



Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume II, Issue 3

Official E-letter of the Ellis County Master Gardeners Association, Waxahachie, Texas

April, 2008

Welcome to the Ellis County Master Gardener's **E-Gardening** newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to give you a month by month agenda of what you should be doing to your landscape. We will be featuring horticulture articles that we hope you will find interesting, important dates where you can find the Master Gardeners speaking, demonstrating and passing out information relative to your garden. If you would like to receive this newsletter monthly via your email address, log onto our website www.ECMGA.com, click on subscribe, and it will be sent around the 1st of every month. Best of all; it's FREE!

Melinda Kocian, editor

What's Happening in April

Tuesday, April 8, 7:00 p.m. - Green Thumb Organic Club. Bill and Ellie Abbott showcase their beautiful garden. Call or come by **The Greenery, Waxahachie**, for directions and more information - 972-617-5459.

Saturday, April 19, 10:00-noon, Pettigrew Academy, **Earth Day** - Free children's event; public invited...games, food, crafts, exhibits, SETTLES Nature Center. For more information, call 972-923-1633, 806 E. Marvin, Waxahachie

Pedal Pushers, Cedar Hill. "Weekend in the Garden":

- Saturday, **May 3, 10:30, Texas Natives: Good, Better and Best**, Rosa Finsley
- Saturday, **May 3, 1:00, Gardens of Scotland**, Rosa Finsley
- Sunday, **May 4, 1:30, Container Gardening**, Vicki Thaxton

Mother's Day, Sunday, May 13, 11-5:00 pm, live harp music, special teas will be served, free 4" plant, gifts available.
8101 Anglin Drive, Ft. Worth (off I-20), 817-572-0549. For more information, visit their website: www.westongardens.com.

Sat and Sun, June 2-3rd: Weston Gardens, Ft. Worth, "Celebrate Summer"

- 1:30: Great Summer Iced Teas, Saturday & Sunday
- 3:00: Longest Lasting, Toughest Perennials

Lighthouse for Learning

Monday, April 7 - April 28, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. - AG 101- Session B (4 classes). *Designed for New or Small Acreage Landowners:* **Instructor: Mark Arnold**, Ellis County Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources. Cost: \$20.00.



Listen to KBEC.....

Saturday mornings at 9:00 a.m. on 1390 AM.

The Ellis County Master Gardeners have a 5-minute segment every week, offering you helpful information on what you need to be doing in your landscape, as well as "happenings" around the county. Be sure to listen in!

Melinda Kocian

Inside this issue:

2008 Expo	2
It's April - What to do	3
Containers	3
The One True Shamrock	4
Turk's Cap	5
Water, Air, and Light	5
Old Blush & Red Cascade	6
Featured Flowers of April	7-8
Dallas Arboretum	9
What Else?	9
Asparagus	11

People from a planet without flowers would think we must be mad with joy the whole time to have such things about us.

~Iris Murdoch, A Fairly Honourable Defeat

Thank You, Ellis County Residents

By Linda Moxley "Mox"
2008 Expo Chairperson

The 2008 Expo is Proclaimed, "BEST EVER!"

The numbers tallied to date indicate that the 2008 *Master Gardener* Lawn and Garden Expo was the BEST EVER in many respects.

The sponsor support was larger than ever, meaning we have exceeded past amounts raised for funding horticultural grants and scholarships within the community. Visit our website: www.ecmga.com, to apply for Ellis County Master Gardener horticulture education grants and scholarships.

Thank you for attending keynote speaker, landscape and adult workshop programs. It is so gratifying to the speakers and program coordinators Sandra Jones and Diane Hopkins to see healthy participation levels. If you have any additional questions about container gardening, pruning, butterfly gardens, planting tomatoes, drip irrigation, attracting bluebirds, plants with low-water requirements or any other topic, please contact the

AgriLife Extension Office, a Master Gardener will gladly offer assistance (972-825-5175).



The Children's Workshop area doubled in size over last year and Mimi DeLoach, coordinator of the children's gardening activities, believes the numbers of children involved nearly tripled.

