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Cover Photo: The milder weather in fall and the smaller footprint of most cool season vegetables contribute to the success of container gardening.
By Bruce Leander

Right: *Callicarpa acuminate* Mexican Beautyberry
By Liath Appleton

Sep Meeting - Judy Barrett

What Can I Do With My Herbs?

Judy Barrett was the founding editor and publisher of HOME-GROWN: Good Sense Organic Gardening, which was published for 12 years as a magazine and is currently available online. She was previously the editor of The New Garden Journal and one of the hosts of the public television series, The New Garden.


She is a regular columnist for the Austin American-Statesman and an occasional columnist on gardening for Edible Austin, ACRES U.S.A. and the Harris Old Farmer’s Almanac. She writes a blog on gardening at [www.HomegrownTexas.com](http://www.HomegrownTexas.com) as well as a monthly newsletter, Homegrown: Good Sense Organic Gardening, available at that website.

Judy holds BA and MA degrees in English from the University of Texas at Austin and has edited books on a variety of topics, including gardening, business, medicine and others.

Master Gardener Meeting information:
Wednesday, Sep 3, 2014 starting at 7 pm
Zilker Botanical Garden

Master Gardener meetings are open to certified Master Gardeners and trainees only.
In the Vegetable Garden
by Patty Leander

For some reason, the hotter it gets outside the more time I spend in my garden. It could be a sort of empathy for my plants (I hate for them to suffer in the heat while I sit in the air-conditioned indoors), but mainly it’s because the fall garden season is here, and I want to be reaping the benefits, hopefully in time for Thanksgiving, and that means planting when it’s hot, to harvest when it’s not! Yep, that’s our motto for fall, and as the nights begin to cool off, September and October become prime months for planting our cool season vegetables. Hot and sunny is still the norm during the day, and that means new transplants and young seedlings will be ever so grateful if you provide them with a little shade, which can come in the form of purchased shade cloth suspended above plants or cheaper alternatives like an old sheet, a big piece of burlap or a large umbrella. Even an old window screen or sheets of newspaper will lessen the intensity of the sun on young, tender seedlings. This sun protection is temporary, maybe two or three weeks until plants get acclimated, so get creative with anything that will stay put and provide shade. This protection will also lessen plants’ requirements for water, a critical factor in the face of Austin’s ongoing water restrictions.

While most warm season vegetables will grow with temperatures ranging from 60-90°, cool season vegetables grow best when daytime temperatures fall in the 45-65° range. However, once established, they will better tolerate temperatures that dip into the 30s. So it’s important to get them in the ground and growing at least a few weeks before the threat of frost arrives. And when will that be? I wish I knew - all I can tell you is be prepared and start paying attention to the local forecast in mid-November.

I’ve had a few inquiries about what kind of mix to use for growing vegetables in a container. It’s important to use a lightweight, loose soil mix that holds moisture and also drains well. Most store-bought potting soils will fill these requirements, but if you prefer to make your own, try this easy recipe for a home-made mix:

Most garden centers will carry premade potting mixes as well as the amendments needed for a DIY version.
4 parts peat moss or coir fiber
2 parts well-decomposed compost
1 part vermiculite
1 part perlite

Combine all the ingredients in a wheelbarrow or large bin and mix well, moistening lightly as you mix. Add a slow-release fertilizer (either manufactured or homemade) to each container before planting.

Below is a super easy DIY organic fertilizer blend that is easy to mix up at home. Many of the ingredients can be purchased at local nurseries as well as Brite Ideas (which offers a discount to MGs):

½ cup each: alfalfa meal, kelp, rock phosphate, worm castings and dolomitic lime.

Blend all ingredients together and add ½ cup of fertilizer mixture per 5 gallons of potting mix.

