



# Horti-Bull

## HORTICULTURAL BULLETIN

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## MGCSA Calendar 2020

The COVID scare is still with us and our schedule is still in shambles. There is no November meeting, and no Christmas Banquet is planned at this time.



Todd Mermin

### Greetings fellow gardeners and plant lovers. *From the President*

Fall has arrived, the leaves are falling in addition to pecans. The Tamalada at Barbara Lamm's was a success. It was good to see the members who did show up. From speaking with several members there is a yearning for more fellowship. I can't say I don't feel the same; however, we need to be smart/cautious where and how we meet. For now there is no concrete schedule of club events. The greenhouse cleanup had to be put off to a later date and there is **no firm date set for our next General or Board meeting**. Most disheartening, the Christmas Banquet is off the calendar for 2020. We are exploring the possibility/practicality of a zoom meeting.

For now, stay safe and be ready when we are able to congregate again. Oh! That's me on the right admiring my night blooming Dragon Fruit. **TODD**



### Annual Siebold Hollywood Park Yard Sale

*by Paul D Huegel*

Each year the MGCSA has been invited to participate in the Hollywood Park Garage/Yard Sale by our member hosts Earl and Joyce Siebold. This year was different in that the event was postponed from the usual April time frame due to the COVID-19 pandemic and took place on October 1-3 with picture perfect weather all three days. The delayed event posed some problems in selecting plants to sell given the time of year and the fact that many people do not plant the Fall growing season. On the latter point, I think that COVID-19 actually brought more people out to buy plants as an escape from their confinement. That and some promotion on the radio on the KLUP Gardening South Texas show with Dr. Jerry Parsons and Dr Calvin Finch the weekend before the event may have helped as well. We got to promote the event and the Club as well on Saturday and Sunday in two show segments. As for the three day Hollywood Park event itself organized by Darlene Badorski, Robert McDaniel, Ken Wolfgram and Joyce, it was a great success both in member support and plant sales. It was a record breaking year in sales and profit for the Club. This year we had more donations which meant we spent less money on nursery purchased plants. This was a blessing given the fact that the pandemic prevented us from holding the other fund raisers we normally hold during the year. Thanks to David & Darlene Badorski, Phil Byrd, Diana Fox, Barbara Hall, Vallerie Hartfield, Sharon Hughes, Barbara Lamm, Teresa & Leonard Martinez, Jane McDaniel, John Opiela, Ken Wolfgram, and myself who donated plants and other items for sale and for their help in setting up the displays. This was an especially difficult logistics undertaking but thanks to efforts of Leonard Martinez, Robert McDaniel, John Opiela and yours truly we made it happen. This year's Hollywood Park event was different in one other very special way. We did not have Earl Siebold there to gently guide us as he did for the past fifteen years. While Earl was not with us in person, he was there in spirit as his legacy of dedication inspired us on.



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### Calvin's Corner

By Dr. Calvin Finch, Retired Texas A&M Horticulturalist

#### Horti-Bull Gardening Calendar for November

It is not too late to plant your winter vegetable garden, in fact, November is the best time to plant spinach transplants. Spinach does not require as much space (or produce as much!) as broccoli or Swiss Chard so instead of 2 feet between plants 18 inches or even 1 foot will work. Prepare the bed by incorporating 2 inches of compost and 10 cups of slow-release lawn fertilizer per 100 sq ft of bed.

After the spinach is established, it works well to harvest up to one-third of the leaves at a time on an ongoing basis as you need them. Spinach is sensitive to heat, so hot spells temporarily cut back production.

In addition to spinach you can still plant broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, collards, kale, Swiss chard, and Chinese cabbage by transplants. Fertilize all the greens generously as was described for spinach. Plant radish, beets, lettuce, turnips, and carrots by seed. Side dress the winter vegetables including spinach every month with "winterizer" fertilizer. Greens are high nutrient users.

