

Denton County Master Gardener Association

# THE ROOT

Grow With Us



## Buds From The Board

BY KATHRYN WELLS, PRESIDENT

Hello, October—the most glorious month of the year!

Most folks love a spring garden, but autumn is my favorite—it's harvest time! Our October 13th General Meeting and Program will celebrate the season as we learn to create beautiful fall topiaries...with succulents! The presentation will be virtual via Zoom; advance registration is required, and as always, our general meetings are free and open to the public. The program will begin at 10 am; I hope you can join us!

And, you'll have it made in the shade with another virtual educational opportunity this month, courtesy of our Greater Aubrey Area Garden Series—Daniel Cunningham of Rooted In will present "Made for the Shade." Always an entertaining and engaging speaker, Daniel will share his favorite plants for those low-light areas of your garden. Advance registration is required. We really appreciate our partnership with Keep Aubrey Beautiful and the Aubrey Area Library for this annual series.

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GROWING ON



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Buds From The Board (Cont.)

Many in our community have recently shared that they always wanted to be a Master Gardener. I have good news for them (and for you!); applications are now being accepted for our 2022 intern class. A virtual Informational Meeting will be held on October 20th—a great opportunity for you to learn more about who we are and what we do. Advance registration is required. We look forward to meeting you, and we're happy that you're interested in growing with us!

Denton County Master Gardeners and Denton County residents—you are valued and appreciated. I hope this month is full of your very favorites.

*Kathryn*



**TOP GARDENING TIPS**

**October**

Continue sowing wildflower seeds. Press into the soil to facilitate germination; do not mulch.

Prepare tender plants to overwinter inside; check for insects.

Cut & freeze fresh herbs in oil for winter use in soups and stews. Leave the leaves! Compost, or use as mulch.

**#DCMGA #GROWWITHUS**

DENTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

## Janet's Corner

BY JANET LAMINACK, AGRILIFE EXTENSION HORTICULTURE AGENT, DENTON COUNTY

Know a fungi?

Mushrooms are a great subject because of the obvious pun value, but they are also interesting. And no, we aren't going to talk about eating mushrooms for food or pleasure. Also, since I'm not a mycologist, I'm going to keep this really simple, but hopefully factual.

Let's start with the basics. The part of a fungus that we call a mushroom is the fruiting body. It is like the flower of a fungus. It's the reproductive portion of the organism that contains spores.

What I find fascinating is that every mushroom or toadstool that pops up represents a much larger underground network of fungus called mycelium. Mycelium are thread-like and can expand for a long way (several kilometers was mentioned in one source!). They are the vegetative part of the fungus and only shoot up a mushroom when the timing is right. Often, this is after rain or a certain time of year.

If you have ever seen a fairy ring, that gives you a really good concept of the expanse of the mycelium. All the mushrooms that pop up in that ring are part of the same organism. That's why if you have a mushroom in your lawn or mulched landscape beds, there's not much of a point in doing anything about it. It's connected to so much more underneath. And besides that, these fungi are helping with the decay process of plant materials. If you have ever removed a tree, you might see a mushroom appear months or years later around the stump area. I've seen the mushrooms sprout up in a line from a trunk mirroring the tree roots the fungus is devouring.

Mushrooms can come in all sorts of sizes, shapes, and smells! A friend of mine recently had red fingerlike mushrooms coming up in a flower bed. She said they put out quite a stench and I just took her word on that. Some of the common names for that particular mushroom are stinkhorn and dead man's fingers. Another thing I like about mushrooms, the common names are straightforward. And sometimes even the scientific name. The stinkhorn family of fungi is *Phallaceae*. When people call me about the mysterious thing growing in their yard but are very sheepish about describing it...I usually suspect this mushroom family.



Photo Courtesy Janet Laminack



## Janet's Corner (Cont.)

Another friend sent me a photo of what appeared to be a bloody brain next to her flowers. Again, a mushroom, but what great Halloween décor! She says every year about this time they appear. This one is a red boletus. But there are puffball mushrooms that look brain-like with a species name of *craniiformis*. I haven't run across that one before, but in general puffballs are round, and poof when you kick them.



Photo Courtesy Heidi Klein

**RED BOLETUS MUSHROOM**



Canva Stock Photo

**PUFFBALL MUSHROOM**



Canva Stock Photo

**DOG VOMIT SLIME MOLD**

I'll close with what can be another disturbing find in your landscape: dog vomit slime mold. It's not actually a fungus, but how could I resist mentioning it? You will find this brightly colored, foamy-looking blob on mulch or in flower beds. And yep, it looks like dog vomit.

While these organisms appearing in your yard may be shocking, they don't stick around long. Within a day or two, they will have transformed, dried up, and will just be a memory that you probably won't soon forget.

## Josey Ranch Pocket Prairie

BY KATHY RAINEY

If you have driven by the Carrollton Public Library at Josey Ranch Lake in the past couple of years, you may have noticed a plot of undeveloped land without knowing it became the inspiration for the Josey Ranch Pocket Prairie project just planted early in the morning on September 18, 2021. Its location on Keller Springs Road is approximately one acre near the Library, Senior Center, Veteran's Memorial and parks. The recent transformation from a weedy, unkempt site to a beautifully designed pollinator garden was truly a team effort involving City leadership, Denton County Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists, and dedicated residents. Master Gardener Lela Khan has served as the Project Manager for the Pocket Prairie since September 2019.

The pocket prairie project started from a simple request for Master Gardeners to help at a workday. Pat Cochran, Mayor Pro Tem, approached Lela about establishing a program to help maintain the prairie which had mostly been taken over by weeds. As a Master Gardener Intern at the time, Lela admits it was an overwhelming request because she was still learning about native plants.

Looking back, Lela recognizes the support she received from City leadership, Denton County Master Naturalists, fellow Master Gardeners resulted in her accepting the challenge and that level of support continues to this day. When she and her team asked the city about the goals for the site, it was always very clear! They wanted the site to be educationally focused and it had to support wildlife.

