

Meet Our Instructors:

Houston Botanic Garden Land Care Institute



Mary Carol Edwards.

Founder of Green Star Wetland Farm

Mary Carol founded Green Star Wetland Plant Farm in 2018 to meet a need for native aquatic species for all kinds of projects, from backyard raingardens to large acreage restorations. She previously worked as the storm water wetland specialist for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's Texas Community Watershed Partners, as well as TCWP's freshwater wetland restoration program, at landscape design and landscape architecture firms, and also in genetics research labs at Baylor College of Medicine and Rice University. Mary Carol is a Houston native, raised on Galveston Bay. She has a BS in Biology and an MA in Architecture from the University of Houston and enjoys bringing both disciplines together to create wonderful natural settings.



Justin Hayes

Landscape Supervisor Dell Medical School University of Texas at Austin

He has spent 15 years at the University and 25 years in the landscaping industry. He has worked in all types of positions including gardener, crew leader, compost specialist, compost tea brewer, and landscape supervisor. At his time there, Justin has helped turn the University into a more organic and sustainable landscape program.

Justin has helped train private landscape groups, HOA's, City of Austin and many other groups how to have a more sustainable landscape with reduced chemicals, water, and maintenance.

Justin and his team use the landscape at the medical district to learn and teach others about the future of Texas landscaping – a sustainable and diverse display of plants of our region that is managed organically. They use an approach that works with and listens to nature. Having a wide diversity of native plants and using things such as organic fertilizers, composting and compost tea, rain water collection, riparian restoration, flood mitigation, electric equipment, wildlife management, pollinator gardening, chemical reduction, fire management, soil management, point photography and other management practices help us create an Urban environment that is friendly to all. The landscape outside of the hospital provides healing for the hospital patients who need it.

- Awards - Texas Turf Association Best Turf in Texas Award 2012
- NOFA Organic Accredited Professional
- Level 4 Native Plant Society of Texas Certification
- Dell Medical SITES Gold Landscape



Brad Phillips

ISA Board certified Master Arborist

Bradford Phillips is an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist (BCMA #TX-3850B), and holds a Commercial Applicators License (TX 0790789). As of January 2020, there are 698 BCMAs. Mr. Phillips has the distinction of having this qualification as well as others. Mr. Phillips has provided scientifically sound arboriculture solutions to both the public and private sector for over 20 years. During this time, Mr. Phillips owned and operated tree services, construction companies and was a first responder in several natural disasters that resulted in millions of tree failures. His investigations into the tree failures and the experience gained, makes him uniquely qualified among his peers, as a risk assessor and risk mitigation planner. Mr. Phillips has used his years of hands on experience along with his formal education to advise states, cities, parks, developers, managers, HOAs and the private sector, including but not limited to the following Assess trees at the Texas State Capitol for risk and health. ● Assess trees in city and county parks for risk (along with management plans). ● Construction planning for multiple developers. ● Reports for permits and permit assistance. ● Forensic investigations, and expert opinion. ● Tree and plant health assessments. ● Tree/plant disease and pest management. ● Tree/plant Appraisals; Eminent public domain, Insurance, Trespass, Construction, Negligence. ● Private Tree Inventories and Management Plans. ● Provide language for state legislation.



Carmelo Orellana

President/CEO of Estructura LLC

Carmelo Orellana is well versed in the green industry with more than 25 years of experience in the field as an operations manager for Landscape Art Inc. He is now the president/CEO of Estructura, LLC. He has been a long-time member of the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association (TNLA) Region 2 education committee where he teaches Horticultural classes in English and Spanish. Additionally, he serves as an educator and instructor for Organic Horticulture Benefits Alliance (OHBA). Carmelo is one of fewer than 100 landscapers in the State of Texas to complete all phases of the testing for the Certified Landscape Technician (CLT#233647) administered by TNLA. He is a Licensed Irrigator (LI7893) and has certifications that include Certified Four Stroke and Two Stroke Engine Technician from the Equipment & Engine Training Council and the ICPI Certified Concrete Paver Installer Program from the Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute.

Among many award-winning projects, Carmelo has overseen the construction of The Leach Teaching Gardens at Texas A&M College Station, Phase 1 of Eastern Glades at Memorial Park, Houston Botanic Gardens, and Post Oak Blvd. Carmelo was formally recognized by TNLA in 2010 as the first Hispanic recipient of the Young Leader award. Through every project he is involved in, he continues to display dedication and a strong passion for sharing organic practices for healthier and greener spaces in the greater Houston area.



