

## Plant Performance from the 2021 Summer Flower Trials by Paul Winski, Harris County Extension Agent, Horticulture

A summer flower trial with annuals and perennials was established in June 2021 at the AgriLife Extension Genoa Friendship Garden in Precinct 2. Eighteen varieties of summer annuals and perennials were planted utilizing Earth-Kind® principles. The demonstration allowed us to evaluate the performance of these plants and help educate the public and the landscape/greenhouse industry on plant performance.

### Objective

- Demonstrate the importance of plant trials to the green industry and gardening public of Harris County.
- Identify summer annuals and perennials with outstanding gardening performance with minimal landscape inputs; no pesticides are used.

### Materials and Methods

- At least 6 - 3" potted plants of each annual variety were planted in week 23 of 2021.
- The perennials have been established in the garden some since 2018.
- Trials beds were amended with 3" compost and tilled to a depth of 4-6"
- 18 varieties of warm season annuals and perennials were selected.
- Overhead irrigation system was used to provide water during the trial.
- A 3" layer of native mulch was applied after planting.
- Plants were evaluated every 2 weeks from July through September by a 2-person team of Master Gardeners that were trained on plant evaluation
- Plants are evaluated for uniformity – leaf color, shape, flower production, flower size, plant habit, overall appearance, resistance to disease and insects
- A scale of 1 – 10 is used: 10 being exceptional, 5 average and 1 an extremely poor performer



# Plant Performance from the 2021 Summer Flower Trials, cont.

by Paul Winski, Harris County Extension Agent, Horticulture

**Table 1. Plant Scores for summer plant trials**



**Torenia Vertigo Mix**

Variety	Score	Type
Torenia Vertigo Mix	10	Annual
Vinca Cora XDR Polka Dot	10	Annual
Vinca Cora XDR Mix	9.9	Annual
Vinca Cora XDR Cranberry	9.9	Annual
Pentas Lucky Star Lipstick	9.7	Annual
Pentas Lucky Star Mix	9.7	Annual
Pentas Lucky Star Lavender	9.6	Annual
Salvia Big Blue	9.4	Perennial
Basil Thai Towers	9.3	Herb
Salvia Mystic Spires Blue Imp.	9.25	Perennial
Zinnia Profusion Red/Yellow Bicolor	8.9	Annual
Basil Emerald Towers	8.75	Herb
Angelonia Alonia Big Dark Pink	8.6	Annual
Salvia Bumbleberry	8.1	Perennial
Echinacea Artisan Red Ombre	8	Perennial
Leucanthemum Sweet Daisy Birdy	7.6	Perennial
Canna South Pacific Orange	7.2	Perennial
Leucanthemum White Lion	6.2	Perennial

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- The Torenia Vertigo Mix, Vinca Cora XDR Series and the Pentas Lucky Series were exceptional performers throughout the season. The Cora XDR series has additional resistance to aerial Phytophthora which is often a problem in our humid growing conditions.
- The perennials in the trial all performed well and many have been in the beds for over 3 years.
- It was a “typical summer” for trials in Harris County. Several dry weeks in July and August did not seem to negatively affect the plants.



# Plant Performance from the 2021 Summer Flower Trials, cont.

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**Echinacea Artisan Reb Ombre**

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Finding plants that thrive in the summer heat can be challenging. As a group, all varieties performed well and offer new options for growers, landscapers, and homeowners.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- Master Gardener Flower Trials Team at the Genoa Friendship Garden.
- Industry Support: Ball Horticultural, All American Selections, Spring Creek Growers

# May in the Garden

by Brandi Keller, Harris County Extension Agent, Horticulture



There is much to accomplish before the heat of summer arrives. Switch out cool season annuals for summer ones. Inspect irrigation. Prune spring blooming shrubs shortly after flowering. Lastly, remember to mulch 3-4 inches. This will help keep weeds down and soil cooler and moister.



## Last Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale Herbs and Perennials - May 14th & 16th

- Shop online for pick up on Saturday May 14th at Genoa Friendship Gardens. Plants will only be available for in-person shopping on Monday, May 16th. Here are a few available options:
  - Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) makes a great small tree with an unusual sphere of flowers for a wide range of wildlife including butterflies and other pollinators.
  - *Cuphea* 'Vermillionaire' mounds to about 30 inches tall with orange-red tubular flowers that attract hummingbirds and pollinators.
  - African blue basil is one that many Master Gardeners have in their own yard. It is sterile so does not produce seeds. However, it does produce more pollinators than you'd think possible.

## Mother's Day Gardening Gifts

- Offer to clean up beds or weed a significant patch.
- Buy quality mulch and spread it out for her.
- Clean up her garden tools by sharpening, oiling, and tightening.
- Buy her a new plant or take her to a local garden center to pick one out. Remember to take photos!

## Vegetable Garden Plant in May

### Transplants

- Eggplant\*\*
- Peppers\*\*
- Sweet potato (slips)

### Seeds

- Southern peas
- Pumpkin
- Summer greens
- Summer squash\*\*
- Winter squash
- Watermelon

\*\* While not ideal planting time, these vegetables can still be planted throughout May.

**If you find wildlife loves your tomatoes as much as you do, be sure to pick them before they are fully red to ripen on the windowsill.**

**Looking for tomato recipes?  
Click [HERE](#).**



To Register for "10 Reasons for Yellowing Leaves" Click [HERE](#).



# Honeybees: Agriculture's Free Pollinator

Shannon Dietz, Harris County Extension Agent, Ag & Natural Resources

Honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) are considered to be the most important pollinator in food production. They tend to be some of the most social and beneficial among the insect groups.