Lela's team presented the city with elaborate designs focusing on outdoor learning areas overlooking the prairie, but then Covid-19 brought havoc to all their plans. With city budget cuts and staff reductions, the project was placed on hold. Park Board Members asked Lela's team to submit a design that could be completed in phases. Their vision remained clear – design an urban wildlife garden, emphasizing appropriate plant selection that city residents could mimic in their yards. The design had to fit in with the surrounding more formal areas, and future phases would focus on outdoor learning areas.



Photos Courtesy DCMGA Member Lela Khan

### It Takes a Team!

Over 40 volunteers planted and mulched the garden on September 18, 2021.



## Josey Ranch Pocket Prairie (Cont.)

While this small group of individuals continued to support the project and input their ideas, Master Gardener, Shirlee Singer was the genius behind the garden design. She describes the design as challenging because the site was not geometrical. It also had a four-foot drop in elevation and drainage issues. The design comprises three arcing planting beds with a curvilinear row of Yaupon Holly trees delineating the three garden beds. Plants that were selected are all native and adapted plants for North Texas to attract butterflies, bees, hummingbirds, song birds, other pollinators and beneficial wildlife. The plants are stair-stepped from tall in the mid area of the garden to short on the edges of the garden, including both evergreen and deciduous plant species and different bloom times to support pollinators migrating through the garden at all times of the year. Mulched pathways enable walking access to the garden where future signage will be added to identify the plant species. The garden fits within large open areas with existing pecan trees and monarch waystations established by Master Naturalists.



In June of this year, the final design was presented to the city, and all members agreed that it was beautiful and fit their expectations. The Parks Manager successfully received funding approval by the City Council and the installation date of September 18, 2021 was set. City

crews prepared the planting area, augered holes for all of the plants and then set plants in each hole to enable volunteers to plant mulch the entire garden. There were over 40 volunteers who gathered that Saturday morning at sun-up to plant and mulch the garden including 24 Denton County Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Citizen Foresters, Friends of Furneaux Creek, Carrollton residents, City Council members, and Parks Department managers and crew.

Lela will continue as Project Manager in future phases to ensure this project will continue as a learning center and demonstration garden where residents can learn about waterwise plants that benefit urban wildlife. Continued collaboration with Friends of Furneaux Creek is already in the works to provide plant signage. Also, the program will integrate the library with kiosk displays and provide onsite educational opportunities for adults and children in both Denton and Dallas Counties.

## Meet Becky Cortines

BY CHERYL HUCKABEE

Becky is both a dreamer and a planner. Before moving to their new property in southeast Denton County, she spent many hours sitting in a lawn chair on the property, absorbing the sounds, sights, and smells and dreaming of what her landscape could one day become. Her dream is beginning to become reality.

Becky grew up in a small town in north central Louisiana. Her parents had a vegetable garden, but she really loved flowers and would dig her own garden plot to plant her flower seeds. She worked for a large production company that eventually took her to east Texas in the late 70s. There, she met her husband, and together they moved from east Texas, to south Texas, then to Collin County where they lived for more than 20 years.

In 2014, Becky and her husband purchased 5 acres in south east Denton County. The property had 2 older homes on it, a cottage that was barely habitable, and a farm home that wasn't habitable. They lived in the cottage for 2 years while they researched remodeling one of the



**Big Muhly (*Muhlenbergia lindheimeri*) and Mexican Mint Marigold (*Tagetes lucida*)**



Photos Courtesy DCMGA Member Becky Cortines

### Becky Cortines DCMGA Class 2020

existing homes or building a new home. In the end, they decided to build a new home on an elevated spot that has a good view of many mature post oak trees, and a little slice of the nearby lake.

Prior to Master Gardener training in the DCMGA class of 2020, Becky was a self-taught gardener. During her time in Collin County she began to learn more about gardening in north Texas through Neil Sperry, a Texas gardening and horticulture expert and long-time resident of Collin County. She also purchased plants from Collin County Master Gardener Association and Heard Museum at their plant sales. After moving to Denton County, she began following Denton County Master Gardener Association and going to their plant sales.



## Beckey Cortines (Cont.)

Beckey's knowledge of gardening in Texas is significantly deeper now. She is a member of Native Plant Society of Texas and has completed Level 1 of NPSOT's Native Landscape Certification Program. She is currently an intern in the Texas Master Naturalist certification program. Her Denton County property gardens are growing right along with her gardening and wildscaping knowledge. Her property is part of National Wildlife Federation's "Certified Wildlife Habitat" Program. In addition, her property is a certified Monarch Waystation through Monarch Watch. Certified Monarch Waystations provide milkweed, nectar sources, and shelter needed to sustain monarch butterflies as they migrate through North America.



**Henry Duelberg (Salvia farinacea) & Purple Coneflower (Echinacea purpurea)**



**Blanket Flower (Gaillardia)**

The area around their new home was a blank slate when they moved into it in 2017. In the last four years, she's added many native plants. Beckey keeps a detailed garden journal noting characteristics of her plants throughout the year. This year, she's adding more space to the rain garden that was created to control run-off during heavy rain events. They also plan to mow less often on the acreage to see what native grasses and other plants might grow.

### *Some of Beckey's favorites:*

Spring: Winecup (*Callirhoe spp.*), Berlandier's Sundrops (*Calylophus berlandieri*) and Cutleaf Daisy (*Engelmannia peristenia*)

Summer: Henry Duelberg Salvia (*Salvia farinacea*), Blanket Flower (*Gaillardia*) and Rock Rose (*Pavonia lasiopetala*)

Fall: Copper Canyon Daisy (*Tagetes lemmonii*), Shrubby Boneset (*Ageratina havanensis*), Fall Aster (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*)

Winter: Grasses - Big Muhly (*Muhlenbergia lindheimeri*), Gulf Muhly (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*), Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)



