

Success With House Plants

Paul Winski, Harris County Extension Agent, Horticulture

House plants are all the craze and the pandemic increased interest since people were spending more time at home. There are many new varieties on the market, which makes finding a plant to fit your needs quite easily. When selecting a house plant choose one that will match the growing conditions in your house or office. The 3 keys to house plant success are Proper lighting, temperature, and watering.

Lighting

House plants are usually classified as needing either low, medium or high light requirements. A southern window will provide the most intense light along with the longest duration. An east or west window will supply 60% of the intensity of a southern window; while a north-facing window will provide only 20% of the southern exposure. Low light intensity areas can be improved by increasing the duration with the addition of artificial lighting (no more than 16 hours).



Temperature

The ideal day temperature for growth is 70-80F. Excessive temperatures either in the high or low range will result in reduced growth, a spindly appearance, or foliage drop.

Water

Most plant losses are due to either over or under-watering. When you water, provide enough water til it runs out the bottom of the pot. This will ensure that the bottom 2/3 of the pot has received sufficient water and it also flushes accumulate salts that may accumulate from fertilizing.

Other Considerations:

Humidity: This can be an issue during drier times of the year. The humidity can be increased by 1) misting the

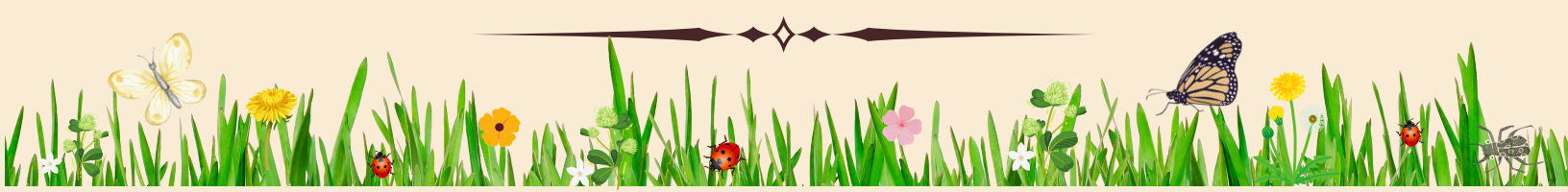
foliage early in the day, 2) placing the plants on a gravel tray, or 3) adding a humidifier.

Fertilization: The frequency will vary with the vigor and age of the plant. A 1-1-1 ratio of N-P-K is ideal and can be supplied as either a liquid, granules, or tablets. House plants will benefit from applications in March through September when they are actively growing.

Adding house plants to your living space is a great hobby and can provide some color and interest to the area. If your considering growing house plants and would like more information, here is a link to our program on YouTube. [Growing Fabulous House Plants - Paul Winski - YouTube](#)

Flowers in Your Lawn

by Brandi Keller, Harris County Extension Agent, Horticulture



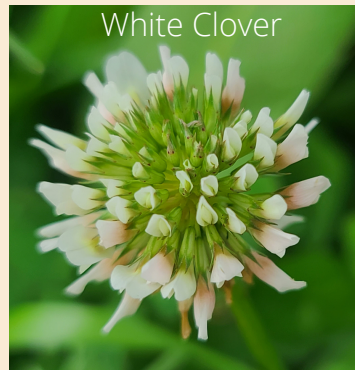
You might be surprised that many Extension educators really don't mind some weeds in their lawn. Keeping up a strict turfgrass regiment requires constant attention that involves regular maintenance and chemical applications. Each homeowner decides how much effort is worth that pristine appearance of a perfect lawn. One advantage of tolerating some weeds/ wildflowers is they add diversity in a monoculture of grass. This adds more habitat for pollinators who often frequent spring blooms. Tolerance of misplaced flowers may also work well for homeowners that have trouble growing certain grasses under large, established trees. Mature trees will always demand water that deprives turfgrass, however, many of these wildflowers or weeds fair well enough with the lower light and moisture found under mature trees.



Woodsorrel



Texas Dandelion



White Clover



Frogfruit

Violet Woodsorrel (*Oxalis violacea* L.) is a native perennial and one of a handful of oxalis species found in the area. It grows in a wide variety of soils using runners from the bulb that allows it to spread rapidly. It attracts native bees, skippers, and birds (they prefer the seeds.)