Here is the vegetable gardener’s checklist for September:

- Continue harvesting and enjoying okra, cowpeas, yardlong beans, eggplant, peppers and other crops that may still be producing.
- Cowpeas that dry on the vine can be shelled and stored for winter consumption. Save a few seeds for planting next year.
- Remove any plants that are diseased or bug-infested rather than letting them languish in the garden – it’s difficult to revive a sickly plant when heat is oppressive and water is limited.
- Save money by growing your own transplants indoors under grow lights or outdoors under partial shade. Broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kale, lettuce, spinach and other greens will be transplant size in only 4-5 weeks. Sow seeds at weekly intervals to keep a ready supply of baby plants on hand to tuck into the landscape, into a container or to replace mature plants that are harvested for the kitchen.
- Expect growth to slow down a bit as the days grow shorter and milder. Add an extra week or two to your expected harvest date to account for what we call the “fall factor”.
- Later in the month direct seed quick-maturing varieties of carrots, beets, turnips, radishes, Swiss chard, sugar snap peas and kohlrabi. Water the soil well before you plant for improved germination.
In the Vegetable Garden

- Plant multiplier onions this month. They sprout quickly and you can be snipping green onions all winter long. If you don’t know anyone who has bulbs to share they can be ordered from Territorial or Southern Exposure Seed Catalog.

- Mulch, mulch, mulch to conserve soil moisture and don’t be intimidated by forecasts of 100° days; remember that is only the high and it takes all day to get there. If you can swing it (and your yard is not infested with mosquitoes) early morning is the best time for fall gardening!

Top Left: A thick layer of alfalfa hay helps moderate temperature and conserve moisture in this raised bed; at planting time the hay is pulled away and the soil is ready to receive transplants. A compost bin made from fencing material lined with screen mesh is placed directly on the bed. The bin is layered with leaves, weeds, grass, soil, kitchen waste and spent plants. After a few months of decomposition the contents will be suitable to use as mulch on top of the bed or can be turned into the bed to enrich the soil with organic matter.

Top Right: Combine and moisten ingredients for potting mix in a wheelbarrow or large bin.

Bottom: A little shade protection at this time of year helps new vegetable plants transition to our still hot and sunny environment.
In the Vegetable Garden

Top Left: This waist high planting bed made from rough cut cedar at It’s About Thyme caught my eye recently. What an easy and attractive way to grow a pretty salad garden or a few favorite herbs or small-scale winter vegetables.

Top Middle: Quick-growing multiplier onions can be planted this month.

Top Right: Harvest and shell dry cowpeas for savory winter meals.

Bottom: CAUTION: Malabar spinach will reseed everywhere! If it gets out of hand the succulent leaves make an excellent ‘green’ for the compost pile.

Photos by Bruce and Patty Leander
Chinch bugs often appear in Texas lawns during hot, dry conditions. Usually damage starts in sunny locations, or near driveways and sidewalk areas. Damage appears as irregular dead patches in the lawn, surrounded by yellowing or dying grass. Chinch bug damage can be mistaken for other lawn problems like white grubs or fungal diseases, so confirmation of chinch bug activity is needed before progressing to proper treatment.

So how do you tell if you have chinch bugs? Look for the insects. One way is to cut both ends out of a can, push it into the ground using a twisting motion, fill the can with water for about 10 minutes, then wait for any bugs to float to the top. Another way would be to get down on your hands and knees and part the grass to look for the insects. For both methods, samples should be taken in the damaged (yellowed grass), not dead, grass areas.

Chinch bugs are small (about 1/5 of an inch). Adults are black with white wings that have triangular black marks on them. Nymphs, or immatures, are yellowish or pinkish with a light colored band across their body. Nymphs do not have fully developed wings.