## Beckey Cortines (Cont.)

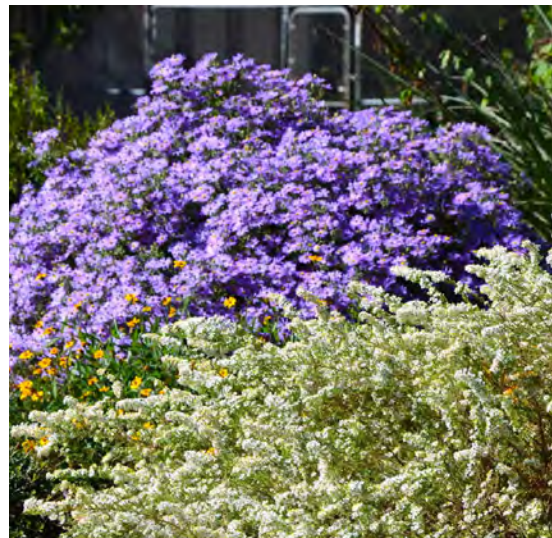
Her love for native plants 'blossomed' through DCMGA volunteer service at Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area (LLELA). She's also worked on the Garden Tour, Plant Sales, Doubletree Ranch Pavilion, Shiloh Fields, and Beulah Acres AgroForest. This year she is a mentor to five DCMGA interns. And, she's a 2022 Garden Tour co-captain for the "Urban Butterfly Oasis."

*Some of Beckey's new favorite gardening resources are:*

- Books by Douglas W. Tallamy, an entomologist and author who advocates for home gardens that bridge the gaps between parks and preserves in providing habitat for native species. (*The Nature of Oaks*, *Nature's Best Hope*, *The Living Landscape*, and *Bringing Nature Home*, all published by Timber Press)
- Facebook Group: "Texas Flora"  
<https://www.facebook.com/TexasFlora/>
- Facebook Group: "Landscaping with Texas Native Plants"  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/DFWNativePlants/>
- Book: *Native Texas Plants: Landscaping Region by Region* by Sally Wasowski, Gulf Publishing



**Rock Rose (Pavonia lasiopetala)**



**Shrubby Boneset (Ageratina havanensis) and Fall Aster (Symphyotrichum oblongifolium)**

We're very lucky that Beckey decided to "transplant" from Louisiana to Texas and gifted us with her dreams and passion for Texas native plants and habitats.

## Plant of the Month - Muhly Grasses

BY LEE ANN YATES

Still looking for a shrub substitute from the Big Freeze? A North American native, *Muhlenbergia capillaris*, or Muhly Grass sounds too good to be true, but it is truly one of those horticultural gifts you really should consider incorporating into your landscape. Long-lived, with little to no insect or disease problems and highly resistant to deer grazing, these delicate-looking ornamental grasses are perfect for the low-maintenance garden. Muhly grasses tolerate heat, humidity, drought, poor soil, and are highly salt tolerant. Air pollution has no negative affect on them, so they can be planted in high traffic areas. They grow in Zones 6-10. Autumn is when they really shine, blooming just as the rest of the garden is winding down and carrying your landscape through winter. Both the pink and white varieties are listed in Texas A&M's "Top 100 Plants for North Texas." Sound like something you might be interested in? Read on, dear gardeners!

Two varieties of *Muhlenbergia capillaris* are particularly popular and both thrive across Denton County – Pink (sometimes called Gulf) Muhly Grass and 'White Cloud' Muhly Grass. Pink Muhly Grass is native to a large swath of the United States, including Texas, while 'White Cloud' Muhly Grass was introduced by a nursery in Florida. Blooming from September through November, Pink Muhly sports



smoke-like clouds of tiny purplish-pink flowers on long, waving, dark green stems surrounded by thin, elegant leaves, while 'White Cloud' – as the name suggests – has white blooms swaying overhead, accompanied by blue-green stems and leaves. The bloom stems will grow to about half again the height of the plant.

Now, when I talk about grasses, you may think immediately of pampas grass – HUGE clumps of grass with very tall, fluffy spikes. They are stately and have their place; however Pink Muhly and 'White Cloud' will not dominate your landscape in the same way. Muhlys make a superb substitute for pampas grass or shrubs in smaller urban gardens, along house foundations, or in a "hell strip" next to the street. The flower spikes on both of these grasses are feathery, airy, literal clouds of color. So beautiful! They sway gently in the smallest breeze and lend a fairy-like, ethereal quality to your landscape. I don't mean to wax poetic...who am I kidding?! Yes, I do! I just love these plants! Let's look at the pink one first.



## Plant of the Month - Muhly Grasses (Cont.)

### *Pink Muhly*

As a Texas native, Pink Muhly is classified as a Texas Superstar plant and a Texas Smartscape (water-wise) plant. It grows to about one and a half feet wide by three feet tall. It's a perennial, low maintenance grass that likes well-draining soil, but isn't very particular about the type of soil – sandy, loamy, even clay as long as it has been amended to drain well. Pink Muhly forms in clumps, so you don't have to worry about rhizomes or stolons carrying babies to unwanted places. The clumps make good wildlife cover – birds really enjoy them. Plant this tough beauty in full sun to light shade and only water it regularly until it gets established, then only during periods of prolonged drought. It does not like to stand in water for several days.



This is a "hairy" plant (capillaris means hair-like) so it is not considered a fire-wise plant. Don't snug it right up next to your foundation – it will be happier (and safer!) in a landscape bed where it can be seen in all 360° of its glory! A hillside where erosion may be a problem is an ideal place for a mass planting! Perhaps you need an informal screen and don't want the usual hedge plants. Pink or 'White Cloud' Muhly spaced appropriately could be your answer (or placed in front of darker hollies or evergreens –

beautiful, textural layers!). And what a focal point in your garden a single plant could be – oh my, what a WOW centerpiece!

We often struggle to find plants that look lovely in winter, and since I always encourage you to "embrace the brown" of winter gardens, Pink Muhly shines again adding texture and interest! It turns a lovely light tan, retains its cloud of seedheads, and still looks dynamic in winter. The only maintenance Pink Muhly needs is an annual haircut in late winter to cut off the spent leaves and bloom spikes. Prune it back to a few inches tall and you will see new green growth as spring warms up. Fertilize only as your soil report says you need to – these hardy Texas beauties do not need extra fertilizer.