Sponsor and Exhibitor Coordinator James Kocian's efforts yielded more exhibitors and profit/nonprofit booths than any prior expo. His goals are to have a diversity of exhibits and to include only quality products and services.

This year, three Johnson County Master Gardeners judged all exhibitor booths to ultimately name the Most Outstanding Booth and the Most Creative Booth. The Greenery's colorful display with spring blooming trees, shrubs and plants was selected as the Most Outstanding Booth and the Texas Bluebird Society's booth decorated and staff by Lysle Mockler was the Most Creative Booth.



You are encouraged to get involved in the nonprofit groups represented and check-out the products/services provided by the local businesses that exhibited at the Expo.

This year Master Gardeners added "Ask the Expert" to the Master Gardener Information Area with turf, tree, flower and vegetable gardening experts available at specific times. Betty Reuscher, who created and implemented the concept, states that the "Ask the Expert" feature

will return next year due to your positive response.

Crowds always appear in the Master Gardener Plant Sale area. This year, with the ability to share the Waxahachie High plants/trees for sale increased substantially. and Sheryl Kiever championed the plant sale Team." At 5 p.m. on Saturday, the plant-sale confidence in our propagation and plant-

The Ellis County 4-H Concession area is their area. Income generated at this year's highest they have ever earned at the event. Scholarships.



dener Plant Sale area. This year, with School Greenhouse, the numbers of Lois Yarborough, Homer McCain activities along with their "Green tables were bare! We appreciate your growing skills.

celebrating numbers of visitors to Master Gardeners' Expo was the Their Expo earnings will go to 4-H

Your overwhelming response to the Expo this year was absolutely thrilling. Then, when Neil Sperry commended the *Ellis County Master Gardener* Lawn and Garden Expo on his Sunday morning radio broadcast, about 200 Master Gardener feet lifted off the ground.

Thank you for being a 2008 Expo participant and making it the BEST EVER.



It's April—What Needs to be Done



Featured Plant for April

Eve's Necklace (Native), Sophora affinis

A small deciduous tree often used as a specimen in a small area. Its outstanding features are the pink flowers in the spring and the black seedpods that give it a bead-necklace look. Easy to grow and drought tolerant in any soil.

Exposure: Sun to shade

Size: Ht 30'

Spread: 20'

Spacing: 10'-20'

Planting and Sowing

- Plant new lawns from sod, seed, or plugs.
- Plant warm-season annuals. Best for full sun (6 or more hours of sun per day): moss rose, purslane, pentas, cosmos, zinnias, marigolds, amaranthus and celosia. For shade (less than 4 hours of sun per day): coleus, caladiums, impatiens, and green-leaf begonias.
- Transplant tropical annuals, such as hibiscus, mandevilla, Mexican heather, crotons, bougainvillea, and Gold Star esperanza into pots or beds.
- Sow herbs directly into beds with very well-draining soil, hanging baskets or patio containers.

Pruning and Fertilizing

- Mow often and at recommended height to maintain a healthy lawn.
- Fertilize your lawn with high-nitrogen or all-nitrogen fertilizer this month, then every 8 weeks during the season. Choose a fertilizer with half or more of its nitrogen in slow-release form.
- Prune rubbing and damaged or low-hanging branches from shade trees. To avoid disease problems with your oaks, wait until mid-summer or mid-winter to prune them, if possible.

Garden Watch

- Thrips cause rosebuds to fail to open properly and turn brown around the petal edges. Control them with systemic insecticide.
- Spray cannas, redbuds, groundcover vinca, sweet gums, and pyracanthas with systemic insecticide to prevent leaf roller infestation.
- Eliminate fire ants in your landscape by broadcasting labeled bait while temperatures are between 70 and 90 degrees. Follow label directions closely to achieve best results. Individual mounds that are located in problem areas such as near house foundations, garden beds, and high-traffic areas can be eliminated by using a labeled mound drench. Contact your county extension office for more information.

Tip of the Month:

When fertilizing gardens, use a product containing slow-release fertilizer, a sulfur-coated or plastic-covered urea. When choosing a slow-release fertilizer, it is important to note that the higher the percentage content of sulfur-coated or plastic-coated urea, the more EARTH-KIND the product.

