learn layout and construction procedures.

Bring a few volunteers with you to the first class to see if they would like to learn more. Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credit is available.

Instructors: Gary Edmondson and Becky Blanton

Class 1: Getting Started

Monday, March 2, 4:15–6:45 pm

Monday, May 4, 2:00–4:30 pm

Free Class

Class 2: Design

Wednesday, March 11, 4:15–6:45 pm

Wednesday, May 13, 2:00–4:30 pm

\$20 members, \$30 non-members

Class 3: Implementation

Wednesday, March 25, 4:15–6:45 pm

Wednesday, May 27, 2:00–4:30 pm

\$20 members, \$30 non-members

If you would like this series to be taught at your site, call Mark Bowen (713/880-5540). A minimum of ten people are needed, and must be scheduled a month in advance.

INTRODUCTION TO PERMACULTURE

Permaculture is an advanced design concept for creating gardens, landscapes, farms and ecosystems. It also helps design sustainable buildings and societies that prosper for centuries while minimizing energy and materials use. This class is a prerequisite for all other permaculture classes.

Instructors: Shawn McFarland and Cas Van Woerden

Tuesday, March 24, 6:30–9:30pm

\$10 all students

Pre-registration is required.

PERMACULTURE BASICS

This class examines permaculture concepts and principles that will help you design sustainable landscapes. This is one of a six-class permaculture series that leads to a permaculture designer's certificate. It is a natural follow-up to the introduction and is a prerequisite for the other four courses to follow. CPE credit is available.

Instructors: The Permaculture Guild Of Houston

Sunday, March 29, 9:30a m–5:00pm

Please bring a sack lunch.

\$80 all students

RESTORING NATURE

The first session of this class focuses on the components of nature and the local bioregional organizations that work to support them. Our second class examines some of the threats to our ecosystems, goes over the basic ideas of ecology and how to observe nature. The last session will be devoted to hands-on restoring of a habitat feature. This classes is open to anyone who has completed An Introduction to Permaculture and Basics of Permaculture. CPE credit is available.

Instructors: The Permaculture Guild of Houston

Saturday, April 4, 9:30 am–5:00 pm

Sunday, April 5, 10:00 am–5:00 pm location TBA

Sunday, April 19, 9:30 am–5:00 pm location TBA

\$140 members, \$211 nonmembers.

Bring a sack lunch to each of these sessions.



PERMACULTURE: DESIGNERS CERTIFICATE TUTORIAL & GRADUATION

This tutorial is for students who have completed the five permaculture classes. Students will work on their own with guidance from one or more permaculture graduates to

prepare a design of a permaculture project on a topic of the students' choosing. Students meet on April 28th to discuss the progress. In late May or early June, students will present their design to the Permaculture Guild of Houston and receive a Permaculture Design Certificate.

Instructors: The Permaculture Guild of Houston

Tuesday, April 28, 6:30–9:00 pm, location TBA
Sunday from 10:00 am–3:00 pm in late May or early June, location and date TBA
\$50 members, \$75 nonmembers, price includes lunch on Sunday

HOME FRUIT & VEGETABLE GARDENING

This class is for anyone who wants to build a vegetable or fruit garden at their home. Each step of the process, from choosing a site for your vegetables and fruits to building a garden, will be discussed. Choosing soil, an irrigation system, building materials and tools are all part of this class.

Instructor: Gary Edmondson

Thursday, February 19, 6:30–9:30pm
Thursday, April 16, 6:30–9:30pm
\$20 members, \$30 non-members

PLANNING THE SPRING & SUMMER GARDEN

Experienced gardeners know that a great spring and summer garden begins in the winter. Learn what varieties to plant and when, soil prep, seed germination and transplanting. This class will cover the types and varieties of vegetables that can be planted in late spring through summer.

Instructors: Diana Liga & Ray Sher

Tuesday, February 24, 6:30–9:00pm
\$20 members, \$30 non-members

FRUIT TREE CARE

If you bought fruit trees this past winter, it is a perfect time to learn about their care. This class will dispel the myth that fruit trees require too much work for the average home gardener. Whether you have already planted all of your fruit trees or are just getting started, this class has something for you. CPE credit is available.

Instructors: Gary Edmondson & Ray Sher

Tuesday, March 3, 6:30–9:00pm
\$20 members, \$30 non-members

SELLING AT A FARMERS MARKET

Selling at local farmers markets is one of the easiest ways to get a big return for your labor. This class provides basic information on the techniques of market gardening. Pre-registration by the preceding Thursday is required.