### *Propagating Muhly Grass*

To be designated a Texas Superstar, a plant must not only be beautiful and perform well, it must also be easy to propagate. Pink Muhly fits this bill also! It can be propagated by seed collected in the fall or winter when the seed heads begin to lose their color. Collect the seeds

## Plant of the Month - Muhly Grasses (Cont.)

during the warmest and driest part of the day. You can use a comb to avoid damaging the appearance of the plant. (Imagine telling your friends "I must comb the Pink Muhly's hair today!") Allow the seeds to air-dry for five to ten days and then they can be planted in pots to be ready for planting in the spring. The seeds do not need any cold treatment for germination so protect the potted babies from the cold. Watch them for aphids and feed those to ladybugs if you see any or spray with an insecticidal soap! Keep the soil moist consistently, but fertilization is not necessary. Pink Muhly germinates well and grows easily. When the babies are ready to go into the ground or a larger pot, plant them with the crown of the plant right at the soil surface so it doesn't get buried. Alternatively, you can divide existing clumps in early spring or summer, but do so before the flowering stage begins. Perhaps a friend has some that need dividing? Offer to help and maybe earn a free Pink Muhly!

### 'White Cloud' Muhly

As for 'White Cloud' Muhly Grass, the growing conditions (sun, soil, water) are identical to Pink (Gulf) Muhly. The leaves are a different green, as I mentioned earlier, and the flowers are, of course, a bright white. These are especially pretty in front of a darker background planting or a darker wall or fence, really highlighting their white blooms. 'White Cloud' also gets slightly bigger than its cousin – three to four feet tall, and two to three feet wide. It tends to be more upright and blooms a little later than Pink Muhly does. 'White Cloud' also maintains its seed heads over winter, providing texture and interest in a more diluted landscape. It is propagated by seed or by division in the same ways as Pink Muhly. Nor does 'White Cloud' have any serious disease or pest issues. You would cut it back in late winter just the same. It, too, looks beautiful planted in masses or drifts and combining the two varieties could make quite a statement. Mass plantings of the two Muhlys together would be just lovely along a driveway, on a hillside, or as a soft, flowing border between neighbors.



Both Pink (Gulf) Muhly and 'White Cloud' Muhly Grasses are increasing in local landscaping popularity. But that's not why you should plant them. You should plant them because they are not prima donnas of the gardening world. Who has time (or the back muscles!) for that! They are Texas tough and low everything – maintenance, water, fertilizer, soil – and high in the best way of all – they are bee-u-ti-ful! Check them out – you won't be disappointed! Happy Gardening!



## Plant of the Month - Muhly Grasses (Cont.)

### References

#### *Texas A&M Agrilife Extension*

"AgriLife Water University's Top 100 Plants for North Texas"

<https://cdn-ext.agnet.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/top-100-plants-for-north-texas.pdf>

#### *Clemson University – College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences*

"Muhlenbergia capillaris: White Muhly Grass"

[https://www.clemson.edu/cafls/demo/plant\\_profiles/muhlenbergia-capillaris-white-muhly-grass.html](https://www.clemson.edu/cafls/demo/plant_profiles/muhlenbergia-capillaris-white-muhly-grass.html)

#### *TexasSmartScape*

"Gulf Muhly"

<http://www.txsmartscape.com/plant-search/plant-details.php?id=256>

#### *Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center - Native Plants of North America database*

"Muhlenbergia capillaris"

[https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=muca2](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=muca2)

#### *Missouri Botanical Garden*

"Muhlenbergia capillaris 'White Cloud'"

<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=293631>

#### *USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service*

"Muhlenbergia capillaris (Lam.) Trin."

<https://plants.usda.gov/home/plantProfile?symbol=MUCA2>

### *Denton County Master Gardener YouTube Channel*

Click on "Videos" and check out our new presentations!

And don't forget to subscribe!

<http://www.youtube.com/c/DentonCountyMasterGardener>



# IT'S 2022 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!

Dues paid by January 31, 2022, \$15; \$25 after

The Fine Print

- Enter VS & CE hours in VMS by January 31, 2022
- Veterans need 12 hours VS & 12 hours CE in 2021
- Interns need 70 hours VS & 50 hours training in 2021
- On March 31, 2022 members not in good standing will be inactivated unless granted an exception by the CEA-Hort.

Email Tammie Gurley with questions [tmgurley@msn.com](mailto:tmgurley@msn.com)



Scan or go to Annual DCMGA Membership Renewal on [dcmga.com](http://dcmga.com) to submit your renewal and payment



## What's Growing in Members' Gardens



Photo: DCMGA member Janet Gershenfeld

**Golden Raspberries**  
*Rubus ellipticus*

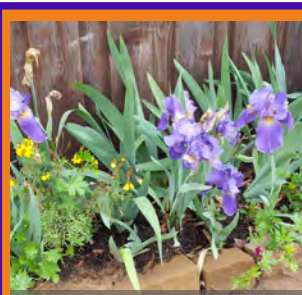


Photo: DCMGA member Liz Moyer

**Purple Bearded Iris**  
*Iris x. germanica*

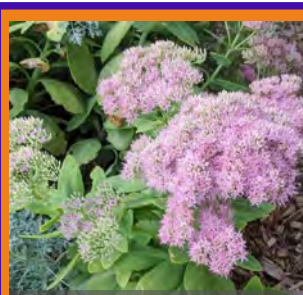


Photo: DCMGA member Lea Watson

**Pink Stonecrop**  
*Sedum/Hylotelephium*

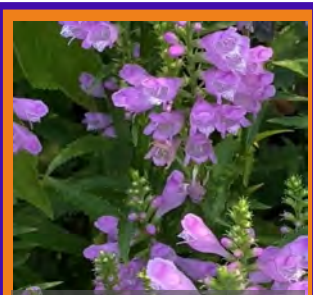


Photo: DCMGA member Joanne Spurgin

**Fall Obedient Plant**  
*Physostegia virginiana*



## To Cut or Not to Cut *Pruning Perennials in the Fall*

BY CHERYL HUCKABEE

Perennial plants, just like people, need rest and a little tidying up to be fresh and look their best. The timing of this effort is essential to their health, attractiveness, and regrowth in the spring. The tricky part is knowing what to cut back, or not, and when. Let's start with a simple botany lesson on the differences in the plant classifications of **herbaceous perennial plants vs. woody perennial plants**. The plant classification is important in their maintenance.