Containers

By Nancy Fenton, Ellis County Master Gardener

The weather is warming up and now is the time to think about getting those containers replanted for great color around the house and porches. Containers are fun because you can have plants that might not do as well in the flowerbeds, but will thrive with a little extra TLC. Most containers will take more care, but if you are up to it they are beautiful.

The first rule of containers is the container itself. It should be able to drain excess water, which may mean putting a hole or two in the bottom. Don't even think about a closed container. It will drown everything but your pond plants. An inch or two of pea gravel, rock or expanded shale will help move the water out. Soil should be of a potting variety, not our black clay. The real test is your choice of plants for your "miniature" garden.

One of the instructors in a gardening class I took called the choices "**Thriller, Filler, and Spiller.**" If you think about it, it makes good sense. One plant to stand tall and be exciting with foliage or blooms, one to fill in the container area and one to spill over



(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

the edges and trail onto the floor. The key to having them thrive is to choose plants that have similar water and sun needs. A Yucca, an Aster, and Ivy would all be low water use and can tolerate bright sun where as Caladiums, Impatiens, and Ferns all like shade and water.

For those of us with the big trees around, the shade-loving foliage plants make great containers. You can use them singly or group them with varying colors. Be sure and look on the label and see the heights at full growth. With more attention, they will probably reach their full projected height easily overwhelming a container if you don't start with a large enough one.

I fertilize my containers once a week with diluted liquid fertilizer. The fact that they are in a limited space makes them need more food and besides I want them to keep on blooming and looking great. Try some of our dwarf grasses to offset a heavily blooming annual. I think you will be pleased with the look!

Just keep in mind that when you get the container, select the plants and get them in the dirt that they will need a glance every day or so and probably a drink. They just need more TLC to stay pretty since they are crowded in there, but they do add that special something to walks and porches

The One True Shamrock

by Kim Ellis, Ellis County Master Gardener



If you have children hanging around getting ready for spring break like I do, you may have recently been asked "what does a shamrock have to do with St. Patrick's Day"? We wear green shirts, carry four leaf clovers but have you ever asked yourself why? The word shamrock comes from the Irish word "seamrog" meaning "little clover." I also saw it spelled "seamroy".



There are so many different types of clover; nearly 300. I did not think I would be able to locate the original studies done that determined which species is considered "The One True Shamrock." As usual I turned to the Texas A&M Horticulture website. *Trifolium Dubium* (Small Hop Clover) is sited as often being referred to as the "true shamrock."

Considering the fact that the idea of a four-leaf clover bringing good luck stems so far back into history, I decided to see what everyone else thinks. There are many misconceptions about plants and nature that have been passed down through the generations that most people believe they are fact. Plus, my curiosity tends to get the better of me! I decided to look at some Irish websites and see what they say.

I found the study done by Nathaniel Colgan, the botanist who is known for his studies done in Ireland on the clover. Nathaniel Colgan set out to finally settle the argument of which clover is the original "Shamrock" used by St. Patrick to visually illustrate The Trinity to the people in the Gaeltacht area of Ireland. **The Shamrock: A Further attempt to fix its species; by Nathaniel Colgan; published in the Irish Naturalist 1893** concludes that *Trifolium repens* (white clover) is the one true "Shamrock." White Clover is also credited with the title at www.fourleafclover.com.

The fourth leaf was believed to bring extra luck or the Grace of God. There are other legends and myths about the clover. It is believed that it was first carried from the Garden of Eden by Eve for good fortune. The Druids thought of it as good luck in Ireland before St. Patrick came along because it formed the triad. The myths of faeries and other leprechauns have permeated the cultures of many countries. However, the fact remains the same. The addition of a fourth leaf is actually a mutation. Often times the fourth leaf is smaller in size and not as difficult to find as people believe. A long relaxing and lazy day in a field of clover is proof of this. I personally like to believe in the myths. I love science and love to research plants but this time of year, on this particular holiday I let the Irish in me out and share the stories of the Faerie King and other mythical beings with my own kids.

