



Meet our Spring Class of 2013 Master Gardeners

Neoma Williams

"My husband used to say, 'One of these days is here,'" says Neoma Williams, a student in the Hale County Master Gardener Spring 2013 program.

When Williams read in the Plainview Herald last year, that the program was available in Plainview, she made plans to participate. An auto injury stopped her from doing much of anything for several months last fall.

When she read that the program was being offered in the Spring of 2013, she signed up. She had wanted to participate in the program for many years, but traveling to Lubbock or Amarillo twice a week for eight weeks was just too difficult.

Williams, almost 66 years old, is enjoying the program, and is looking forward to touring gardens and landscapes, particularly xeriscapes. Her "one of these days" is here, and she's taking advantage of it. She hopes to help beautify her home town of Hart once she's finished with the class.



Charlie & Aileene Williams

Charlie and Aileene Williams grew up in Lockney, Texas. Charlie was in the Army from 1956 to 1959, stationed in Germany and Lebanon. They both attended a couple of years of college in Canyon, Texas where they met and married December 28, 1960. Their family consists of 2 sons, 8 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren.

In 1969 they moved to Danbury, Texas, just South of Houston where Charlie worked for a chemical plant until he retired in 1999. After Charlie's retirement they moved back to the Texas Panhandle, just 16 miles North West of Tulia. They both stay busy. Charlie is an avid gardener and Aileene likes to sew.

Drexel Tipton

I was born and raised in Plainview by my parents Woodrow and Lorene Tipton along with two brothers and a younger sister. I grew up on Utica Street which in those days was on the very western edge of town with Yonkers Street being in the "country". My parents are deceased but my brothers and sister still reside in Plainview. I attended Highland Elementary, Coronado Junior High and Plainview High graduating in 1971 working in retail and waiting for the call from my uncle, Uncle Sam, but never got the call.

Meanwhile I had taken a job at Lillie Hoffman cooling towers on Date Street. One day after work I dropped by the garage that an uncle operated here with his partner. That day Hub told me they were looking for someone to work at the local Pontiac Cadillac dealership delivering cars, chasing parts, and light used car repairs. The next day I went to inquire about the job and was hired. I worked in the Parts department primarily but when the Parts Manager needed me I would be out in the shop with the mechanics. He understood and suggested I talk to the General Manager about moving into the shop. It was arranged and in a year the owner told me GM had a cooperative training program for new mechanics and asked if I was interested. I was and attended the Training Center in Garland Texas on a full scholarship with room and board, a car and gasoline furnished and tuition paid. I now work for Xcel Energy, running the shop taking care of our trucks and equipment.

Somewhere during this time circa 1973 I had a friend with a hot rod car and a pretty sister. Geneva Shaw and I were married in First Baptist Church Chapel July 5th 1974. I completed the school in Garland and my friend became my brother in law. Geneva and I have raised two great kids who live here in Plainview as well. We also have a granddaughter & grandson.

My reason for enrolling in the Master Gardner program is to gain a better knowledge of growing and maintaining trees shrubs and grass. I also started plants from seeds this spring and want to propagate plants and flowers as well. I live on a corner lot and want to improve the property and maybe the neighborhood.

Cynthia Ann Kingston

I was born and raised in Plainview. West Texas is in my blood. I enrolled in the Master Gardner's class with my husband Alex. We both enjoy fresh vegetables and fruits, especially homegrown tomatoes. I am very committed to learning how to become a "Plant to Plate" person - besides gardening I am learning to be an accomplished cook, using fresh herbs that I grow, in many recipes that I have developed. The Master Gardening Class has opened a new fascination with flowers and learning to understand what grows here in West Texas and how to grow them. I have a very well used Kindle because I read and I also enjoy watching my son Kit play sports and growing up here in Plainview.