**Herbaceous plants** have soft and flexible stems, where **woody plants** have strong and inflexible stems. Herbaceous plants can have perennial, biennial, or annual life spans. Most woody plants have perennial life spans with stems that live for several years adding new growth in height and width each year (shrubs and trees). **Herbaceous perennial plants** die down to the ground each year but their roots remain alive and send up new growth each year.

In general, herbaceous perennials should be cut back to near the soil level, 2" to 6" high, when their foliage and stems freeze after a couple of hard freezes have occurred. In North Central Texas, the first freeze typically occurs in mid-November.

There are a few exceptions to this rule of thumb. Perennials that provide food for birds should be left standing through the winter, cutting them back in late winter or early spring before they put out new growth. Also, perennials that add interest to the landscape in winter should be left standing until early spring.

Here are some tips on what and when to cut back and which to leave standing until early spring.

### *Leave standing, cutting back in late winter or early spring:*

- Ornamental grasses for winter interest (e.g., Inland Sea Oats, Mexican Feather Grass, Texas Sedge, Muhly)
- Perennials that provide food for birds such as Sedums, Coneflower, Black-eyed Susans, Sunflower, and Coreopsis



**Inland Sea Oats,**  
Chasmanthium latifolium, leave standing.

## To Cut or Not to Cut (Cont.)

### *Leave standing, cutting back in late winter or early spring: (cont.)*

- Tender perennials such as Garden Mums, Hyssop, Red Hot Poker, and Montauk Daisy should be left standing because their foliage provides some protection for their roots (Note: Tender perennials are plants that if planted in warmer zones would be perennial and continue to grow and come back each year; many are considered annuals here in North Texas (e.g., Dahlia, Carnation, Gazania, Ornamental Peppers, Caladium, Tuberous Begonia)
- Low growing evergreen or semi-evergreen plants such as Stella d'Oro Daylily, Hardy Geranium, Coral Bells/Heuchera, Hellebores, Dianthus, and Moss Phlox
- Ferns, such as Autumn Fern or Southern Wood Fern, can be trimmed a bit before frost, but should not be heavily cut back because their fronds help protect them in the winter

### *Prune to shape after frost:*

These herbaceous perennials should be cut back to prune or shape only, typically removing 50% of the plant. Examples include Damianita Daisies, Mist Flower, Turk's Cap, Blackfoot Daisy, Salvias, and Sages.



**Blue Mistflower,**  
*Chromolaena odorata,*  
shape after frost.



**Shasta Daisy,**  
*Leucanthemum x superbum,*  
cut flower stalks

### *Cut-back the flower stalks, leave new basal leaf growth after frost:*

Perennials such as Yarrow, Shasta Daisy, and Globe Thistle will put out new foliage at their base in the fall. With these, you should remove the flower stalks after a couple of hard freezes and leave the new basal leaf growth in place.



## To Cut or Not to Cut (Cont.)

### *Cut-back to near ground level after frost:*

Many herbaceous perennials fall into this maintenance category. The leaves and stems of these plants will blacken or turn brown after a hard freeze, and they will appear to die back to the ground. Cut-back these to near ground level, leaving 2" as a reminder of their location next spring. Examples include Bee Balm, Flame Acanthus, Gaura, Texas Star Hibiscus, Rock Rose, Skullcap, Canna, Garden Phlox, Hosta, Peony, Daylilies, Brunnera, Speedwell, and many more. A couple of exceptions include Lantana, which should be cut back to 6", and Texas Columbine, which grows foliage in winter, should not be cut back until after spring bloom.



**Bee Balm,**

Monarda, cut to ground level

### *How to cut back:*

- Wait until after a couple of hard frosts have occurred before beginning to cut back
- Use by-pass clippers or loppers because they make clean cuts rather than crushing the stems
- Remove all plant debris, including any on the soil under the plant. If the stems or leaves show signs of disease, discard them in the trash, do not compost them

Your herbaceous perennial plants will reward you next spring with beautiful flowers and foliage because of your tender loving care this fall!

### *Sources and Resources*

University of Nebraska – Lincoln, Plant Classification, Herbaceous vs. Woody

<https://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/ec1258.pdf>

PennState Extension, General Perennial Plant Pruning, "Cutting Down Perennials in the Fall"

<https://extension.psu.edu/cutting-down-perennials-in-the-fall>

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Aggie Horticulture, Plant Answers Category Pruning

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/parsons/search.php?category=Pruning>

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Specific Plant Maintenance, Native Plant Database

<https://www.wildflower.org/plants-main>

Missouri Botanical Garden, Plant Finder

<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plantfinder/plantfindersearch.aspx>



**TEXAS**  
MASTER GARDENER

**Want to Be a Master Gardener?**

DENTON COUNTY  
MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

Now Recruiting for Our  
2022 Intern Class  
Applications Accepted  
August 10 - October 22, 2021

JOIN US for our  
General Meeting 10 am, October 13,  
&  
Informational Meeting  
10 am, October 20  
at  
Global Spheres Center  
7801 S I-35, Corinth TX, 75210

Details and applications available at  
[www.dcmga.com](http://www.dcmga.com)  
#GrowWithUs

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is an equal opportunity employer and program provider. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating. We seek to provide reasonable accommodation for all persons with disabilities for this program and ask that you notify the Denton County AgriLife Extension Office of the auxiliary aid or service that will be required.



**Website**

"Everything You Need to Know About Texas Wildflowers" (2021). Texas Highways. A comprehensive guide to Texas wildflowers; includes a top 20 field guide, identification tips, when & where to see wildflowers, how to grow wildflowers & lots of photos. <https://texashighways.com/wildflowers/>

**Book**

"The Lifelong Gardener: Garden with Ease and Joy at Any Age" (2019). Toni Gattone. Timber Press. The author shares methods and techniques for making gardening easier for aging gardeners with illustrations.