Watch the weather forecast. Your fall tomatoes will require protection from the cold through November if you are going to harvest any large size fruit. Have the plant covering and heat source ready just in case. Often if you can protect the plants from the first light freeze you may receive another 5 or 6 weeks of mild weather which could mean harvesting full size tomatoes in December.

In the flower garden you will usually be able to enjoy blooms from zinnia and other warm weather annuals for the month of November, but you can also go ahead and plant snapdragon, stocks, dianthus, alyssum, petunias, pansies, and calendula in the sun. For the shade use cyclamen and primula for color. Protect cyclamen from cold spells of 30 degrees or less. Petunias, snapdragons, and stocks will often take a break from blooming in December and January but will bloom again in the late winter and early spring.

November is the big month for citrus harvest. Limes, lemons, satsumas, and grapefruit come ripe in large numbers. Sometimes they do not completely change color, but they should be used up before the quality declines.

Take advantage of the lull in new hackberry and mulberry seedling germination by cutting them back to ground level and then applying Cut Vine and Stump Killer to the stems. The herbicide is inexpensive and works well to kill the seedlings, roots and all.

November is an excellent time to plant shade trees. In addition to the cool weather you can take advantage of plant sales at nurseries. Select from among live oak, Texas red oak, Mexican white oak, Mexican sycamore, cedar elm, bur oak, and chinkapin oak. Dig the planting hole to the same depth as the container and 2 times as wide. The trees listed are well adapted for our soils, so no supplemental soil additives are recommended. Cover the root ball area with 3 inches of mulch and water generously weekly or every time the soil dries to 2 inches deep.

### MGCSA Officers for 2020

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### MEMBER INFORMATION

From Vallerie Hartfield

I hope you are all taking care of yourselves physically, mentally, and spiritually. Please let me know what you have been doing to cope with this pandemic.

It was great to see Delphine Beck back with us again at the Tamalada. She seemed chipper and to have enjoyed her time with us. Many thanks to her daughter for bringing her.

Happy Birthday to all who have celebrated another year of life, it is truly a blessing. May God continue to bless you with the love, peace, and happiness with family and friends. Have you had a birthday parade? Let us know how you felt.

Did you leave something at the Beck Tamalada? Found in the bed of a pick up truck—black coat, red shirt, and a man's watch. Call Darlene at 1-815-436-3970 if they belong to you.

## Easy-to-Make Plant Fertilizers by Paul D Huegel

To get fuller, greener and healthier plants, don't turn to chemical grade fertilizers. You can make your own fertilizers with products you're likely to have at home, or find multiple uses for much cheaper, and in many cases, make organic fertilizers.

These are superb homemade fertilizers you can make at home to grow healthier plants that are brighter, fuller, and bigger – and for vegetables with more nutrition too.

### 1 – Coffee Grounds

In most cases, after the coffee has been brewed, the used coffee grounds are pH neutral. However, when you put the grounds into the soil or compost, there's a different reaction than just fertilizing your plants. That is because the caffeine left in the coffee grounds can compete for other nutrients when they're just blanketed on top of soil. You only need a thin layer and spread sparingly so the grounds do not compact together.

One of the safest ways to use coffee grounds is to add it to your compost bin with other brown organic matter or to leafmould. This way, it's not only the coffee grounds, but it's adding more nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, and magnesium to the compost you'll eventually be using in your garden. Coffee grounds are also good for repelling pests and encouraging earthworms into your garden soil.

If you don't brew your own coffee, opting to buy from your local coffee store, then that's where to get used coffee grounds – for free! That's because, it costs coffee houses more to get rid of used coffee grounds because if it's not getting used, it goes to landfill. From there, it emits methane – *“a greenhouse gas more harmful than carbon dioxide.”*

So, by using coffee grounds in your compost or adding to your leafmould, you're playing a part in reducing landfill waste too. As mentioned though, be careful with quantities because you don't want highly acidic coffee grounds to be competing for soil nutrients. That's why it's not advised to add it directly to your soil, but rather introduce it to your homemade compost or leafmould.