For those of you who see clover as nothing more than a cumbersome weed beware, faeries don't like to be trifled with and can be very bothersome. So watch where you spray that roundup this spring, your luck could turn bad and you may get an unwanted brown spot on your beautiful turf!

For more information on Ireland and its myths and culture visit www.from-ireland.net and www.irelandnow.com.

For myself I hold no preferences among flowers, so long as they are wild, free, spontaneous. . .

~Edward Abbey



Turk's Cap

By Rick Daniel, Ellis County Master Gardener Intern



The Turk's Cap derives its name from the fact its flower resembles a Turkish fez. Flowers are typically red, but also come in white and pink. The broad petals remain closely wrapped and never fully open, forming a spiral arrangement, which causes the bloom to resemble a partially open hibiscus bloom, hence one nickname of 'Sleepy Hibiscus'. The stamens are fused together by filaments to form a tube through which the pistil (style) pass and extend beyond the petals, enticing hummingbirds, bees and butterflies. Fruits are green when immature and ripen to a red apple like fruit about one inch wide. Fresh seeds can be planted, but you have to be quick and get to them before the birds do. Deadhead only if you don't want volunteer propagation next year. The leaves are alternate and about 3-5 inches long and about the same in width. The leaf has coarse hair above and is soft and velvety underneath.

This plant is propagated by dividing the rootball, from cuttings or from seed. Once established, it will reseed itself each year. Turk's Cap prefers well drained and fertile soils, but will adapt to most soils and water requirements. Sun or part sun will provide the healthiest growth and flower production, but it seems to prefer afternoon shade. Turk's Cap is a low maintenance plant requiring minimum water and fertilizer. It is affected by very few diseases and pest and is found in many Texas gardens.

Scientific Name:	<i>Malvaviscus arboreus (many variations),</i>
Common name:	<i>Wax Mallow, Turk's Cap,</i>
Family:	<i>Malvaceae,</i>
USDA Hardiness Zones:	Perennial shrub in zone 9b-11, annual in zone 8,
Origin:	Native to Mexico and Texas,
Light Requirements:	Full sun to partial shade, does better with afternoon shade,
Water Demand:	Average, water regularly, do not over water,
Drought Tolerance:	Medium, will adapt,
Height:	2-4 feet in shade, up to 8 feet in sun,
Deciduous/Evergreen:	Evergreen shrub in Mexico and the valley, otherwise an annual

Water, Air and Light

By Nancy Fenton, Ellis County Master Gardener



We all know what it takes for our plants (and us) to grow, water, air and light. The light is an easy one, the sun shines or it doesn't, but water and air are a bit harder to figure if our plants are getting the amount they need. They absorb most of their food in the "water" form through the roots, but did you know they get lots of their air that way too?

Our hard, tight clay soils make the plants growing in them struggle to push their roots out to get enough surface area to absorb the air and water they need; hence the need for organic matter in our soils to provide the "breathing room" and water retention for when they are thirsty again. We can dig, dig, dig the organic stuff into the flowerbeds, but what about our lawns and trees?

This is where aeration comes in. Simply speaking it is making holes in the lawn especially in compacted areas (those that see a lot of wear from foot traffic or haven't see a spade or fork in your or my lifetime). My neighbors laugh when they see me out in my front yard with my spading fork poking holes in my lawn, but I know of only one other way of getting the air and water down through the heavy clay to the root level about 8 inches down. I employ the 10- to 15-minute a day routine. This is leaving my fork on the front porch and going out when the weather is decent and I have ten minutes or so between chores or waiting for someone. It does add up and for me getting started is half the battle. It won't get done in a day, but over several weeks all my lawn and big trees will have a breath of fresh air and a little more water down there where they can get to it.

About the other method short of plowing up the yard. There is a great machine called an aerator. They probably weigh about 200 pounds and put ½ inch wide holes about 3" deep into your yard every 6 inches. We've used them in Wyoming when we were young and foolish. Foolish because we didn't realize they came with an automatic vibrator! The machine hits so hard that I couldn't hold it and so my poor husband had my share of shakes and his for days afterwards! Unless you can find a friend that likes to jiggle a lot or hire it done, opt for the fork! You might want to mark your sprinkler heads also since it's hard to see when your body is shaking every which way.