Treatment is usually a liquid or granular formulation. Liquid formulations are often bottles that you can attach to the end of the garden hose, or concentrates that you mix into a tank sprayer. Granular formulations are put out with push spreaders, and need to be watered in after treatment. Treatment should be applied in the area where damage is occurring, and several feet out from the damaged area; the entire yard does not have to be treated. All label instructions should be read and followed before and during the treatment.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

Dead spots in the lawn? Look for chinch bugs....

by Wizzie Brown
Meet the Master Gardeners: Pat Mokry, Class of 2008

by Jean Love El Harim

Pat Mokry has lived many adventures right here at home, in Llano and Austin. Born and raised in Llano, she is, as she puts it, “as German as you can be this far removed from Germany.” A member of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, Pat traces her family history back to Johann Hartung, one of the founders of New Braunfels in 1844, whose granddaughter married a Raesener (Pat’s maiden name) in 1872. When Pat was a young teenager, while her mother was working as a Licensed Vocational Nurse at hospitals, in labs, and doing X-rays, she and her sister would spend the summer days outdoors riding horses, all day, every day. “Why we didn’t get hurt,” she shakes her head, “I’ll never know.” “Being outdoors was always a big thing for my sister and me. Daddy raised rabbits. We fed and watered the rabbits and washed the cages. The land was rich with rabbit manure, and my mother had a garden.” Pat and her sister would weed flowerbeds and plant seeds, but “were too busy riding horses to be much interested in gardening.”

In 1961, Pat came to Austin and she never left. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Medical Technology from the University of Texas. Her first job was at Holy Cross Hospital on East MLK (then known as East 19th Street). On August 1st, 1966, she was working in the blood bank department when the blood bank tech rushed in and started to take the blood that was being prepared for surgical operations. “We’ve got an incident at the Tower,” he said, “and we need all the blood we can get.” That was the day Charles Whitman started shooting from the U.T. Tower. Pat’s sister was on campus that day, taking a class in Batts Hall that was due to let out at noon. Pat’s sister would have been walking back to the Scottish Rite Dormitory where she lived, right past the Tower, just when Whitman started gunning people down. “I panicked,” she says. “I had no way to get in touch with her. After work, I drove to campus, but it was total chaos.” Pat found her sister and learned that because the class had let out late, the students had been kept safe in the building until after the event. “Those were the scariest hours I have ever spent,” she recalls.

Working as Chief of the Blood Bank at Brackenridge Hospital from 1966 until 1970, Pat was frequently involved in intense life-and-death situations. Once a young man got stabbed at Austin High School and Pat had to deal with a “waiting room loaded with people who wanted to give blood.” She was responsible for monitoring blood gas levels during open-heart surgeries that sometimes lasted for eight hours. In 1970, Pat helped open a new private lab in Austin and worked there as Chief Medical Technologist.

Pat’s children were born in 1976 and 1978, and because she wanted to be able to spend summers with them, she went back to school and got a Masters in Science Education at U.T. Austin so she could teach. She taught biology at Westlake High School, biotech at Austin Community College, and science at St. Edward’s University. “I like to teach,” Pat says. “I didn’t know that until I started teaching. I love to learn and pass that on to others.”
Meet the Master Gardeners

Though Pat retired in 2011, there has been no break in the continuous activity she has enjoyed since her teenage days of horseback riding. “I have a private pilot’s license, ASEL (aircraft single-engine land), and over 100 hours of flight time,” she remarks. “Dad had a plane. He was an aviation machinist in WWII, a crew chief in the Navy in Kingsville. He had a love of flying.” “I got my flight training at Mueller Airport, pronounced ‘Miller,’” Pat says, correcting my mispronunciation. “The first time I flew I was five years old,” she recalls. “I was sitting on my father’s lap, and he let me ‘fly the plane.’ I looked out the window as we flew over a house.” Pat remembers flying with her father in the late 1960s when she, her father, and another friend went to Wichita, Kansas to fly back two, bright red Cessna Cardinals, the first two in Texas. “It was icy weather, and we made a night landing at Mueller Airport,” Pat says, the excitement of the adventure shining in her eyes.