### 2 – Grass Clippings

If you have a lawn, the worst thing to do is throw away your grass clippings. They're a superb source of nitrogen. Additionally, your soil will also benefit from added potassium, phosphorous, chlorophyll, and amino acids. To make your compost effective, you need to mix green material with brown. Obviously, your grass clippings are the green. It's nitrogen rich. You then need to balance that with carbon rich material for a good quality homemade compost. The way to make this with grass clippings is to make a green tea. Fill a net bag with your grass clippings and place that in a large bucket. Fill with water and leave the clippings to steep. A five-gallon bucket or larger will do the job. Let the grass clippings soak for a few days. What will happen is the chemicals from the grass clippings will release into



the water. You can then use that water to feed your plants, then add the grass clippings to your compost pile. A 2-for-1 on what would otherwise be wasted.

### 3 – Banana Peels

Banana peels can be a source of up to 42% potassium and up to 25% phosphorous. There is also the additional calcium, magnesium and sulfur in banana peels, which is why it's among the best organic material to use to make a homemade fertilizer.

That said, there's a huge downside and that's insects. If you just plant banana peels in your soil so it decomposes to release the nutrients, chances are, you'll attract a bunch of insects. A more worrying problem is that bees can mistake the scent released as a defense hormone. It's not a good idea to put banana peels in the soil of household plants. What is a good idea is to puree the banana peels, or soak the peel in water inside a sealed mason jar for a week, then drain it with a sieve and use that water as fertilizer.

Alternatively, you can bake the peel and then grind it down to mix into your soil. The one thing that banana peels don't have is nitrogen. To add that into the mix, you can add in eggshells.

### 4– Egg Shell Fertilizer

Eggshells have a few essential nutrients for plants. Mostly calcium, but they're also sources of selenium and nitrogen. You can add eggshells into your mulch, but a faster way to get the same benefits is to crush the eggshells up and boil them. To make an eggshell brew, you only need a pot large enough to boil a gallon of water and just 30 grams of crushed eggshells. Boil the crushed eggshells for a few minutes, then leave them in the standing water with the lid on for a few days, then strain. If you're using this on outdoor plants, it'd be a good idea to leave the water in a sealed container outdoors to avoid adding too hot of a water temperature to your plants, which could shock them.

### 5 – Wood Ash

For those with a wood burning stove or smoker, there's a lot of nutrients in the ash. More so if you are burning hardwood. Nitrogen and sulfur are lost during the burning process as they are released as gas. But what is left in the ash is decent trace amounts of potassium, magnesium and up to 25% calcium carbonate. Wood ash is only good for your garden when used in moderation. You don't want a thick layer of this. Just a light sprinkle over the top of the soil and it'll eventually work its way down, adding the nutrients to your soil. Point of note: Any soil you plan to grow potatoes with, do not use wood ash. It can cause potato scab.



Continued on Page 4

**6 – Cooking Water**

Any food you boil, there's nutrients in the water. Don't toss it. Just as you'd use the water from a netted bag of grass clippings as a fertilizer, and eggshell tea for the same, you can do the same with boiled foods. Recycle the water. Drain it into a separate container, let it cool and then water your plants with that. The nutrients will differ depending on what you've boiled. Veggies, rice, eggs, pasta, potatoes, and spinach are all examples of foods you can boil and use the water from cooking as fertilizer for your plants, provided you don't add salt to the water.