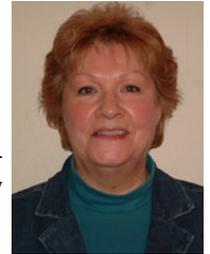
(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

You can aerate any time of the year, but I prefer spring since the ground is usually a bit softer. I just push my fork down as far as I can and wiggle it a bit before I pull it out to go on to the next place about 8-12 inches away. It enlarges the hole a bit so water, fertilizer, and air can get down more easily. After this dry winter it is going to be even more important for our big trees so think about giving your trees some air!

Old Blush and Red Cascade Roses

By Shirley Kolthoff
Ellis County Master Gardener Intern



Old Blush also known as 'Common Monthly', 'Common Blush China', 'Old Pink Daily', 'Old Pink Monthly', and 'Parsons' Pink China'. The myriad of names of this semi-double hybrid of *R. chinensis* attest to the friendly familiarity with which it has been grown for over two hundred years. One of the most common of old roses, it is also one of the most valuable, for it has passed on its incredible blooming prowess to countless cultivars during the history of hybridization in the West. 'Old Blush' has medium, semi-double, lilac pink flowers in loose clusters. They flush darker pink in the sun and are followed by large orange hips. It blooms so steadily that it is not a very good cut flower; the blossoms drop quickly to

make room for their successors. The bush is full and upright in habit, growing slowly to over 5 feet, with neat, healthy foliage. Perfume is soft, but fruity and pleasant. Whether used in a hedge (which can be spectacular), as a specimen, or in a border, 'Old Blush' should be treated simply as a flowering shrub and not fussed over. It is best kept at a height between 3- and 6-feet. It is hardy from zones 6-9.

The rose, Red Cascade, can be a very versatile rose. Although it is an extremely thorny, rambler/climber that grows on its own root stock (not grafted) it always attracts attention with its fine-leaved foliage and profuse one inch, blood red blooms and seems to do quite well in Texas. It is an ever blooming rose and when in bloom, it is simply smothered in color.

Climbing roses need support whether they are placed against a wall, fence, or trellis. On a trellis, this is achieved by attaching the fanned-out canes to the openwork. flowering potential, since a rose heavily than one that shoots straight the canes of a climbing rose to the a wall or privacy fence. We expand with the growth of the rose wrap or braid it around a tall post, or nails can be used with stretch tie of the post, it can either be trained cascade outward in an "umbrella" displayed it will add height and depth to the garden and will also soften and decorate the hard angles of walls and buildings.



This both supports the rose and increases the cane drawn out horizontally will bloom more up. The same effect can be created by fastening links of a chain link fence or to staples driven into recommend using gardener's stretch ties, as they cane. Another way to train a climbing rose is to creating a pillar rose. Once again, fencing staples to secure the cane. When the rose reaches the top further along a wire or over an arch, or allowed to fashion. No matter how a climbing rose is

But a weed is simply a plant that wants to grow where people want something else. In blaming nature, people mistake the culprit. Weeds are people's idea, not nature's.

~Author Unknown

Featured Flowers of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Canna Lily 'Tropicanna' *Canna x generalis*

Boldly striped foliage topped by blazing orange blooms make this Canna Lily pack a knockout punch in the garden. Cannas were brought from the West Indies to Spain in the late 16th century.

As with many exotic plants, they became a garden fashion statement during the Victorian era. Liberty Hyde Bailey wrote a glowing review of an exhibition of Cannas at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.

After the turn of the century, Cannas fell out of favor with gardeners who eschewed the fussy tropical look in favor of more natural plantings. But as with most trends, everything old is new again, and Cannas are no exception.

Their foliage ranges from green to burgundy, with some striped or variegated. Blooms are in all colors except pure white and blue-violet tones. Whether you grow them for their foliage or flowers, give them fertilizer and plenty of water, and watch them grow!



Type of plant:	Perennials	Sun requirements:	Full Sun
Bloom color:	Orange, Red-Orange, Gold (Yellow-Orange), Bright Yellow	Cold hardiness:	Zone 7b to Zone 11
Bloom time of year:	Late Spring/Early Summer, Mid Summer, Late Summer/Early Fall, Blooms repeatedly	Height:	4-6 ft.
		Spacing:	9-12 in.