After having lived in Central, East, and South Austin, Pat now lives in West Austin. In addition to gardening, she enjoys playing golf, hiking, working out at the gym, and spending time with her grandchildren. She plays the oboe, the English horn, and the clarinet in a band called New Horizons, which is for people aged 50 and above and is affiliated with the U.T. music department.

When asked about her unique talents, Pat says she has done some introspection about that. “When you’re digging in the dirt, what do you think about?” she comments wryly. She notes that she is, first of all, curious. “I love to learn,” she says. “You never should quit learning.” She also affirms that she has a strong work ethic. “When you do a job,” she says, “keep at it. Even when you fail, keep at it. Do the job; the pay will come (sometimes).” she says. “Be kind, a ‘mensch,’ diplomatic, cooperative, collegial,” she says, further explaining her work ethic. “I can’t say no,” she laughs.

Pat’s mother-in-law got her interested in gardening. On a farm in Sinton, Texas, Pat’s mother-in-law raised six children, took care of the house, and tended the garden. “She had phenomenal energy,” Pat says. “This woman could take a dead stick, plant it, and grow pears,” she adds, “and she liked to share her plants with everyone.”

Pat describes her garden as “eclectic.” She is growing potatoes, tomatoes, onions, lettuce, chard, and eggplant in a hugelkultur bed and has two solid-frame, heated greenhouses. She also likes ornamentals and raises African Violets in the house. Her main gardening interest is propagation, and her biggest gardening challenge has been “not having enough light or soil, and now water.” She collects rainwater in several 50 gallon barrels and a cistern. Her favorite plants are “roses and African Violets.” “I love anything green,” she admits. What’s her favorite gardening tip? “Try it. If it fails, keep trying. Don’t let failure deter you. Don’t be afraid to try something new.”

Pat sees the garden in the larger context: “In the First Detector training, I see a link between plant diseases and human diseases.” “I am concerned with the environment,” she adds. “I try to live by the philosophy of the Native American people: Earth is on loan to us. We are borrowing Earth for a short period of time. We should take care of it. Leave it better than we received it.”

Pat wears many hats as a Travis County Master Gardener. She has earned MG Plant Propagation and Entomology certifications and is completing the First Detector, Compost, and Earth-Kind Landscaping certifications. She is manager of the TCMG greenhouse at Zilker Botanical Garden, a garden captain for the 2014 Inside Austin Gardens Tour, and a member of the TCMG Speakers Bureau. With Tommie Clayton and Susan Jung, she teaches propagation classes to Master Gardeners in surrounding counties. What she most enjoys about TCMG is “being associated with and learning from other gardeners, who are always willing to encourage others and share their knowledge.”
Weeds and Reads: A Gardener’s Book Guide
by Liath Appleton

Although I wouldn’t consider myself to be a voracious reader, I do find myself regularly searching through blogs, bookstore websites and various published lists in an attempt to find the latest, greatest books in gardening, food and fiction. There’s a lot of reading material out there, and new books are being published faster than anyone could ever possibly keep up! So I’ve decided to keep a running list of the notable gardening, and garden related books that I see coming out each month. Hopefully these lists will help myself and others find fun and insightful new books to enjoy between the weeding and the watering.

September 2014:

The Bee Kind Garden: Apian Wisdom for Your Garden - Sep 1, 2014
by David Squire

Bees are vital for the future of the planet; without their dedicated pollinating many crops would eventually fail. This delightfully illustrated book reveals many facets of their lives, including homes, flight patterns, and defense. [more]

by Annette Giesecke, Naomi Jacobs

The Good Gardener? Nature, Humanity, and the Garden illuminates both the foundations and after-effects of humanity’s deep-rooted impulse to manipulate the natural environment and create garden spaces of diverse kinds. Gardens range from subsistence plots to sites of philosophical speculation, refuge, and self-expression. [more]