Texas Dandelion (*Pyrhopappus pauciflorus*) is also known as false dandelion. This annual blooms each morning and closes up by noon from February to June and can be found speckled across lawns fields and pastures. It is a popular source of nectar for pollinators, especially in the early spring.

White clover (*Trifolium repens*) provides forage for bees in the early spring/winter, but it also attracts beneficial parasitoid wasps that often feed on aphids and whiteflies. The biggest benefit of this plant is that it fixes nitrogen from the air to the soil, reducing the need for fertilizer. Some grass is purposely mixed with this perennial for this very reason.

Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*) is a native perennial that produces small flowers, from May through September, that many pollinators rely on as a larval host and nectar plant. While its mat-like growth can become aggressive, it can also be used as an alternative lawn.

Flowers in Your Lawn

by Brandi Keller, Harris County Extension Agent, Horticulture



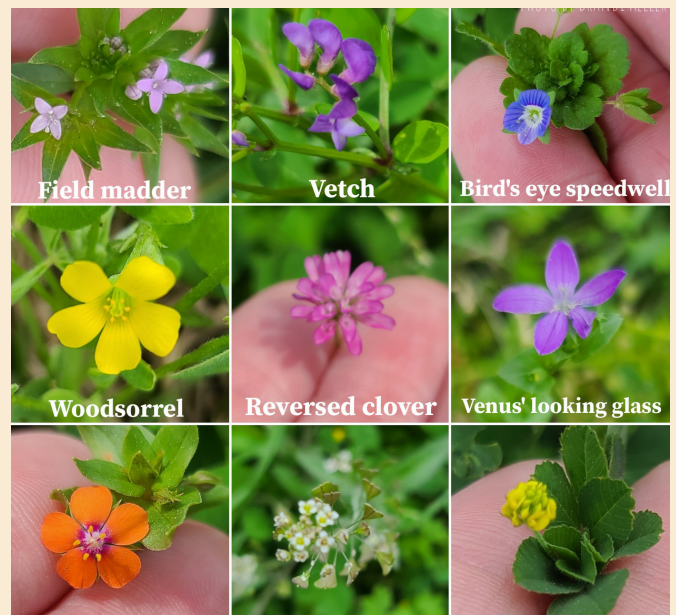
Proper application of lawn chemicals can prevent problems and be effective at addressing issues.

- Always identify the weed and your turfgrass before taking action. Are they broadleaf weeds, grassy weeds, or sedges? Annuals, biennials, or perennials?
- A common mistake with homeowner chemical use is addressing the wrong pest or applying at the wrong time of year

Check out this resource from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension: [Homeowner's Guide to Herbicide Selection for Warm-Season Turfgrass Lawns](#)

Chemicals and Water Quality

- Improper management of herbicides, fertilizers, and insecticides contribute to air and water pollution.
- Increased nitrogen and phosphorus from runoff causes an overproduction of algae, cutting off resources for waterway wildlife.
- Do not apply lawn chemicals before a heavy rain.
- Get a [soil test](#) if you suspect nutrient deficiencies.



Here are a few more resources:

[Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#)

[Texas Turfgrass Weeds](#)

[Healthy Lawns and Healthy Waters Program](#)

[Is Clover a Weed?](#)

[EPA: Lawn and Garden-Environmentally Friendly Practices](#)

To view 2020's "Wildlife Friendly Garden Tips" talk - Click [HERE](#).

Summer Grilling Tips and Resources

Shannon Dietz, Harris County Extension Agent, ANR

Summer is right around the corner and people are already pulling out the grills for burgers and hotdogs. This is one of my favorite ways of cooking and from the popularity of BBQ in Texas, it seems like it is most people's preference as well. Why heat up the kitchen when you can grill in the backyard or patio right?!

In addition to not heating up the house with the stove, grilling your foods tend to be healthier in nature than frying or other cooking methods. All you need is your favorite seasoning, the proper grill temp, knowledge of food, and fire safety rules and you are all set! Hopefully, I can get you prepared for all your outdoor gatherings while keeping everyone safe.