**7 – Use Vermicomposting for Top-Grade Fertilizer**

The most organic fertilizer you can make is compost made from any product that started out from the ground with the help of a red wiggler worm. These will eat all your vegetable scraps, fruits, paper, cardboard, potatoes (*and the potato peelings*), rice and coffee grounds. Cotton too. To get started with vermicomposting, you need a worm bin. You'll also need the right type of worms. Those are Red Wigglers...Red wiggler worms will eat half their body weight every day. To know how many red wiggler worms you need, weigh the garbage you throw out that could be used for composting. That will give you an indication of how many red wigglers you'll need to start. An interesting thing about this type of worm is they have both male and female organs, so the gender does not matter, they will reproduce. When they do, they'll eat through more waste, creating your compost faster. The real gem though is in their poo. Worm excrement is the richest fertilizer you can use on your crops. In agriculture, it's known as black gold because it can fetch a good price from farmers in need of high-quality fertilizers and this is the most top grade you can get. These seven homemade fertilizers probably will not take care of all your fertilizer requirements but can greatly reduce what you purchase. The key is to supplement a good organic fertilizer with these amendments to make the store-bought fertilizer more effective. **The key is to use only organic fertilizers.**

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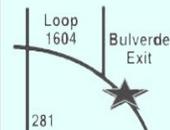
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# Earth Mix

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From the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)



### 8 Easy Steps to making compost

1. Pick at least a 4-ft. area (shaded) where water does not collect when it rains.
2. Cover half the area with a 6 in. layer of leaves. Water thoroughly.
3. Add a 2 in. layer of grass clippings and/or fruit and vegetable scraps and add a dash of soil.

4. Mix this layer lightly into the layer below it with a hoe or cultivator. Water thoroughly.
5. Top with a 2-inch layer of leaves.
6. Repeat steps 3 through 5 as ingredients are available.  
Note: The top layer of the completed pile should be at least 4 in. of leaves covering all food materials.  
Build the pile to 3 ft. x 3 ft. x 3 ft. high as soon as you can.
7. Turn the whole pile over with a hay-fork or shovel every 2 to 3 weeks, adding water as needed to make the whole pile moist like a wrung-out sponge.
8. Compost is well done when most of the original ingredients have broken down and when it smells like rich soil.



## Annual Herb Fest at the Pearl by Paul D Huegel

The Herb Market event went well despite starting off with some unexpected drizzle on October 17. This was our third year as invitees to showcase our Mobile Children's Garden and promote membership in the Club. This year was more restrictive given the COVID, but we managed in spite of the restrictions. It was not as busy as past years so there were not as many children. Margarita Rubio helped with the Children's Garden and plant sales with other member volunteers. We were allowed to sell plants, so we took advantage of this and sold leftover plants from the Hollywood Park event as well as donated succulent arrangements from Barbara Lamm, ceramics from Ken Wolfgram, and handmade dish scrubbers and plants donated by Sharon Hughes. Darlene, who did most of the planning for the event, was sick the day of the event so husband David made sure things went as planned. Many thanks to John Opiela and Leonard Martinez and son Leonard for their logistical support. For an event that was not considered to be a fund raiser we did pretty well in that department, as well with the leftover plants and other donations that were sold. All in all, it turned out to be another worthwhile endeavor.



At the Herb Fest  
On Saturday morning, Margarita Rubio & Paul Huegel have the Mobile Children's Garden ready to go after a slow start because of the drizzling rain. Photo courtesy of Rob Deroucher.

### Questions and answers about the water you drink.

What's the safest, cleanest bottled water?

Fiji, Only Water, Deer Park Natural Spring Water.

What is the very best water to drink?

Distilled water is the ideal sort of water to drink since it includes no pollutants or contaminants. Processed does not have vital minerals your body needs.

Why bottled water is poor?

Bottled water frequently contains toxins from your vinyl. If you drink from a plastic jar, you risk ingesting the chemicals used to make the bottles as these toxins may leach to the water over the years.

Is purified water the same as distilled water?

There's no difference between dried and purified water, apart from the purification process. Distilled water travels via distillation, whereas purified water can be processed by other means (reverse osmosis, sand, ion exchange, etc).

Is it better to drink bottled or tap water?