Weeds of North America - Sep 9, 2014
by Richard Dickinson, France Royer

“What is a weed,” opined Emerson, “but a plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered?” While that may be a worthy notion in theory, these plants of undiscovered virtue cause endless hours of toil for backyard gardeners. [more]

Ancient Trees: Portraits of Time - Sep 9, 2014
by Beth Moon

Black-and-white photographs of the world’s most majestic ancient trees, from the yews of England to the baobabs of Madagascar [more]
Weeds and Reads: A Gardener’s Book Guide

**Soil Remediation and Plants: Prospects and Challenges** - Sep 15, 2014
by Khalid Hakeem (Editor), Muhammad Sabir (Editor), Munir Ozturk (Editor), Ahmet Ruhi Mermut (Editor)
Phytoremediation is a simple, cost effective, environmental friendly and fast-emerging new technology for eliminating toxic heavy metals and other related soil pollutants. [more]

**Air Plants: The Curious World of Tillandsias** - Sep 17, 2014
by Zenaida Sengo, Caitlin Atkinson (Photographs)
Air plants, also known as tillandsias, are having their moment. Popular for their spiky shape and extremely low-maintenance needs, they are now widely available in garden centers, small boutiques, upscale food markets, and national retail stores dedicated to home furnishing and design. [more]

**Phytomedicines, Herbal Drugs, and Poisons** - Sep 22, 2014
by Ben-Erik van Wyk (Editor)
A richly illustrated, scientific guide to medicinal and poisonous plants, including those used for their mind-altering effects. Van Wyk covers approximately 350 species—from Aloe vera and Ephedra sinica to Cannabis sativa and Coffea arabica—detailing their botanical, geographical, pharmacological, and toxicological data as well as the chemical structures of the active compounds in each. [more]

**Welcome to Subirdia: Sharing Our Neighborhoods with Wrens, Robins, Woodpeckers, and Other Wildlife** - Sep 30, 2014
by John M. Marzluff, Jack Delap (Illustrations)
In this fascinating and optimistic book, John Marzluff reveals how our own actions affect the birds and animals that live in our cities and towns, and he provides ten specific strategies everyone can use to make human environments friendlier for our natural neighbors. [more]
Backyard Basics: The Art of Self-Reliance in Austin Series - Vegetable Gardening
Thursday, Sep 4, 2014
10am - 12pm
Travis County AgriLife Extension
1600 Smith Road
Austin, TX

With its warm days and cooler nights, along with more stable weather patterns, Fall just may be the best season for vegetable gardening in Central Texas. In our second course on Backyard Basics, Master Gardener and vegetable specialist Tommie Clayton will share her many years of experience in gardening, with details on planting schedules, proven varieties for our area and other helpful resources.

Part of the Texas AgriLife Extension Backyard Basics Series. Register at https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/TravisCounty or by phone 979-845-2604

Back to Basics Workshop
Saturday, Sep 13, 2014
8:30am – 4pm
Austin Community College south campus,
1820 West Stassney Lane
Austin, TX

Join AgriLife Extension Master Gardener volunteers and other community experts for this special workshop on all things backyard food. We'll cover the basics of growing fruits and vegetables, as well as garden recipes (basic canning and preserving how-to's) backyard chickens, and backyard bees.

8:30 to 9:00 Registration
9:00 to 10:15 Grow Your Own Fresh Fruit, Joe Posern, Travis County Master Gardener Fruit Specialist
10:15 to 11:30 Growing Vegetables, Patty Leander, Travis County Master Gardener Vegetable Specialist
11:45 to 1:00 Garden Recipes and Preserving the Harvest, Jeff Peters, Travis County Master Gardener
1:00 to 1:30 Lunch (boxed lunch provided)
1:30 to 2:45 Backyard Chickens, Joy Williamson, Travis County Master Gardener
2:45 to 4:00 Backyard Bees, Chris Doggett, Williamson County Beekeepers Association President