The first thing you are going to want to pay attention to is what needs to be done before you grill your meats, seafood, or veggies. It is very important that you keep all perishable foods that are headed for the grill cold until you are ready to prepare them. This is an important step in avoiding food-borne illnesses and keep everyone safe from food poisoning.



Simple tips to follow include:

- Transport cold food home from the store in a cooler with ice packs.
- Keep cold foods at 40 degrees or below until time to place on the grill.
- Defrost meat, fish, and poultry in the refrigerator on a plate to catch any drippings.

If you marinate your food before grilling to enrich its flavor and help tenderness, you should:

- Always marinate food in the refrigerator.
- Discard any boil or unused marinade that has been used on items such as meat, fish, and poultry.

Internal meat temperatures are a critically important part of food safety. This is necessary to kill harmful bacteria which can lead to food poisoning. Due to the high heat of the grill, foods often cook faster on the outside and may look done before they truly are. To be sure it is done on the inside, a food thermometer is necessary.

Internal food temp recommendations are as follows:

- | | |
|---------------|-------|
| • Fish | 145 F |
| • Steaks | 145 F |
| • Ground Beef | 160 F |
| • Pork | 145 F |
| • Poultry | 165 F |



Once food has reached a safe minimum internal temp and is removed from the grill:

- Place on a clean platter, being sure not to place it on the plate that held the raw meat, seafood, or poultry.
- Keep food hot at 140 F or above until it is served.
- Refrigerate cooked items within 2 hours in mild weather.
- Refrigerate cooked items within 1 hour when the outside temp is above 90 F or above.

Summer Grilling Tips and Resources - Cont'd

Shannon Dietz, Harris County Extension Agent, ANR

Tips for Grilling With Care:

- Grill more fruits and vegetables.
- Marinate protein foods before grilling, and turn them frequently to reduce the scorching or burning.
- Reduce flare-ups by spreading aluminum foil on the grill, making small holes in the foil to allow the fat to drain.
- Cook in the center or side of the grill and move the coals to the side for indirect heat and keeping the fat from dripping on them.
- Grill smaller portions to decrease the exposure time to high heat.
- Remove and discard any charred portions of protein foods.

Hopefully, these tips and the recipes included will encourage you to get out and enjoy grilling for your family and friends. Always remember safety first and never leave food out for extended periods of time. For more information about grilling and recipes, check out [Path to Plate](#) for all your questions and resources.



Summer Grilling Recipies

Shannon Dietz, Harris County Extension Agent, ANR



Beef Kabobs



Course Kid Friendly, Main Dish, Vegetables

Servings
5

Ingredients

- 1 lb extra lean beef steak
- 1/4 tsp sea salt
- 1/4 tsp minced garlic
- 1 medium green bell pepper cut into 20 squares
- 10 cherry tomatoes
- 10 small, fresh mushrooms
- 2 small, yellow squash cut into 10 slices
- Non stick cooking spray

Servings:

Units: ▼

Instructions

1. Cut meat into 20 (1-inch) cubes

2. Thread meat, green pepper, tomatoes, mushrooms, and squash alternately onto five (12-inch) skewers.

3. Sprinkle evenly with salt and garlic.

4. Coat grill rack with cooking spray; place on medium hot grill (350° to 400°F).

5. Place kabobs on rack and grill uncovered, turning once for 10 minutes or until beef reaches a minimum of 145 degrees F.

Along with the above beef kabob recipe, we have included another "Dinner Tonight" recipe below. Enjoy! Happy Grilling!

["Chicken & Summer Veggies"!](#)

Upcoming Home Grown Lecture Series

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

APRIL
MAY
JUNE **2021**



HOME GROWN LECTURE SERIES

04/01 **Southern Bulbs**

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

04/15 **Sausage Making 101**

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

05/06 **Benefits of Bats**

Brandi Keller – Harris County Master Gardener
Program Coordinator

05/20 **Growing Fabulous Houseplants**

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

06/03 **A Legen-Dairy Lecture**

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

06/17 **Art from the Garden**

Brandi Keller – Harris County Master Gardener
Program Coordinator



TO REGISTER FOR THIS FREE
EVENT,
PLEASE VISIT
[HTTPS://HOMEGROWN2021Q2.
EVENTBRITE.COM/](https://homegrown2021q2.eventbrite.com/)

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.