Lenten Rose *Helleborus orientalis*



Hellebores are native to Asia and eastern Europe. They were documented in literature over a thousand years before the time of Christ. Fast-forward 3500 years to 2005, when Hellebores were recognized as the Perennial Plant of the Year by the Perennial Plant Association. The honor was a long time coming, but is well deserved. Modern hybrids bloom in a spectrum of colors, ranging from the traditional white and creamy pale green and yellow, to newer red, violet and blue hues. Best of all, many species of Helleborus boast flowers in mid-winter, even in cold climates.

Their dark leaves are leathery and evergreen, requiring only minimal care in spring to tidy them up when a new flush of leaves appear to replace the fading foliage from the past season. Need more reasons to grow Hellebores? The plant is virtually free from pests, including hungry deer and other wildlife foraging for food. Numerous varieties of Hellebore are available in local garden centers and mail order sources; plants may need a few years to settle in and reward the patient gardener with some much-needed cheer in the dreary winter months.

Type of plant:	Perennials	Sun requirements:	Partial to Full Shade
Bloom color:	Pink, Purple, White/Near White	Cold hardiness:	Zone 4a to Zone 9b
Bloom time of year:	Late Winter/Early Spring, Mid Spring	Height:	12-18 in.
		Spacing:	15-18 in.

Corkscrew Hazel 'Contorta'

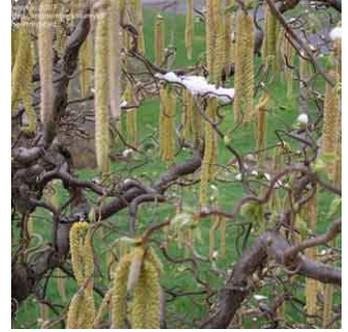
Corylus avellana

To properly set the stage for this plant, it is important to know the man behind the name. Sir Harry Lauder was a beloved Scottish ballad singer and entertainer. He was knighted by King George V for service to his country in World War I.

Contorted filbert began as a sport, found within a hedgerow of Contorta avellana growing in 19th century England. Since it was discovered, it has been propagated mainly via grafting (some own-root plants are occasionally offered). Contorted filbert has grown in popularity as a specimen plant, especially for gardeners who like an usual oddity in the landscape.

When introducing a 'Contorta' to your garden, be sure to plant in a moist, well-drained site, and prune out any non-contorted branches that grow. An annual annual spring pruning will help maintain the desired shape and size.

Type of plant:	Shrubs, Trees	Cold hardiness:	Zone 4a to Zone 8b
Bloom color:	Bright Yellow, Brown/Bronze	Height:	8-10 ft., 10-12 ft., 12-15 ft.
Bloom time of year:	Late Winter/Early Spring	Spacing:	6-8 ft.
Sun requirements:	Full Sun		



Johnny Jump-Up

Viola tricolor

Heartsease is a diminutive annual or short-lived perennial wildflower that is native to Europe. Just as charming as many of its common names suggest, this pansy traces its roots back to ancient Greece. It later inspired William Shakespeare to include it in several of his writings. After being introduced to North America, it was dubbed Johnny Jump-up.

Viola tricolor has long been used in herbal medicine, including as a treatment for asthma, eczema, and other skin diseases. It has both expectorant and diuretic properties.

In the early 1800s, hybridizers began creating crosses from *Viola tricolor* and other species, resulting in several new strains of pansies. These new hybrids paved the way for the modern varieties of pansy available today.

Type of plant:	Annuals, Biennials, Perennials	Light Shade, Partial to Full Shade, Full Shade
Bloom color:	Bright Yellow, Purple, White/ Near White	Cold hardiness: Zone 4a to Zone 9b
Bloom time of year:	Blooms repeatedly	Height: under 6 in.
Sun requirements:	Full Sun, Sun to Partial Shade,	Spacing: 6-9 in.



