

# Home Grown Newsletter

## October 2020 Issue

### Attracting Beneficial Insects to Your Garden

By Paul Winski, Harris County Extension Agent, Horticulture

Every year gardeners lose numerous plants to insect pests. However, there are practices a gardener can employ to decrease pest pressure. Nature has natural enemies and their diet consists of the pests that ravage your tomatoes, cucumbers and begonias.

Start with good horticultural practices in your garden. Prepare the planting site properly. Start with healthy plants. A stressed plant is a vulnerable plant so maintain the proper moisture and fertility. Use mulch to conserve water, reduce the weed population and to help the soil.

A diversified planting will also help to attract not only beneficial insects but also butterflies. Finding the right balance of plant material is important for a successful garden. In order to attract beneficials you need to have flowers available to keep them happy. They provide carbohydrates and protein to the beneficial insects when pest populations are low. The flowers supply nectar, which contains carbohydrates, and pollen which is a source of protein. The foliage on the plants provides protection from heat, rain and other insects. Many annuals and perennials are good attractors. See the list below of some annuals and perennials, there are many others that will also attract beneficials.

#### In This Issue:

- Attracting Beneficial Insects to Your Garden  
Page 1 & 2
- Prime, Choice, Select Grades...What Does It All Mean?  
Page 3 & 4
- Upcoming Classes  
Page 5
- Contacts & Links  
Page 6

(continued on page 2)

# Attracting Beneficial Insects to Your Garden

By Paul Winski, Harris County Extension Agent, Horticulture

Annuals	Perennials
Sunflower	<i>Coreopsis</i>
<i>Verbena</i>	<i>Echinacea</i>
<i>Lobularia</i> or <i>Alyssum</i>	<i>Gaillardia</i>
Marigold	<i>Rudbeckia</i>
<i>Zinnia</i>	<i>Salvia</i>



***Sunflowers are an excellent attractor of beneficial insects.***

Most beneficial insects fall into one of two categories, predators and parasitoids. A predator attacks, kills and feeds on its prey. In most cases, predators are generalists and will attack multiple species. Parasitoids are more particular, and considered specialists. They will only attack specific species. Parasitoids will first parasitize their prey, and then lay an egg in the host. See the list below of some predators and parasitoids that we have found in Harris County.

Predators	Parasitoids
Green Lacewing	<i>Aphidius sp.</i>
Minute Pirate Bug	<i>Diglyphus sp.</i>
Long Legged Fly	
Milkweed Assassin Bug	



***Adult green Lacewing***

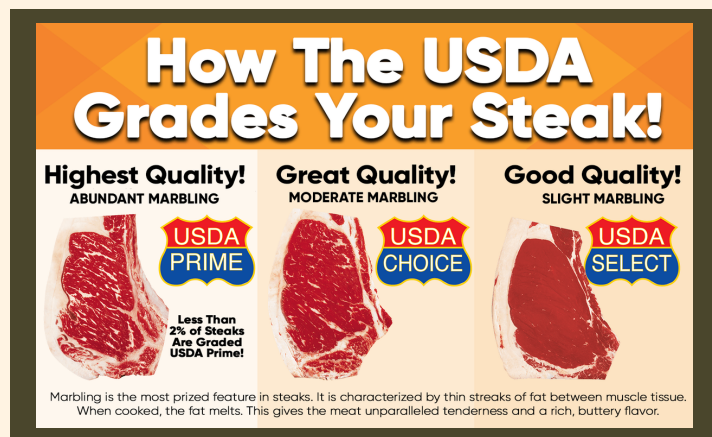
# Prime, Choice, Select Grades...What Does it All Mean?

By Shannon Dietz, Harris County Extension Agent, ANR

Are you like most people, when walking to the meat counter in your local grocery store and become confused? Not only with all the various cuts of meat to choose from, but also with the terms; Prime, Choice, and Select Grades. Well you're not alone...

The grade of a beef cut sold at retail can be an important selection factor for many customers.

Likewise, the grade of a beef carcass is critical to the beef producer since the dollar value received is directly dependent upon the grade.



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has standards for both grades of slaughter cattle and beef carcass, which is intended to separate a highly variable population of live cattle or beef carcasses into groups which are more uniform in quality and composition. Both are voluntary services and the packer is charged a fee for the service provided.