Register online: https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/TravisCounty
Register by phone: 979-845-2604
Austin Area Events

**Monarch Appreciation Day**
Saturday, Sep 13
10am - 4pm
Zilker Botanical Gardens
2220 Barton Springs Rd
Austin TX

Head to Zilker Botanical Garden for a family-friendly, educational, and fun-filled event to celebrate Monarch Butterflies and other pollinators. Enjoy a Butterfly & Pollinator Plant Sale from 10 – 2, benefitting Monarch Watch and the Xerces Society. Learn about Bees, Monarchs, Organic Gardening, and Gardening for Wildlife & Pollinators at lectures scheduled from 10-2 in the Garden Center auditorium. Take the kids to meet and greet caterpillars, butterflies, and moths, see a display bee hive and build a Bee house, make Wildflower Seed Balls, Butterfly Wings, create a Butterfly Mural, and get their faces painted! Join a guided tour of the Blachly Butterfly Trail & Garden, and visit Information tables to learn about gardening for butterflies, bees, and wildlife.

FREE admission with paid admission to Zilker Botanical Garden
For Details go to: [http://www.zilkergarden.org](http://www.zilkergarden.org)

**Fruit Production for Producers and Backyard Enthusiasts**
Wednesday, Sep 24, 2014
8:30am – 1pm
Travis County Health and Human Services
502 East Highland Mall Boulevard
Austin, TX

Part of Travis County AgriLife Extension’s Forward Farming series, this program will cover information appropriate for all level of current and potential fruit producers, while also being useful and easy to understand for the backyard enthusiast. Monte Nesbitt, AgriLife Extension state-wide fruit specialist, will be the presenter of this half-day workshop. The focus will be on fruits that can be successfully grown in Central Texas: stone fruits (peaches and plums), figs, pomegranates, and blackberries; but will also cover olives (a crop with quite a lot of interest from potential growers in the Hill Country at the moment) and citrus (with the current weather pattern of warmer winters in Central Texas, there are actually a few citrus crops that have real potential for Central Texas, if managed properly).

In addition to the wealth of knowledge that Mr. Nesbitt will share during his presentation, you’ll also have the unique opportunity to ask him questions particular to your own growing situation.

From site selection, soils, fertilization, and pruning to sustainable production practices and dealing with particular insects and diseases—we’ll cover the production basics, as well as unique specifics. This workshop is only offered semi-annually and is not to be missed!

8:30 to 9:00 AM     Registration
9:00 to 1:00 PM     Fruit Production Basics

There will be a half hour break in the middle of the workshop, with refreshments and the opportunity for networking.

Register online: [https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/TravisCounty](https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/TravisCounty)
Register by phone: 979-845-2604
TRAVIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION
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Texas AgriLife Extension Travis County Horticulture Agent: Daphne Richards
1600-B Smith Road, Austin, Texas 78721
512-854-9600 drichards@ag.tamu.edu
This issue of the Compost Bin has been published thanks to the contributions of the following Travis County Master Gardeners and Wizzie Brown — Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

**Photographers:**
Bruce Leander

**Contributing Writers:**
Wizzie Brown
Patty Leander
Jean Love El Harim

**Editor and Layout:**
Liath Appleton

**Editor:**
Martha King

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**The Compost Bin Submissions**

We are always looking for Travis County Master Gardeners who are interested in writing for our monthly newsletter, and we would love to see your articles, photographs, book reviews and gardening ideas.

**General Guidelines**

- Please first email the editor to discuss potential article ideas.
- Email contributions as attachments (preferably in Word with a .doc or .rtf suffix).
- Please send images as separate attachments (preferably .jpg suffix). Don’t forget to include photographer acknowledgments and captions.

Send your submissions, announcements, questions and suggestions to: editor.compostbin@gmail.com

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“For summer there, bear in mind, is a loitering gossip, that only begins to talk of leaving when September rises to go.”
- George Washington Cable