Instructors: Jim Bundscho, Gita Van Woerden & Ray Sher

Monday, February 23, 4:00–6:00pm (Bundscho)
Monday, March 23, 4:00–6:00pm (Van Woerden)

Monday, April 27, 4:00–6:00pm (Sher)
Monday, May 25, 4:00–6:00pm (Bundscho)
\$20 members, \$30 non-members

CONTAINER PROPOGATION

Learn the various ways to start plants from seeds, cuttings, divisions and layering. Topics include the proper storage of seeds, seed dormancy and methods of sprouting hard-to-sprout seeds. This class includes a hands-on propagation by cuttings. Bring a pair of small pruning shears. Other materials will be provided.

Instructor: Jean Fefer

Saturday, March 7, 9:30am–12:30pm
\$20 members, \$30 non-members



NEW! PRESERVING FRUITS & VEGETABLES

Anyone who has grown vegetables and/or fruit trees is often faced with more produce than can be eaten fresh. The choice is to give the excess to neighbors and friends, donate it to a food pantry, compost it or preserve it for later use. This two part class will teach methods of preserving food safely.

Section 1: Drying

We will learn different dehydrating techniques using fruits and vegetables available throughout the year in the Gulf Coast Region. We will taste veggies made into pates and then dehydrated into crackers. Join us as we learn new ways to play with our food.

Instructor: Pat Greer

Thursday, April 30, 6:30 pm–9:00 pm
\$20 members, \$30 non-members

Section 2: Canning

This class will cover the vegetables and fruits that are best for freezing and canning. It will review the equipment needed for canning and freezing and various techniques and procedures that are used for safely preserving foods.

Instructor: Nancy Edwards

Thursday, May 14, 6:30 pm– 9:00 pm
\$20 members, \$30 non-members

Sharpen Your Shovels

Programs: Schools & Youth

Landscape–Mindcape Connection

by Dilafruz Williams, Ph.D.
Professor, Portland State University
Chair, School Board, Portland, Oregon

I am an advocate, an activist, a policy-maker, a researcher and a garden educator. I educate and train school teachers and administrators. I firmly believe that school gardens are fertile educational soils where not only can seeds of learning be sown, but they can be nurtured and nourished, no matter what the age of the child or youth, or for that matter, even the adult.

Our research in Portland shows that students, who are engaged in garden-based learning, are motivated academically and their enthusiasm transfers to their overall educational experience in school. With recent national concerns over obesity and health issues, it is particularly critical to connect students to their bodies via food. Large proportions of poor and/or minority children are educated in urban school districts, hence, the significance of school gardens in these schools cannot be underestimated.

I was privileged to connect with Carol Burton, School and Youth Garden Coordinator, at Urban Harvest. She proudly took me on a field trip to various school gardens in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) where I was to discover strong partnerships that schools have with Urban Harvest!

We visited Peck, MacArthur, Garden Oaks, Travis and Browning Elementary Schools. In these gardens I saw beds of diverse shapes and sizes bearing endless possibilities for community partnerships, life-long learning and

life-sustaining inquiry. I was fascinated to see ponds, raised food beds, native plant beds, orchards, bridges, art work, murals and thriving wildlife that delight the mind and the spirit. The schools were “alive” -- literally and metaphorically. Urban Harvest’s magic has visibly impacted the school landscape and its occupants.

It was especially wonderful to watch students learning to grow food, create beds for fresh plantings, clean garden tools after using them and play outdoors. At Browning Elementary school, a special plaque acknowledged their teacher, Thelma Graves, for starting the garden which is now an incredible habitat. The teacher was a humble harbinger who motivated students through hands-on learning in the garden.

At Garden Oaks, the teachers and principal, Lindsey Pollock, shared their joy of integrating garden curriculum in the classroom. According to one teacher, his students had initiated, planned and planted the garden outside the classroom. More importantly, students were seated quietly in the garden absorbing and writing. I have seen this over and over again in Portland schools with gardens. Students connect with plants, take care of them and explore their stories. Some of the

finest student writing and art work emerges in the garden.

A recent hurricane which had downed trees in the schoolyard did not deter Urban Harvest from supporting the school community to re-create their gardens. As one parent proudly took me around, the human genius was indeed evident: a catastrophe was turned into an educational experience. Tree stumps now formed seats and new trees were being planted.