Jarred McNabb
Owner of Restoration Organics

Jared's journey with Restoration Organics began with a shared passion for the outdoors and a vision to create landscapes that are as sustainable as they are beautiful. Seeing an opportunity to blend his knowledge of ecology and design, he set out to craft outdoor spaces that not only look good but do good for the environment and the communities we serve.

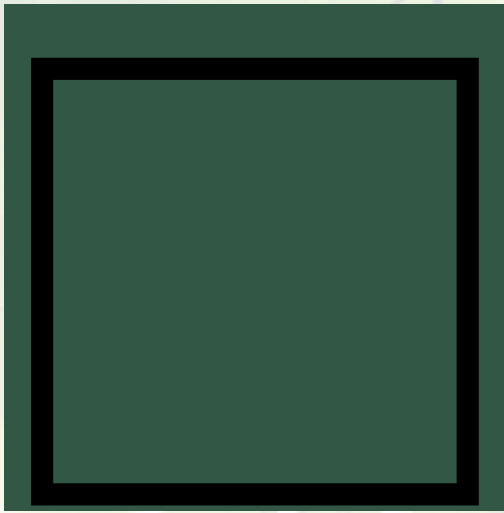
Today, his dream has grown into a thriving business, but our mission remains the same: to create extraordinary outdoor spaces that inspire, delight, and nurture. As we continue to grow and evolve, we remain committed to our values, to Jared's vision, and to delivering excellence in every project we undertake.



Alex Lahti

Alex is an independent landscape and urban designer working in Houston, Texas with degrees in Architecture from the University of Houston. He has experience with urban, regional, and campus planning. His work focuses on designing human environments that integrate seamlessly with and support natural landscapes. Alex designs environments for people that maximize impact, reduce waste, integrate with complex natural and constructed urban systems, and inspire delight.

Alex Lahti is an urban planner and landscape designer based in Houston. He is currently pursuing a Master of Architecture degree at the University of Houston, where he studies the strategic reuse of mid-century buildings and landscapes.



Sherri Harrah

Sherri Harrah is co-owner at her family's garden center, Plants for all Seasons is in north west Houston and is celebrating their 50th year this year. Harrah spends her days educating on and researching products to make gardening endeavors easier and more successful in the crazy subtropical environment of the gulf coast of Texas.



Blas Espinosa

Owner of Next Door Nursery, Landscape Designer

Blas Espinosa is the owner of Next Door Nursery, a backyard nursery in Houston specializing in native plants, vegetables and herbs that thrive in the Gulf Coast. Since starting in the field 12 years ago, he has designed, installed, and maintained gardens on public and private property, as well as provided garden education to youth and adults. Blas has worked with different organizations, spoken at various conferences, and takes time to go out into the wild prairies to examine plant conditions and save seeds to grow certain prairie plants that are harder to find. Since opening Next Door Nursery in 2020, he has been a trusted source of plants for gardeners, farmers, schools, parks, non-profits, and landscape professionals. His mission is to inspire the conservation of Houston's disappearing natural landscape by supplying urban gardens with local native plants.



Dany Millikin
Director of Education Houston Botanic Garden

Dany is a plant health enthusiast who loves soil, soil biology, root anatomy, and the way they all work together. He loves introducing beginner vegetable gardeners and native novices to new or better ways to grow their own plants. He attended Texas A&M University, focusing on Biology.

Before he was Director of Education, Dany served as Executive Director of the Organic Horticulture Benefit Alliance—a Houston non-profit dedicated to the education of organic and sustainable lawn and garden practices, and previously owned and operated an organic, edible-focused landscaping company. He also was the original Host for the radio show “HomeShow Garden Pros” on SportsRadio 610 every Saturday morning.

Dany is regionally recognized as a passionate educator, receiving the prestigious “Club Horticulture Commendation” from the Gard Club of America in 2023. He is certified by the Soil Food Web in several soil based certifications, the University of Arkansas for the Greenhouse Manager certification, and the US Compost Council’s highest Certified Composter.



Mickey Kleinhenz
Bee Keeper, Permaculturist, Educator, Creator of Urban Abundance

Mickey Kleinhenz is a native Houstonian.

He grew up exploring the bayous of the city, discovering and caring for the wildlife within the urban environment.

He has a Bachelor's degree in Horticulture and Masters in Landscape Architecture from Louisiana State University. He has worked in landscape management and landscape design, also working for the Houston Arboretum and the Houston Zoo. For over a decade of summers he reconnected with the natural world working at a summer camp, leading programs focused on exploring the wilderness and teaching outdoor skills. He carries a wealth of knowledge in working with children and teaching in the outdoor environment. In 2013 he finished his first Permaculture design course (PDC) and began devoting his energy toward nurturing life on a 2/3 acre vacant lot in the city. He has built it into a premier site for Urban Permaculture in the Houston Area and shares it online through "[Inwood Eden](#)" on social media.