In general it seems that tap water is a better choice. It's convenient, free or cheap, and has less of an ecological effect than bottled water.

Source: Adapted from: DaDong Tips for Food & Kitchen: Reviews and Buying Guide.

From Vallerie Hartfield



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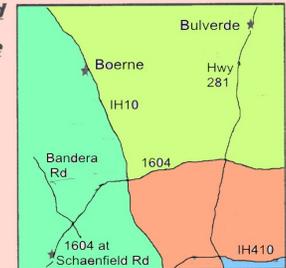
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## BECK TAMALADA AND 2021 ELECTION RESULTS

*From Paul Huegel*

The Annual Beck Tamalada for 2020 was held on October 24, 2020. While it started out as an overcast day the temperature was comfortable and became sunny as the day progressed. The folks who attended had an enjoyable afternoon away from the COVID seclusion we have been enduring since March. While 60 people committed to attend, we had about half as many actually attend which is understandable given the concerns over the COVID. Those who did attend got to enjoy a good assortment of food to complement the tamales that were procured by Frank Rios our tamale purchasing agent. We had some good adult and other beverages as well including hot mulled cider with a rum option provided by the Byrds. The surprise of the day was our Guest of Honor and Tamalada namesake, Delphine Beck accompanied by her daughter Kay Hunt. I was happy that we had a slide show pulled together by Larry Cromer which included a segment on the gracious hospitality of the Beck's over the years. I think Delphine and Kay enjoyed the show with the rest of the attendees. Thanks to Darlene and David we had a couple of tables set up with plants and decorator pots and other useful items to sell "dirt cheap" (no pun intended).

As advertised, there was a business meeting included in the program. Because of the pandemic we decided to extend the term of office for our officers but in compliance with our By Laws we held an election to allow for other nominations from the floor or in this case the lawn. With the assistance of John Opiela each officer position and name were called out for a vote by acclamation. There was only one nomination from the floor for President. Teresa Martinez nominated Darlene Badorski who accepted but has since withdrawn her acceptance and endorsed Todd Mernin our current President. Thus, Todd is elected by acclamation and will serve as President for 2021. Congratulations to Todd and the other elected officers which include: **Ivan Roman- First Vice President, Vallerie Hartfield-Second Vice President, Robert McDaniel- Third Vice President, Larry Cromer-Secretary Phil Byrd- Treasurer, John Opiela- Director (2021-2023), David Badorski- Director (2021-2023)**

Also, appointed by our President Todd Mernin were our two replacement Directors **Leonard Martinez** who will complete the 2020-2022 term of Judy Phillips, and **Teresa Martinez** who will complete the 2019-2021 term of Margarita Rubio.

As EX Officio President and Nominating Committee Chair for this year's election, I would like to offer my congratulation to all our officers who have already demonstrated their call to duty and dedication to the club in this most unusual year in the 51 years of our existence.

A special thanks to our most gracious hostesses, Barbara Lamm and daughters Pam and Susan who put a great deal of time and energy in making this event a memorable one at Barbara's beautiful homeplace. They spent time cleaning, painting, and sprucing things up and forgot only one thing, namely the 30-foot-high slide which I cleaned with my pants as I slide down the chute. Glad to help---not. Kidding aside, it was fun and just added to the day's festivities helping us to unwind in spite of our masks and social distancing.



Delphine Beck and Hostess Barbara Lamm at the Beck Tamalada. Delphine said she had a great time with new and old friends,

A beautiful cornhusk arrangement made by Teresa Martinez adorned the head table. What a beautiful piece.





Page 7 & 8 are added to the November Horti-Bull email edition only. The photo takers at the October 24th Tamalada are Darlene Badorski, Jeff Brown, Vallerie Hartfield, and John Opiela. Added comments are mine.



Barbara gives a tour.



Four past Presidents unmasked.



Barbara with daughters Pam & Susan.