Upcoming Home Grown Lecture Series



HOME GROWN LECTURE SERIES

JULY - AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2021

THE LATEST & GREATEST IN BEDDING PLANTS FOR 2022

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

July 1, 2021 - 10:00 a.m.

GARDEN HUMMINGBIRD SAFETY

Brandi Keller - Texas A&M AgriLife County
Extension Agent-Horticulture

July 15, 2021 - 10:00 a.m.

COOKING SAFELY OUTDOORS

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

August 5, 2021 - 10:00 a.m.

FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING

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

August 19, 2021 - 10:00 a.m.

ENHANCING YOUR DISHES WITH FLAVORED BUTTERS

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

September 2, 2021 - 10:00 a.m.

GROWING MICROGREENS AT THE WINDOWSILL

Brandi Keller - Texas A&M AgriLife County
Extension Agent-Horticulture

September 16, 2021 - 10:00 a.m.

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

TO REGISTER FOR THIS FREE ONLINE SERIES,
PLEASE VISIT
[HTTPS://HOMEGROWN2021Q3.EVENTBRITE.COM](https://homegrown2021q3.eventbrite.com)

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..

Contacts/Social Media/Websites

Contacts

Paul Winski, County Extension Agent - Horticulture - Paul.Winski@ag.tamu.edu

Brandi Keller, Master Gardener Program Coordinator -Brandi.keller@ag.tamu.edu

Shannon Dietz - County Extension Agent - AG/NR - Shannon.Dietz@ag.tamu.edu

Social Media/Websites

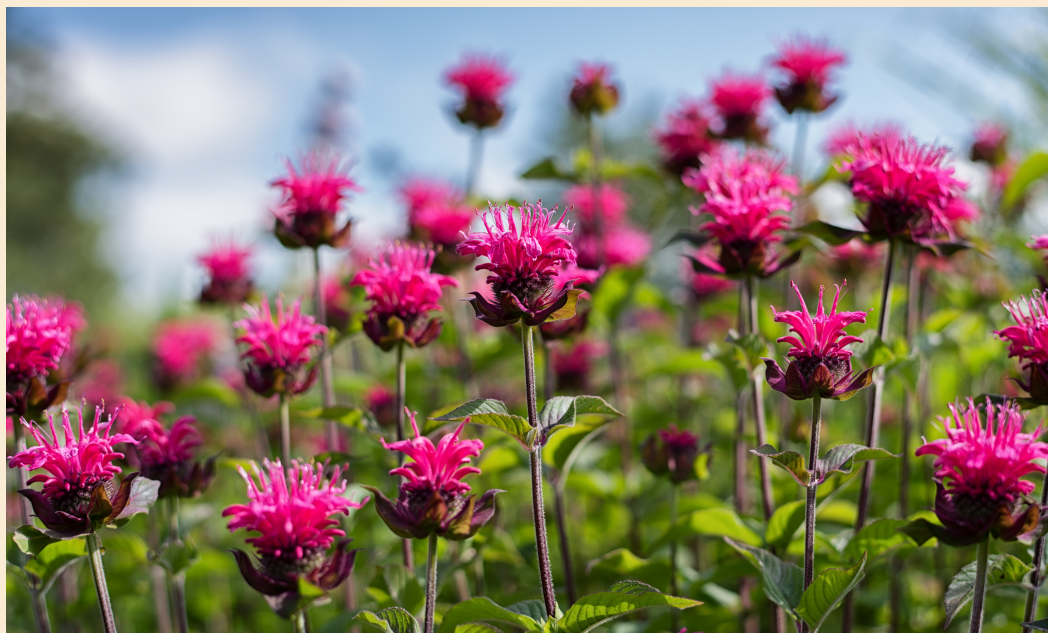
Harris County Horticulture Facebook

Horticulture YouTube Channel

Harris County Master Gardeners Facebook

Harris County AgriLife Website

Harris County Ag & Natural Resources
Facebook



If you would like to **unsubscribe** to the Home Grown newsletter, please email Julie Menn at julie.menn@ag.tamu.edu

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION



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.