“Knowledge of a place — where you are and where you come from — is intertwined with knowledge of who you are. Landscape, in other words, shapes mindscape,” explains David Orr. As urban educators, parents and communities, we have a golden opportunity to design, shape and develop school gardens even as we undertake the next wave of school facilities construction. Boston, San Francisco, Chicago, Houston and Portland are all connected in their successful partnerships for what I consider to be learning gardens. I look forward to re-visiting Urban Harvest at HISD schools. Perhaps we can generate common research ideas with school teachers and principals, since urban schools are particularly suited for the silent democratic milieu that school gardens have been creating. ■



Pamela Kletke teaches students about irrigation at Peck Elementary.

Green Advice

Programs: Education

I'm a "Mulchaholic"

by Gary Edmondson

By spring we need to begin protecting our plants from the summer heat and we can accomplish that by mulching. I am a bit of an obsessive mulcher. I look out in the fall and winter at all of the leaves fallen from the trees, jump in my truck and drive the streets around my house and pick up bags of leaves.

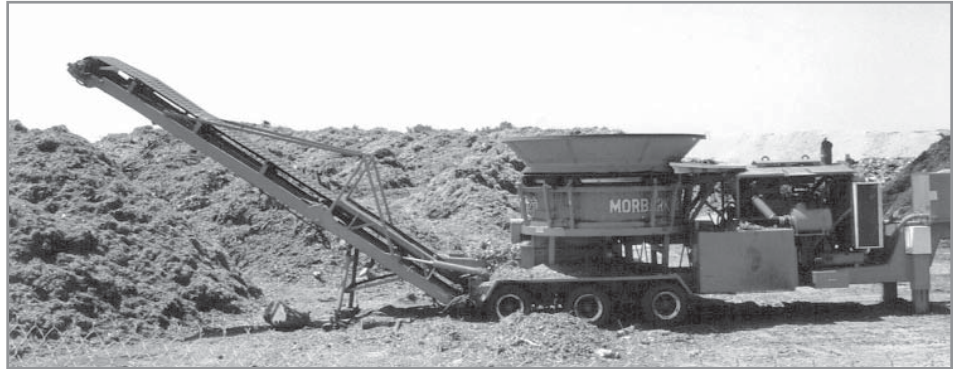
I spread the leaves as mulch under my larger plants in my ornamental beds, under my fruit trees and in the paths of my vegetable garden. Neighbors who know I collect leaves drop off their leaves at my house. This is valuable material and it's free for those of us willing to take a little effort to make good use of it!

Why bother mulching? Nature is naturally mulching all the time. Walk into a forest and you find a layer of decomposing matter that is becoming soil. Mulched soil requires less water, keeps the soil around our plants cool and adds valuable organic nutrients to the soil.

I am selective about what I use in the garden. Leaves and pine needles work for fruits and large ornamentals most



The backyard way of making mulch.



The commercial way of making mulch.



any time of the year, but I do not pick up leaves that contain acorns or other seeds. I also avoid pecan leaves which have high tannic acid, a growth deterrent if used in high concentrations. I also refrain from mulching where I have reseeding annuals such as wild flowers until the plants are large enough and then I mulch beneath them. I generally put on a layer of about six inches of leaves.

I mulch my vegetable beds, but I do not use leaves. Vegetables are heavy nitrogen feeders and leaves in the decomposition process consume nitrogen. Alfalfa hay is excellent mulch, but it is more expensive than partially decomposed native mulch, which is also good to use under vegetables.

Natures Way Resources has high quality native mulch and I have also been using the native mulches available

from Cowboy Trucking. I mulch vegetables when the plants are at least four inches high and I use about a three inch layer. However, you can not place mulch on beds that have been seeded, for this prevents the seeds from coming up. And it is best not to plant seed in mulch. ■



Nature's way of making compost mulch.