**Cooperative Conservation Project**

"Homegrown National Park™" (2021). A 501(3)(c) non-profit organization whose mission is to encourage anyone with some soil to plant in to start a new habitat by planting native plants and removing the most invasive plants. <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>

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## Hidden Treasures Update

BY JUDY ALLEN & MELISSA MIGIS

*Editor's Note: In the [April 2021 issue of The Root](#), we highlighted some of our local parks and public gardens, Hidden Treasures in Denton County. Our intrepid Master Gardeners Judy Allen and Melissa Migis revisited some of the parks and gardens to discover if/how they have recovered from the havoc that last February's Winter Storm Uri wrought. Here is their update.*

Judy and I visited The Wildflower Prairie, Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center, Quakertown Park, and Cross Timbers Park in early September. Our mission was to see if the wetter and cooler than normal summer had a positive impact on these areas in Denton County. The answer is yes!

The Wildflower Prairie had many things in bloom and there was evidence where many things had bloomed and had gone to seed. We saw Common boneset, Swamp rose mallow, Azure blue sage, Common sunflower, Snow on the prairie, perennial grasses, and various salvias.



**Common sunflower**  
(*Helianthus annuus*)



**Mealycup sage**  
(*Salvia farinacea*)



**Swamp rose mallow**  
(*Hibiscus moscheutos*)

At Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center there was a mass of blooms even in these late days of Summer. Many plants had already gone to seed, but there was still a beautiful display of flowers. We saw gorgeous Turks Cap, Swamp Rose, Scarlet and Mealy Cup Sage, various sunflowers, Rose mallow, and a Yucca putting out its last beautiful bloom stalk before Fall.



**Snow on the Prairie**  
(*Euphorbia bicolor*)

## Hidden Treasures Update (Cont.)

Quakertown Park was less impressive. We saw some flowers but also saw many dead plants.

Cross Timbers Park was green and overgrown with no blooms. The trails were shaded by the trees and there was water in the creek.

Our general consensus is that most natives survived "Snowmageddon" and actually seemed no worse for it. Certain shrubs and non-native plants had a less desirable outcome. This is a great example of why we promote the planting of our beautiful native plants that we have here in North Texas. We need plants that can take our extreme weather conditions, not only in winter but through the long hot summer as well.

*Our hope is that everyone will take advantage of the wonderful natural places that we have here in Denton County. On our website, [DCMGA.com](http://DCMGA.com), under North Texas Gardening, select **HOT TOPICS** for information on 16 gardens and trails in Denton County.*

### Join Denton County MGA in cyberspace for our October General Meeting & Program.

We're pleased to feature Wanda Stutsman, who will present "Fall Succulent Topiaries", a fun, seasonal topic!

**Advance registration is required.**

As always, our General Meeting programs are open to the public and free of charge.

TEXAS MASTER GARDENER  
DENTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION  
OCTOBER 2021  
*Virtual*  
**GENERAL MEETING & PROGRAM**  
*"Fall Succulent Topiaries"*  
PRESENTED BY WANDA STUTSMAN  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 13TH, 2021  
10:00 AM - 12 NOON  
VIA ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE



## Celebrate October With Pumpkins

BY BARBARA BROWN

Fall temperatures have finally arrived bringing with them a cascade of large and small pumpkins displays at our local supermarkets and garden centers. If you want to celebrate the season with some pumpkin-themed attractions, you have many opportunities to express your creativity.

Pumpkins can be grouped with seasonal plants to welcome visitors to your front entry. Small pumpkins, arranged with fall leaves and candles, provide a seasonal table centerpiece or fireplace mantle display. Or, a talented pumpkin carver can create an eye-catching pumpkin illuminated with a string of lights. That's all well and good for some, but what pumpkin activity can you do that includes small children you ask?

How about pumpkin painting? It's a fun and safe activity for all ages including young children. With just a few supplies and some together time, your kiddoes can create and show off their pumpkin art.

### *Supplies You Need*

- A fairly small, smooth pumpkin
- Tempera or washable paint
- Stick-on decorations (optional)
- School glue
- A foam or small paint brush
- Acrylic sealer
- Paper plate to hold paint samples
- Paper towels for periodic clean up



### *Make It Happen*

Wash pumpkin to remove any dirt particles and dry. Cover your work surface with cloth or newspaper as the painting process may be a bit messy with young children. Spray the pumpkin with an acrylic sealer and allowed it to dry thoroughly. Mix each paint color with school glue at about a 50/50 ratio. The glue helps the paint stick on the pumpkin and not flake off after it dries. Place dollops of each paint mixture on a paper plate. Hand out the brushes and Go! After the pumpkin painting is complete and the paint has dried, spray the pumpkin again with the sealer.

## Celebrate October With Pumpkins (Cont.)

**Note:** It is best (but not always possible) to paint the pumpkin one half at a time allowing some drying in between to keep from smearing wet paint.

**Pumpkin trivia:** Texas is the fourth largest commercial pumpkin growing state. Although most commercial pumpkins grown in Texas come from our western counties, you can even grow small to medium-sized pumpkins right here in North Texas by planting seeds in late spring. Give the plants lots of space as the vines spread out.



DCMGA member Phyllis Minton discovered these two monarchs hanging off a zinnia one 52-degree morning this past September. They began flying around once it warmed up to 70 degrees.



## Online Education Opportunities

For Master Gardeners and the Community We Serve



Science-based knowledge on a variety of topics in an innovative and interactive virtual format.



### DCMGA General Meeting Presentations

October 13, 2021. 10:00 am to Noon

Open To The Public

"Fall Succulent Topiaries" presented by Wanda Stutsman

To Register:

<https://uso2web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYuf-GsrD4pHN1rRS5ZTRqNO1rInOcXRwSW>

November 10, 2021. 10:00 am to Noon

Open To The Public

"African Violets" presented by Ann Athey

### Upper Trinity Regional Water District, City of Lewisville and Keep Lewisville Beautiful virtual classes

Information to help you save water year-round.