Alexander Kingston

I followed my wife Cindy to Plainview, as a Civil Engineer I have a nomadic life - growing up in Denver CO, moving to California, Maryland and Nevada. I have enjoyed gardening ever since I was 5 years old and my Mother and I cleared an overgrown rose patch and found out they were raspberries. Growing up in Denver is gardening heaven and everything grows there. I converted my first backyard to a large garden and used every square inch to grow fruit and vegetables. Gardening in West Texas has presented many challenges. Since Civil Engineering positions are somewhat hard to find - I work as a substitute teacher at the Plainview High School. I read science fiction, Stephen King, detective novels and Rock-n-Roll Bio's. I listen to music 24/7 and have a very wide range of musical tastes. My favorite passion is watching my son Kit play football and run track.

Autumn Sage: *Salvia greggii*

by Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Occasionally, the common name of a plant is a bit misleading. The name 'Autumn Sage' conjures the image of a fall-flowering herb, yet Bailey Hortorium's *Hortus Third* describes this plant as a fall-flowering sub-shrub.

My experience with the Autumn Sage over a twenty-year period has been that it is almost constantly in flower from late spring until hard frost. Robert A. Vine's book, *Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines of the Southwest*, contains a more accurate description of the flowering habit, indicating summer and fall flowering on the shrub up to 3 feet.

The species name 'Greggii' honors Josiah Gregg (1806-1850), an early American explorer and botanist. *S. Greggii* is native to dry, sunny sites in southern and western Texas and New Mexico. It may also be found in the Mexican states of Coahuila, Sonora, and Durango. Although generally ignored by most nurserymen and home gardeners in this century, *S. Greggii* was a frequently-found plant in the cottage gardens of early Texas.

Once established, the plant usually thrives on existing rainfall. It does need at least tolerably good drainage, and thrives in full-sun or partially-shaded exposures. Thanks to increasing awareness about the plant among Extension horticulturists in Austin, San Antonio, and other areas, *S. Greggii* is now beginning to be utilized.

In recent years, the discovery of a broad range of colors within the species has greatly increased their landscape value. Pure white, rich red, pink, and salmon have now joined the more common purplish-red selections. Flowers appear in terminal racemes, are tube-shaped and two-lipped, and about one inch long. Leaves are opposite, narrowly oblong, with blade length 1/2 to 1-1/4 inches long. The foliage has a pleasant, spicy scent. Propagation is usually from cuttings taken during the growing season.



Landscape uses of *Salvia Greggii* are many. It is a natural for use in containers, masses, or borders, for low-maintenance landscape color. In landscape developments where a refined look is desired, the plants respond very well to periodic shearing to remove old flower stems during the summer. Occasional light applications of a balanced fertilizer, and irrigation during unusually dry periods, will ensure repeat flowering from May through November in most of Texas.

Little is known about the winter hardiness of *Salvia Greggii* north of the Dallas/Fort Worth area, but West and South Texas are excellent locations. Well-drained sites in East Texas produce handsome specimens.

Salvia Greggii is a beautiful, practical source of landscape color in most of Texas. It is another example of 'rediscovering' plants that were popular in the early gardens of Texas, but ignored by most people in the recent past. It will be available from Texas wholesale nurseries specializing in native plants, as well as garden centers in much of the state.

STRAWBERRIES, WEST TEXAS AND YOU

By: Alex Kingston



This spring has had a major theme and that is Strawberries. I went to the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension presentation on “Growing Strawberries on the Texas High Plains” by Russell W. Wallace. I also went on a tour of Mr. Mike Patrick’s Strawberry Garden in Plainview, Texas. With the tours and lectures I have attended this spring – Strawberries have taken a front and center position.

The word Strawberry always brings up the discussion of is it a fruit or not? The answer is always the same – Yes and No. No in the traditional sense of a fruit definition (Strawberry seeds and on the outside) and Yes because they are sweet and wonderfully juicy. In reality, Strawberries are an “Aggregate Fruit” – the real fruit are the objects we call seeds – properly called “Vacenes” and the Strawberry itself develops from several receptacles that hold the ovaries of a single flower. Since the “Berry” is really an “enlarged receptacle that holds the ovaries” the plant does not normally reproduce from “seeds” but uses “Runners.” Runner’s will grow along the soil and produce roots, which grow into a second generation Strawberry plant.