False Indigo

Baptisia australis

Though its botanical name suggests you might find it growing in Australia, *Baptisia australis* is actually native to much of the central and eastern U.S. Slow to settle in, this showy perennial member of the pea family produces lovely violet-blue flowers in early summer, followed by distinctive seed pods.

As one of its common names suggests, False Indigo produces a dark blue dye, although it is not as durable or vibrant as the dye from the true Indigo plant. It also has numerous medicinal uses, ranging from emetic to purgative, as well as to treat pneumonia, influenza, smallpox, fever, and even the common cold.

Baptisia australis will grow in well-drained soil, in full sun to part shade. It often takes several years to settle in and begin flowering. Its deep roots make it drought tolerant, although very difficult to transplant.

Type of plant:	Perennials	Sun requirements:	Full Sun
Bloom color:	Purple	Cold hardiness:	Zone 3a to Zone 10b
Bloom time of year:	Late Spring/Early Summer, Mid Summer	Height:	36-48 in.
		Spacing:	24-36 in.





Dallas Arboretum Trial Program Plant of the Month

Cleome 'Senorita Rosalita'

Meet a cleome that withstands hot Texas Summers
By Jimmy Turner-Director of Horticulture Research

I have always loved the way cleome looks in catalogs and in gardens I've visited across the nation, but to tell you the truth, I haven't had that much luck with it here in Texas. Every variety I've trialed in the last five years has disappointed me. Even though the plants flowered beautifully in spring, the flowers stopped and the bottom leaves fell off as soon as the temperatures rose over 100°. By the end of summer, a bed of tall, gangly plants with few leaves and a lot of seeds confronted me. Oh, and did I mention the thorns? Those spindly little stalks had wicked rose-like thorns hiding out in them!

Then I invited Cleome 'Senorita Rosalita' to join the party and she out-flowered all the competition. Unlike other varieties, this cultivar flowers from late spring through the heat of summer and right up until fall. Another great attribute of this variety is it doesn't set seed, so there is no dead-heading! The dark-green foliage forms 3- to 5-foot upright mounds in the garden that are continually crowned with clusters of bright lavender-pink blooms, and there are no thorns!

In the garden, 'Senorita Rosalita' adds much-needed height to the back of landscape beds and large containers. I like to combine it with the deep burgundy foliage of purple fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum 'rubrum'*) or *Alemanthera 'Purple Knight'*, then accent it with either the bright pure-blue of *Ageratum 'Artist Blue'* or the lacy white flowers of *Euphorbia 'Diamond Frost'*. If you are into attracting butterflies to your garden, then this is a plant for you. All summer long 'Senorita Rosalita' plays host to a halo of butterflies.

At the garden center, you will likely find Cleome 'Senorita Rosalita' in 4-inch or 1-gallon containers. Since this cultivar is sterile, it can be grown only from cuttings, so don't look for seeds or 4-inch pots. For the best garden performance, I recommend using a high-nitrogen fertilizer regularly to keep the foliage dark green and the plants in flower. This heat- and drought-tolerant plant prefers full sun and well-drained soil. Once established, it has a low water requirement.

If you have given up on cleome like I had, then I tempt you to invite this Latin lady to your garden. With a name like 'Senorita Rosalita' this heat-loving annual is guaranteed to spice up your yard all summer long!

About the author: Jimmy Turner is the director of horticulture research at the Dallas Arboretum. Visit www.dallasplanttrials.org for more information on his trials.

Latin name:	<i>Cleome</i> hybrid 'Senorita Rosalita' TM	Mature height:	24" to 48"
	'Inncleosr PPAF	Hardiness:	annual
Common Name:	spider flower, spider plant or grandpa's whiskers	Soil:	well drained
Plant type:	warm-season annual	Exposure:	full sun
Flowers:	classic, pink cleome flowers	Water usage:	low
Foliage:	upright, green	Sources:	local nurseries



It's April - What Else Needs to be Done?

By Rosemary Morgeson
Ellis County Master Gardener



Let me just say thank you to all of our sponsors and visitors that help make our Master Gardener Expo possible!