[Spring Into Action for Long-Term Success](#)

[Soil Preparation and How to Plant a Plant](#)

[Lawn Care Basics](#)

[Getting Started With Natives](#)

### Chat with Green Aggies

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Join us for CWGA 12:12pm, 1st and 3rd Thursday each month. Please register for both

1st Thursday at <https://tinyurl.com/wpwcxwza> &

3rd Thursday at <https://tinyurl.com/urc5mr3m>

so that you don't miss any chats.

Oct. 7 - Turfgrass field day special edition

Oct 21 - Fall Favorites

Nov. 4 Disease prevention in Fall; Greenhouse sanitation

Nov 18 Preparing for winter

### Greater Aubrey Area Gardening Series (GAAGS)

October 21st: Made for the Shade, Daniel Cunningham, Rooted In.

6:00-7:00pm

Please register for this virtual (Zoom) Class:

<https://uso2web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMld-urj4vHNLAJf82vARuN-GNqSyN5e5g>

### Tarrant Regional Water District & Tarrant County Master Gardeners

Toni Moorehead "Tough Texas Plants"

Part 1: <https://youtu.be/GPkDJtkn-Jc>

Part 2: <https://youtu.be/3wwDY38VVLg>

Part 3: <https://youtu.be/kZKXOieXJMw>

### Tuesdays with Texas Master Naturalists

On the Second Tuesday of each month at the noon hour (12PM Central Standard Time), the TMN State Office will offer an hour-long virtual advanced training event. These will be recorded each month and shared to the website by the following day of each month. Here's a link to one YouTube video: A Presentation by Doug Tallamy - "Nature's Best Hope"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WY4aV5hqkxY>

### Chat with Green Aggies

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

All previous Chat with Green Aggies recordings:

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxT5cUdFaycrUzUiWSA46JRPGBYSFiFzH)

[list=PLxT5cUdFaycrUzUiWSA46JRPGBYSFiFzH](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxT5cUdFaycrUzUiWSA46JRPGBYSFiFzH)



## Online Education Opportunities (Cont.)

### AgriLife Online Courses

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

(Most, but not all, are free.)

<https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu/catalog?pagename=Plants-and-Garden>

### Earth-Kind® Online Master Gardener Training

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/training/>

### Introduction to Plant Identification

UDSA NRCS Science & Technology

<http://www.conservationwebinars.net/webinars/introduction-to-plant-identification>

### Aggie Horticulture YouTube

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbp4wkcScRV0HlN3Hi1\\_KUQ/](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbp4wkcScRV0HlN3Hi1_KUQ/)

### DCMGA YouTube CE Programs

"Waterwise Gardening"

"The Ease of Effective Hardscaping"

"The Pleasures & Pitfalls of Perennial Plants"

"Gardens Gone Wild"

"Getting Buggy"

"Texas Trees: Caring for Your Legacy"

"Using Technology for Plant Identification"

<https://www.youtube.com/c/DentonCountyMasterGardener>

### Metroplex Tamil Sangam Gardening – "Perennial Gardening in North Texas" By "Sharrie & Rick Ely"

Presentation by DCMGA Member Sharrie Ely

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pF-BMdAaoqM>

### Home Grown Lecture Series from Harris County Master Gardeners

Join us for our Free, 30-minute, bi-weekly ONLINE on Thursdays at 10 AM Central time. Must register through Eventbrite to get the webinar link.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/home-grown-lecture-series-tickets-143797364789?aff=erelexpmlt>

October 7, 2021 – Creating a Combination Planter – Paul Winski, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agent – Commercial Horticulture

November 4, 2021 – Citrus Trees for the Landscape – Brandi Keller, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agent – Residential Horticulture

### Gardening 101 + Virtual Learning Series

Aggie Horticulture

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Texas AgriLife posts great videos to the Aggie Horticulture Facebook. There are over 50 presentations here. View them at:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/Aggie-Horticulture-26803072143/1541129202716211/>

### Citrus Varieties: Gardening on the Gulf Coast

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Stephen Brueggerhoff, Extension Agent – Horticulture

<https://youtu.be/wSIRjQJnxhE>

### The Bee Short Course – Ohio State University

"Building wild bee conservation skills together"

<https://u.osu.edu/beecourse/>

#### DCMGA Members

Plan Your Week emailed each Friday has the most current Online CE Opportunities.

See our [Member Handbook](#) for approved CE sources and guidelines. Note that members may claim up to 3 hours of annual discretionary education; veteran members with 10+ years of service may claim up to 6 hours.



#### BY HELP DESK TEAM

*Q: It seems like I've seen more fire ants later in the summer this year than I have before. Is there a reason for that? And, how do I get rid of them?*

**A:** We had an unusually wet August in North Texas this year. Imported and native fire ants are often more visible in the landscape after it rains. The first step is accurately determining that you're dealing with imported fire ants. Then, follow the Two-Step Fire Ant Control Method to manage the fire ants in your landscape.

#### Imported Red Fire Ant Identification

There are hundreds of species of ants in North Texas, and most are not harmful. Most ants are beneficial insects because they prey on other insects and effectively aerate more soil than earthworms. Accurately identifying the species of ant will ensure that the control measures taken are effective. There are four native fire ant species in Texas, and the fifth species is the imported red fire ant. The native fire ant species are not as aggressive as the imported red fire ant. (Cook et al.)

Imported red fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*) have several characteristics (Cook et al.):

- They are aggressive and run up any object placed into their nest and try to bite and sting it.
- They have a narrow "waist" between the thorax and abdomen with a petiole and a postpetiole.
- Their antennae are jointed like an elbow.
- Other physical characteristics unique to the imported red fire ant are more challenging to see without a microscope. They include a "median clypeal tooth, a striated mesepimeron, the antennal scape nearly reaches the vertex, the postpetiole is constricted at the back half, and the petiolar process is small or absent." (Cook et al.)