Growing any kind of Fruit or Vegetable in West Texas requires the conquering of two major foes – Water (as in lack of) and Wind. The Northern part of West Texas located in the High Plains is dominated by high winds most of the spring growing season. Moderate winds in the daytime hours with stronger winds as nightly storms pass over the area. Young, early plants are buffered by these winds and many fall victim to the relentless West Texas wind. Water is the second factor a person has to deal with in West Texas. A perpetual drought has set in on the High Plains and as water becomes scarce conservation methods are needed. Soaker and drip line hoses are being used more and more to insure the needed water is targeting the thirsty plants. Rainwater harvesting is becoming more and more popular every day.

With some extra effort and willingness to learn new growing methods – you can grow hearty and delicious Strawberries. The successful way for growing strawberries is the “Low Tunnel” method, which both Mr. Wallace (in his alley way) and Mr. Patrick have used. The “Low Tunnel” method is an extension of raised beds. The raised bed boxes are covered with a plastic sheet during a cold spell, or a windy day in winter and the strawberries are planted in long rows and watered with the use of a drip line. Strawberries are planted in the early fall and cared for over the winter months, allowing for an early spring crop.

Strawberries, after chocolate, are one of the most popular flavors in the world today. With a little extra time and care you can have your own wonderful tasting Strawberries for canning, jellies and jams, or as a topping for a dish of ice cream.

QUICK STRAWBERRY SPINACH SALAD

3 cups baby spinach leaves
1 cup sliced fresh strawberries
¼ cup of feta cheese
¼ cup of your favorite balsamic
Salad dressing (I use Ken’s Creamy Balsamic)

Add spinach and strawberries to a large bowl. Toss with the balsamic dressing and top with the feta cheese. So simple and delicious!

Photo Tour of Dr. Birkenfeld's place at Nazareth, TX. By L. T. Cooper



May Flowers

By: Maria Vasquez

Since April showers were replaced with a series of hard freezes between March and early May I have found that my garden is off to a slow start this year. My roses and irises had the leaves burnt off, lilies turned to mush, lilac blooms and two plantings of basil were lost. But in the last two weeks I am seeing signs of renewed growth and today I found the start of leaves on my butterfly bush that I just knew I had lost.

Now that the weather seems to be warming up it's time to try again because as all of you know gardening teaches patience. Here is a list of what I will be doing this month.



Visit your local plant nurseries to see what's available for you to plant. May is a great time for good selections of herbs, vegetables, annuals and perennials. I just planted some salvias, lavender, Blackfoot Daisies, and yarrow all great plants for our climate. Big box stores carry good plants too but educate yourself on what you buy as these retailers have buyers buying in bulk for all regions and what they carry may not be suited to this area. Don't forget to add some compost in the hole you plant is going into.

If you purchase acid loving plants for your garden or flower pots such as hydrangeas, wisteria and gardenias don't forget they will need some plant food with acid. Our soil is alkaline so these plants will need extra care. While on the subject of pots if you pot some geraniums don't over water them as this will stop them from blooming. Give them a good saturated watering and then wait until they are dry (flower pot will be light) before you water again this will keep them blooming!



Fertilize all your flower beds regularly with plant food with high levels of slow release nitrogen but whatever you do if you forget to water a plant and it looks dry don't fertilize it as this will finish killing it.

Continue pulling weeds (why don't they freeze...ugh) and watch for insects and disease.

These are just a few tips but every garden is different based on its location and microclimates within it. I live out in the country and fight wind where as someone in town might fight more heat due to surrounding buildings.

I am happy to tell you that my irises are starting to bloom, last year's Shasta Daisies started from seed have been moved from my starter bed into different areas and my peonies have very large buds and should bloom this week. I can't complain it's all good when it comes to gardening and now I have add ten chickens to my gardens so I have a new adventure. I have included some pictures for you to enjoy and yes that's a frog by the lemon balm that froze!



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*Texas Master Gardener*SM



- ◆ Farmer's Market coming to Gebo's parking lot on Thursday's! Date to be announced. (Probably sometime in May or June) If you have homegrown vegetables that you would like to sell call the Extension office 806.291.5267.
- ◆ Seed to Table gardening/cookbook available at Extension office for \$10. This comes in book or cd. Great information on growing vegetables!