

This Month in the Garden

May Tasks

Gardens can be such a source of peace and tranquility, especially at this time of the year when the weather is so lovely. Fort Bend Master Gardeners hope you get to spend some time in a beautiful garden near you. If you are working in yours, here are some suggested tasks.

- Your garden might be attracting bugs but don't rush for the insecticides! Some insects are beneficial to your garden and we are not just talking about bees. Lady beetles eat aphids, dragonflies eat mosquitoes, and other beneficial insects really help you in your garden. [Learn about beneficial insects](#) so you can identify and protect them.
- As the weather warms up, check your irrigation system to make sure it is watering ½ to 1 inches of water per week when it doesn't rain. Here is a [helpful app](#) that can tell you how much to water your yard each week.
- As the weather warms, you can now plant some of your summer vegetables such as okra, cantaloupe, watermelon, and pumpkins. You will be glad you did when you are enjoying homemade gumbo and pumpkin pies. Learn about some [easy vegetables to grow from Texas A&M](#).
- Now is the time to plant some heat-tolerant perennials to liven up your landscape. Make sure they get adequate water while they establish their new root system.
- Also, you can still add sod to the bare spots in your lawn. Do it now before the summer heat makes it harder to transplant or seed new grass.
- Clean up your spring bloomers by trimming off dead flowers and stems to make your garden look neater. If the foliage has turned yellow or brown, you can trim that too.
- Do you know the correct mowing height for your type of grass? Cutting too much can harm your grass making it more vulnerable to disease. [Learn how to keep your lawn healthy](#).
- Carry a camera or your cell phone into the garden while you work. That way you can snap photos of any problems or pests you see. Then, if you need help researching the problem, you can send the photo to your friendly Master Gardener Hotline. This free service will give you science-based answers to your horticultural problems. Find their contact information at <https://fbmg.org/ask-a-master-gardener/>.
- Before the summer heat is here, put in some landscape to protect your air conditioning unit from direct sunlight. This can make your A/C unit more efficient and save money (\$\$\$\$!). [Learn more](#) about how landscaping can be used to save money from Texas A&M.



- You might have noticed a place in your garden that gets a bit swampy. This might be a great place to put in a rain garden. Although many plants require well drained soil, some do very well in wetter areas. Learn about putting in a [rain garden](#).
- Have a safe and thankful Memorial Day! Memorial Day is a day to honor those who gave their lives in war. Perhaps you will want to plant flowers at a grave or wear a poppy, the symbolic flower of remembrance.

May Color in Fort Bend County

Let's start with our Texas Superstar® of the Month: Blue Princess Verbena (*Glandularia x hybrida* 'Blue Princess'). This hardy perennial blooms from late spring through late fall and attracts butterflies and hummingbirds with its lavender blue blossoms. A slightly different variety, called Rose Princess, is also available with pink blossoms.



This easy-care plant will make a great addition to the front of your gardens where it can grow to a height of about 1 foot. It can also be grown in planters. For more information about this plant, visit <http://texassuperstar.com/plants/verbenablue/index.html>.

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Here are some other blooms to brighten your May. We hope you find space for some of these in your garden.

- [Giant Turk's Cap](#) or [Turk's Cap](#): This hardy deciduous perennial will grow to a height of 7 to 9 feet (Giant) or 3 to 7 feet (standard size) and a width of 3 to 4 feet with red drooping blooms that look like little Turkish caps. (Occasionally, you can find one with white blooms.) It grows well in full or part sun but has more blooms in full sun.
- [Plumbago](#): This perennial shrub has light blue and occasionally white or dark blue flowers. It grows well in full or part sun and has a long bloom season. It is a tropical plant so it may need protection when the weather turns cold. Bonus: This plant is a Texas Superstar®!
- [Yellow Bells or Esperanza](#): Yellow Bells is a Texas native that explodes with a riot of yellow flowers from spring to frost. It is a perennial shrub with an irregular growth pattern. There is also a variety, called Gold Star Esperanza, that is a Texas Superstar®.
- [Purslane](#): A tropical groundcover that can be a perennial in tropical climates, it is considered an annual in most parts of Texas. It can be found with blooms in many different colors, including bi-colors and mixed colors, and grows well in full sun or part sun.



Esperanza

- [Bougainvillea](#): Although it is a tropical shrub, this crazy plant does not know when to not bloom. You can count on flowers year around with this perennial when winters are mild. It grows well in full or part sun and can be trimmed vigorously if needed. Blossoms come in many colors to match any garden scheme but be careful of its thorns.

When the Stay Home and Stay Safe order is lifted in Fort Bend County, feel free to visit our demonstration gardens. For more information, look on our website at <https://fbmg.org/demonstration-gardens/>.



Bougainvillea