They average approximately 15 mm in length, and their fuzzy bodies ultimately help with their ability to pollinate. Colors range among common yellows and browns, but this is determined by the race of the bee. Unknown to most, they have lapping and chewing mouthparts that help feed on nectar and pollen. Care should always be taken around beehives because they are stinging insects, but only the worker bees are able to sting and are usually only prone to do so when they feel like their home (hive) is threatened by intruders.



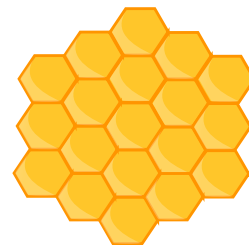
Honeybees were introduced to the Americas in the 1600's by way of European settlers. The first honeybees arrived in Virginia around 1602 and within decades colonies were established throughout the reach of the colonized states.

Today, it is likely that the only managed hives are European honeybees. In the 1990's, Africanized honeybees came into the states via Texas and due to inbreeding with the European bees, it is now believed that all non-managed colonies have the Africanized gene.

Bees tend to nest in hollow trees, stumps, eaves of buildings and any other cavity they might find. They have been known to form nests in unused BBQ pits and trash cans just to give you a couple of examples. It's been noted that sometimes honeybees form nests outside of protected areas with comb being exposed, however, those generally won't survive the colder months of the year.

## Poultry Biosecurity Measures are critical during current Avian Influenza Outbreak

Shannon Dietz, Harris County Extension Agent, Ag & Natural Resources



Hives are composed of wax produced from glands in worker bees which are molded into vertically hanging combs. There may be several to many hanging combs in a nest, depending on the strength and size of the colony. Comb is composed of hexagonal cells that contain eggs, larvae, pupae, honey, and pollen.

Honeybees have a complete life cycle composed of egg, larvae, pupae, and adult. A colony contains a single queen who lays all the eggs in the cells. Eggs hatch after about 3 days into grub-like, white larvae that are fed royal jelly by the workers. After feeding for about 6 days, larvae elongate their bodies and turn into prepupa. These cells are capped within about 24 hours. After approximately 10 days, the adult bee chews its way out of the cell.

Worker bees have a variety of jobs depending on age. From younger to older, it can include nurse bees, construction workers, guard bees and foragers. Workers will live as adults for 5-6 months during warm months and from 3-4 months during the winter. Queens, on the other hand, can live up to 5 years, but most are replaced within 2 years. Drones live approximately 3 months, but various factors can reduce that lifespan.

For more information on beekeepers who perform honeybee removal, visit Texas Apiary Inspection Services Website at <https://txbeeinspection.tamu.edu/bee-removal/>



# The Home Grown Podcast!

The Home Grown podcast is presented by the Agriculture & Natural Resources (ANR) Unit of the Harris County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office. The series provides information on urban agriculture / horticulture / gardening and ag literacy. Check out our latest episodes below.

## Episode #12

Brandi interviews Sherri Harrah, manager and hardline buyer for Plants For All Seasons Garden Center. They discuss an overview of the family-owned business, a few observations as a woman in horticulture, and touch on some current buying trends in the market today.

## Episode #11

Paul interviews Rebecca Dubiski, project manager with Landscape Art Inc. Paul talks with Rebecca about her experience in the green industry and some of the opportunities working for a landscape construction company.

## Episode #10

Shannon interviews Kay Wolfe, County Executive Director, USDA Farm Service Agency for Harris, Waller and Montgomery Counties.

## How do you access the podcast?

Click on the image below or go to <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1791415>. You can also search "Home Grown" wherever you find your podcasts.



Harris County  
Extension Agents  
Horticulture  
Paul Winski  
Brandi Keller  
Ag/Natural Resources  
Shannon Dietz

## HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

**May 14-16th**

**Perennials & Herb Sale**

***Genoa Friendship Garden***

***1210 Genoa Red Bluff***

***Houston 77034***

***Map for Directions***



For more information go to: [hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-sales/](https://hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-sales/)

# 2022 HOME GROWN LECTURE SERIES

Lectures will be on the first Thursday of each month and include live demonstrations. Register now so you don't miss one!

## Winter

### STARTING PLANTS FROM SEEDS

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

January 6, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

### BASIC GRAFTING TECHNIQUES

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

February 3, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

### TOMATOES FOR THE PATIO

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

March 3, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

## Summer

### IDENTIFYING PEST & DISEASE ISSUES IN THE GARDEN

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

July 7, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

### SAFETY IN THE HOME GARDEN

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

August 4, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

### ALL ABOUT MINT

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

September 1, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

## Spring

### STARTING PLANTS FROM CUTTINGS

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

April 7, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

### HOME BUTCHER: MAKING BOUDIN

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

May 5, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

### 10 REASONS FOR YELLOWING LEAVES

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

June 2, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

## Fall

### PROPER PRUNING IN THE LANDSCAPE

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

October 6, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

### HOLIDAY MEATS - NOT JUST TURKEY!

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

November 3, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

### PLANTABLE CHRISTMAS TREE ALTERNATIVES

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

December 1, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

## Registration

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION

[homegrown2022.eventbrite.com](https://homegrown2022.eventbrite.com)





# Contact Us

Paul Winski, County Extension Agent  
Horticulture - [Paul.Winski@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:Paul.Winski@ag.tamu.edu)

Brandi Keller, County Extension Agent  
Horticulture - [Brandi.keller@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:Brandi.keller@ag.tamu.edu)

Shannon Dietz - County Extension Agent  
AG/NR - [Shannon.Dietz@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:Shannon.Dietz@ag.tamu.edu)

## Social Media/Websites

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[Horticulture YouTube Channel](#)

[Harris County Master Gardeners Facebook](#)

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

[Harris County AgriLife Website](#)

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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. 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.*