His purpose is to help people understand their relationship to nature and reconnect with the living world.



Ra Shango

Owner of Omi Rain Tanks

Ra started building tanks under the tutelage and apprenticeship of Nell and Dean at [Metal Rain Tanks](#) in Texas. Nurtured by the best, Ra was able to fly the nest and continue to supply high quality stainless steel tanks for rain water systems and rainwater harvesting. Now, Ra owns Omi Rain Tanks, a successful rainwater tank company that specializes in manufacturing, sizing, and installing stainless steel rainwater tanks that are built to bring beauty, and functionality for a lifetime. The rain tanks are comprised of 75% recycled material, making this rain tanks a very sustainable option for your water harvesting.



Courtney Hall

Manager of Conservation Operations at Memorial Park

Courtney has worked for Memorial Park Conservancy for over 4 years. Her background working in wetlands, studying fishery populations, and monitoring coastal restoration projects has allowed her to explore many coastal habitats. During her time at MPC she has worked with a team of restoration practitioners to maintain and restore native habitats in the Park. She also works with designers and construction teams as specific pieces of the Memorial Park Master Plan are built out. She enjoys being a part of this greenspace and looks forward to the many ecological and social benefits. Before Memorial Park, she served as an ecologist at the U.S. Geological Survey's Wetland and Aquatic Research Center in Lafayette, Louisiana. While there, she worked in coastal wetlands to understand how plant diversity and biological, chemical, and physical processes contribute to the overall ecological health and services of these unique and special habitats. Her educational track took her to Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and TAMU at Galveston, where she was trained in various labs including fisheries ecology, population genetics, and wetland ecology. Needless to say, marshy water and mud makes her day. Her passion is to get others, especially our future generations, jazzed about science, conservation, and stewardship. Park will bring for future visitors (including those with feathers, fur, and scales!).



Joanna Botvin

Education Coordinator at the Houston Botanic Garden

Joanna Botvin is a passionate educator on all things relating to living a Regenerative lifestyle. Having studied Sociology, Psychology, Permaculture and Holistic Landscape Design- Joanna merges these worlds in her teachings to get a whole system's perspective on why we should care about the health of our bodies, our minds, and our planet. Joanna has been a garden educator for many years, and this is where her passion and professional work have merged into one. Joanna has traveled and been a part of various programs, communities, and permaculture projects that have influenced her work today. She loves to grow food, design permaculture landscapes, be outside hiking with her dog, swim in natural waters, make medicine with plants, and teach those around her how to become more in tune with nature and the cycles of the earth. She is certified in Holistic Landscape Design and Permaculture from Bastyr University in Washington, and is a certified Herbalist through Ecoversity.



Danny Lenderman

Owner and Operator of Enchanted Forest

Danny Lenderman is the owner-operator of Enchanted Forest, an independent family-run garden center in Richmond, Texas. A proud native Texan with deep roots in Ft. Bend County, Danny has over three decades of experience helping Gulf Coast homeowners find beautiful, cost-effective, and environmentally sound landscaping solutions.

Danny is a Certified Landscape Professional, a licensed Landscape Irrigator, and past president of the Houston Gulf Coast Irrigation Association and Texas Irrigators Association. In his past work as a landscape designer, he worked diligently to promote more sustainable irrigation practices and to promote the use of water smart plants. Today, as the operator of Enchanted Forest, he continues to spread the gospel of safe, practical, and reliable landscaping practices and regularly partners with organizations like OHBA and the HBG to bring education and resources around organic, sustainable gardening practices to Ft. Bend County.

In addition to his professional work, Danny is a devoted family man. The proud father of three recently welcomed his first grandchild into the family, Cash, who he hopes will one day become the fourth generation of Lenderman to take up the family business!



Erin Mills

Education Manager at the Houston Botanic Garden

Erin has a Bachelor of Science in Entomology from Texas A&M University and as a Board Certified Entomologist, has dedicated most of her career to the study of insect biology, behavior, and plant-insect interactions. After 15 years as an Entomologist, Curator, and finally Director of the Cockrell Butterfly Center in the Houston Museum of Natural Science, she felt a calling towards education and joined the Houston Botanic Garden education team. As Education Manager, she oversees youth and adult programming, leads outreach and conservation efforts, and speaks on many insect and plant related topics. Erin is passionate about insects' crucial role in sustaining a healthy ecosystem and encouraging gardeners not only to tolerate them in the garden, but to welcome and celebrate their presence.