Spring Planting Guide

	March	April	May
Average Temperatures	Hi 73 - Lo 51	Hi 79 - Lo 58	Hi 86 - Lo 66
arugula (roquet), seed	1-31	1-30	1-31
basil, seed		*1-30	*1-31
bean, adzuki, seed	*1-7		
bean, asparagus or yard long bean, seed	15-31	1-14, *15-30	1-15
bean, lima (butterpea), seed	15-31	1-14, *15-30	*1-14, 15-31
beans, bush snap, seed	1-14,*15-31	*1-14, 15-21	
beans, pole snap, seed	1-14,*15-31	*1-7	
bitter melon, seed		*15-30	*1-15
cantaloupe, seed/plant	15-21, *22-31	*1-14, 15-21	
chayote/mirliton, fruit	*1-31	1-30	
chicory (escarole), seed	*1-14, 15-31		
chile, plant	*15-31	1-30	
claytonia, seed	*1-14, 15-31		
corn seed/sprouts	1-7, *8-31	1-30	
corn, supersweet, seed/sprout	1-15	1-14, *15-30	
cress & watercress, seed			15-28
cucumber, burpless, seed	15-31	*1-30	*1-31
cucuzi/Italian squash, opo seed			*1-31
cumin/comino, seed		*1-30	
eggplant, plant & egusi melon, seed		8-21, *22-30	*1-14, 15-31
endive, seed	*1-14, 15-31		
fenugreek, seed	1-31	*1-30	*1-28
fruits: container grown	1-31	1-30	
fruit: tropical	*15-31	1-30	
gai lan/Chinese broccoli seed	1-7		
garlic chives, plant	*1-31	*1-30	*1-14, 15-31
ginger & turmeric root	inside	1-14, *15-30	*1-31
gourds, (luffa, bottle gourd, etc.), seed		*15-30	*1-31
horseradish, root	1-31		
Jerusalem artichoke, tuber		*1-30	1-31
lemon grass, plant	15-31	*1-30	1-31
lemon verbena, plant	15-31	*1-30	
lettuce, seed	*1-31	sierra 1-30	

Spring Planting Guide

	March	April	May
Average Temperatures	H_i 73 - Lo 51	H_i 79 - Lo 58	H_i 86 - Lo 66
mache (corn salad), seed	*1-31		
melon, seed/plant	15-21, *22-31	*1-14, 15-21	
millet, seed	*1-31	1-30	
mint, plants	1-31	1-30	
mizuna and mibuna, seed (row cover)	1-31	1-30	
mustard, seed (row cover)	*1-31		
nasturtium (edible flower)	1-31	1-30	
okra, seed		8-21,*22-30	*1-14, 15-31
onion, multiplying bulbs	1-15		
oregano, plant	1-31	1-30	
peanut & goober pea, seed		*1-30	1-31
pea, pigeon (red dal) seed			*1-31
pea, southern, seed		15-30	*1-31
pepper, plant	*15-31	1-30	1-31
perilla (shiso), seed/plant	15-21,*22-31	*1-14, 15-30	
rape leaf (quick collard), red radish, seed	1-14		
rice, seed	1-14	*1-30	plant *1-31
roselle/Jamaican sorrel & false roselle,	1-31	plant *22-30	
rosemary, plant	*1-31	1-30	
spinach, Asiam & Malabar, seed/plant		1-30	
squash, seed	*15-31	1-7	
summer savory		*1-30	
sweet potato & bonaito, sets	inside	inside, 15-30	*1-31
sweet sorghum, seed	*1-31	*1-30	1-31
sunflower	*1-31	*1-30	
tapioca (yuca, casava) stem		15-30	*1-31
taro & malanga, tuber	inside	15-21, *22-30	*1-31
thyme, plant	*1-31		
tomato, pl.-north of FM 1960/west of 6	8-14,*15-31		
tomato, plant – Montrose/3rd Ward	1-14		
tomato, plant – other locations	*1-7, 8-14		
watermelon, seed/plant	*15-31		
winter melon, seed		15-30	*1-31

* ideal time to plant, ? questionable time to plant



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The Urban Harvest newsletter, *In Season*, is generously underwritten in memory of Jake Hershey who believed strongly that environmental education and knowledge are key to a better life for all.



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Rice University Scores for Fruit Tree Sale

Touchdown! Thanks to Rice University, the 9th Annual Urban Harvest Fruit Tree Sale was a blowout victory. There were no fumbles on Saturday, January 17, as the spacious university stadium concourse allowed ample room to huddle while talking to experts about the assortment of fruits for sale and plenty of room to pass while shopping for trees.

The January weather was crisp and clear and the covered venue gave shoppers the sense of strolling through a fruit tree emporium. The 2000-car parking lot looked like one outside a Super Bowl Stadium on game day. Over 6000 trees and berries were sold, making it a successful season for Urban Harvest and Gulf Coast gardens that will soon be bearing bushels of fruit.

Thanks Rice — Go Owls! ■