#### Fire Ant Swarms

Fire ants will swarm after it rains, particularly following a dry period as we had in July. Swarming is how fire ants reproduce and expand their range. You may see winged male and female ants exiting the mound. They mate in the air while flying. The male ant dies, the female ant falls to the ground, burrows into the ground, and lays eggs to start a new colony. Swarming fire ants can be confused with termite swarmers. Along with the physical characteristics listed above, the fire ant's front wings are longer than the back wings. (Hu)

Fire ant swarmers are attracted to reflective, shiny surfaces. You may spot them in swimming pools, ponds, or water features. Float a tennis ball or two in the water for the ants to climb onto (they're not good swimmers). Collect the tennis balls and drop them into a plastic bag, tie off or seal, then discard. (Hu)

### Two Steps to Control Fire Ants

Eradication or total elimination of fire ants is not possible or practical. However, following these steps recommended by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and many other state extension services will effectively control fire ants in the landscape.

#### Step 1 - Apply Fire Ant Bait

Applying a fire ant bait product twice annually is an effective and cost-efficient method of controlling fire ants. The ants do the work for you, gathering the bait and taking it back to the colony, which is ingested by the ant larvae, worker ants, and queen, effectively killing the entire colony. Fire ants forage up to 300 feet from their mounds, so broadcasting bait is effective and doesn't require knowing where the mounds are.

Fire ant baits are typically in granular form. Their low toxicity and low application rate make them one of the safest control methods for homeowners to use. They are best used as a broadcast, using a hand-held spreader. Set the hand-held spreader with a narrow opening to distribute 1 to 1.5 lbs per acre. Drop spreaders typically cannot be set with a narrow enough "gate" opening to broadcast the small amount needed.

#### Step 2 - Spot Treat Individual Mounds

Spot-treat individual mounds or colonies in high traffic areas, which may be more visible after rain. (Schattenberg) Many labeled products for non-bait fire ant control are available in dust, liquid concentrates or drenches, or granular forms. These treatments will usually kill the colony in 1 to 2 days.

#### Tips for Using Fire Ant Bait

1. Apply fire ant bait twice annually, once in spring (May/early June) and again in fall (late September/October).
2. Baits work best when fire ants are actively foraging for food. To find out if they're foraging, drop a few greasy potato chips several places in the landscape. After 20 to 30 minutes, check the potato chips for fire ants. If they're on the chips, they're foraging, and it's a good time to broadcast fire ant bait.
3. Use fresh bait; purchase just enough to treat one season. Fire ant bait uses soybean oil as an attractant. Soybean oil can become rancid quickly and will no longer be attractive to the ants.
4. Apply the bait when it's dry, at least 4 hours before expected rain. Wait to apply until the morning dew has dried. Do not water in the pesticide and turn off irrigation.
5. Broadcast the bait around the perimeter of the home, in the garden, and compost pile.

#### A Few Final Words

Following these steps, with the appropriately labeled products and at the right time, really work. Home DIY remedies such as sprinkling grits over the mound do not work, and some DIY methods can be dangerous (e.g., gasoline or other petroleum products). Always carefully read the product label for application instructions, safety precautions, and proper disposal.



### Sources and Resources

Bertagnolli, Vicky. "Hints and Tips for an Effective Fire Ant Management Program in Home Landscapes Using Broadcast Baits." Clemson Cooperative Extension Home & Garden Information Center, 2020, <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/hints-and-tips-for-an-effective-fire-ant-management-program-in-home-landscapes-using-broadcast-baits/>. Accessed 09/05/ 2021.

Cook, Jerry L., et al. "Key to Common Pest Ants and Fire Ant Species." Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, 2014, [http://fireant.tamu.edu/files/2014/03/ENTO\\_001.pdf](http://fireant.tamu.edu/files/2014/03/ENTO_001.pdf). Accessed 09/05/ 2021.

Hu, Xing Ping. "Swarming Fire Ants." Alabama A&M and Auburn Universities Extension, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, 2021, <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/lawn-garden/swarming-fire-ants/>. Accessed 09/05/ 2021.

Schattenberg, Paul. "Spring is the time for Texans to 'two-step' toward fire ant control." AgriLife Today, 2020, <https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2020/05/13/spring-is-the-time-for-texans-to-two-step-toward-fire-ant-control/>. Accessed 09/05/ 2021.



Fire ants cluster in water by Junglecat (licensed under CC-BY-SA-3.0)



*If you have questions about any horticulture-related subjects,  
please contact our Master Gardener Help Desk at 940.349.2892  
or [master.gardener@dentoncounty.gov](mailto:master.gardener@dentoncounty.gov).*

*It's free of charge, and our pleasure to assist you.*

# Denton County Master Gardener Association

## 2021 Events

DCMGA General Membership Meeting program:

October 13, 2021

Program: "Fall Succulent Topiaries" by Wanda Stutsman

Greater Aubrey Area Gardening Series:

October 21: "Made for the Shade" by Daniel Cunningham

Next year's presentations coming soon!

Garden Tour: Cancelled

DCMGA New Member Round Up: October 20



DCMGA.COM



**Mission Statement**

Denton County Master Gardener Association educates and engages county residents in the implementation of research-based horticultural and environmental practices that create sustainable gardens, landscapes, and communities.

**Extension EO/EEO Statement**

Texas A&M Agrilife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

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<https://www.pinterest.com/DentonCountyMGA>

YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/c/DentonCountyMasterGardener>

**Save the Date**

- October 6 Board Meeting - (Virtual)
- October 13 General Meeting & Program - "Fall Succulent Topiaries" (Virtual)



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**Content**

**Submission deadline for the November edition of *The Root is Friday, October 15*.** Submissions may be revised at the discretion of the editor.

Ideas, photos, and articles are welcome and may be submitted to Editor Karen Gibson or Communications Director Cheryl Huckabee at [dcmga.communications@gmail.com](mailto:dcmga.communications@gmail.com).

All photos are courtesy of DCMGA's Creative Visual Arts (CVA) Team unless otherwise attributed.