## Quality Grading

Beef quality refers to the expected eating characteristics (tenderness, juiciness, and flavor) of the cooked product. USDA quality grades are used to reflect differences in expected eating quality among slaughter cattle and their carcasses. Of the eight grades of beef, the three that you will encounter at your meat counter are USDA Prime, USDA Choice, and USDA Select.

The age of a beef animal has a direct effect on tenderness of the meat it produces. As cattle mature, their meat becomes progressively tougher. Taking the maturing process into account on beef tenderness, evaluations of carcass maturity are used in determining USDA Quality Grades. There are five maturity groupings, designated as A through E. The most common that you will see is Grade A beef coming from cattle ranging in age from 9 to 30 months.

Marbling is a term you might or might not have heard before about cuts of beef. The word marbling is the amount and distribution of intramuscular fat within the cut on a side of beef at the 12th rib. Beef cuts with high levels of marbling are more likely to be tender, juicy, and flavorful than cuts with low levels of marbling. Most consumers typically choose beef from carcasses grading at least USDA Select.

(continued on page 4)



# Prime, Choice, Select Grades...What Does it All Mean?

By Shannon Dietz, Harris County Extension Agent, ANR

Hopefully, this information will help you in choosing your next cut of beef when cooking for your family or for that special occasion! For more information on selecting cuts of beef, cooking methods and nutrition value, please click here to watch my most recent lecture on [Beef...It's What's for Dinner](#). You can also find additional information regarding this article on the "[Path to Plate](#)" website.

*Are you a new landowner?*

*Absentee landowner?*

*Just need to brush up on the basics?*

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EXTENSION

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION  
HARRIS COUNTY PRESENTS

## Texas Landowners Educational Series

- Oct. 8 Residential Rainwater Harvesting
- Oct. 15 Ag Exemptions & Your Land
- Oct. 22 Raising Small Ruminants on Small Acreage Areas
- Oct. 29 Common Aquatic Herbicides Use & Mode of Action
- Nov. 5 Feral Hog Management

**1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.**

\$20 fee, Register at:

<https://2020texaslandownersseries.eventbrite.com/>

Series is presented online.





# Upcoming Classes!



## VIRTUAL HOUSTON URBAN FOOD CONFERENCE OCTOBER 23, 2020

Join us for a half-day session with 3 great topics on aquaponics, horticulture therapy and food preservation.

### Agenda:

- **9:00 am - Understanding Aquaponics -**  
**Dr. Joe Masabni**, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Small Acreage Vegetable Specialist
- **10:00 am - Sustaining the Human Spirit: The effect of interior and outdoor greening on urban inhabitants -**  
**Dr. Tina Cade**, Professor of Horticulture, Texas State University
- **11:00 am - Food Preservation: Methods & Importance -**  
**Dr. Sonja Davis**, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Harris County Extension Agent Family & Community Health

Registration \$25.00

Conference link will be sent prior to the conference.

Registration link: <https://hufc2020.eventbrite.com>



## HOME GROWN LECTURE SERIES

Hosted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension—Harris County  
10:00 a.m. Thursdays in October 2020  
Join us for 30 minutes from a computer, laptop or mobile device with internet capabilities.

**October 1st**

**Cool Season Color Annuals**

Paul Winski, Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Horticulture

**October 8th**

**Pig Out! Know Your Pork.**

Shannon Dietz, Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Agriculture & Natural Resources

**October 15th**

**Kool Kid Plant Projects**

Brandi Keller, Harris County Master Gardener Program Coordinator

**October 22nd**

**Food Safety**

Amanda Krippel, Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Family & Community Health

**October 29th**

**Wildlife-Friendly Garden Tips**

Brandi Keller, Harris County Master Gardener Program Coordinator

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To register for this free event, please visit  
<https://homegrown2020october.eventbrite.com/>

A link to the program will be emailed before the webinar.

The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife. Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service or accommodation in order to participate in this meeting are encouraged to contact the County Extension Office prior to the meeting to determine how reasonable accommodations can be made.





## Contacts & Links

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[YouTube - Harris County Extension  
Horticulture](#)

[Texas A&M AgriLife Extension](#)

[Harris County Master Gardeners](#)

[Facebook - Harris County Ag &  
Natural Resources](#)

[Facebook - Harris County Horticulture](#)

*For questions please contact us at:  
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(713) 274-0976*

*If you would like to unsubscribe to this newsletter,  
please submit an email to [julie.menn@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:julie.menn@ag.tamu.edu)*

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*The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.*