- If you haven't gotten your hummingbirds feeders out yet, then do it now! Boil your water and mix 1 part sugar to 3 parts water and allow to cool down and then fill your feeders! Never add red food coloring to your mixture. Remember about every 3 to 4 days clean old food out and replenish with fresh food mixture for the hummingbirds!
- Now is the time to prune the lower branches of your shade trees to allow light to reach grass and landscape plants, do this early or late in the day. If you are pruning your oak tree branches, you should coat lightly with aerosol pruning sealant to prevent entry of Oak Wilt fungus.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

- Research conducted by Texas A&M turf specialists have shown that lawns respond best to a 3-1-2 and 4-1-2 ratio fertilizers. Fertilize all landscape plants and turf to promote vigorous spring growth. Choose a
- quality fertilizer with half or more of its nitrogen in slow-release form.
- Got problems with broadleaf weeds such as clover, dandelions, dichondra and others? Then use a broadleaf weed killer spray during the heat of the day, a second application maybe required.
- Pick and plant perennials while you can still get the best selections at the nurseries! Remember when you are choosing new plant for an area, make sure that you are aware of the plant at its maturity. If you are shopping for roses, check out the EarthKind™ and other disease-resistant types. Madáme Antoine Mari has been named Earth-Kind Rose of 2008! Check out the Master Gardeners E-newsletter for the month of March and read about Earth-Kind Roses at www.ecmga.com.
- Plant warm season veggies after the last frost date: tomatoes, peppers, beans, squash, melons corn and cucumbers, which is March 17th in our area. Two to three weeks later plant eggplant, okra, southern peas and sweet potatoes! Yummy!!!
- Prune your spring-blooming shrubs and vines after they have bloomed, to restore good shape and encourage vigorous re-growth over spring and summer.
- Look out for slugs and snails; they will devour tender new plant growth. They feed at night and leave slime trails. Treat with a bait or "sevin dust" product. Cankerworms can be a big problem in the spring; they will strip new leaves of shade and native trees! They hang from a silk thread during early spring and oak trees are the host trees that they prefer! Use B.T. biological worm spray to treat them or sevin dust.
- Now is a great time to plant your herb gardens! If you are lacking space, try container gardening with herbs and veggies! Plant oregano, basil, green onions, bell peppers and tomatoes in one large pot for a patio pizza garden! This is a great project to do with the kids!
- Pinch growing tips out of fall asters, coleus, copper plants, mums and Mexican bush sage to encourage branching and fuller plants.
- If you are seeing some yellowing on the newest growth of your leaves and bright green veins, then they may be lacking iron. Give them an iron/sulfur product and treat according to label.
- Fertilize your container plants with diluted, complete and balanced plant food such as a 20-20-20 with each watering.
- Springtime is also the birthing time for garden pests!
- Watch out for thrips on roses! Look for a singe around petal edges and they will fail to open. The silver-shaped thrips will be within tight buds. A systemic insecticide will eliminate the pests.
- Cabbage loopers can be a problem on broccoli and cabbage leaves, Control these pests with B.T.
- Use a labeled fungicide on crape myrtles, euonymus, Chinese phlotinias, zinnias, roses and other plants affected by powdery mildew. Remember to keep foliage dry and provide air circulation to maintain healthy plants.
- You still have time to do some seed planting of flowers such as cosmos and zinnias, to name a few. Remember to collect the seed from the dried flower heads for next year. Store your dried seeds in an envelope and keep in a cool dry place. This will prevent moisture from rotting the seeds! Got a lot of shade? Try planting some coleus, caladiums, impatiens and green-leafed begonias, in areas that have less than 4 hours of sun.
- Now that the mowing season has begun, keep a check on your mowing height and make sure that your blades are sharp! Dull blades on a mower will tear the leaf tips of your grasses. This can allow your grasses to become more susceptible to disease. Keep a close eye on your automatic sprinkler systems! With the spring rains upon us you may need to manually operate those systems!

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

- Watch out for leafroller infestations! They will attack your cannas, redbuds, groundcover, vinca, sweetgums and pyracanthas! Spray with a systemic insecticide to prevent these pests during this month.
- Fire ants are a big problem here in North Texas! Eliminate fire ants by broadcasting labeled bait while temperatures are between 70° and 90° F. Follow label directions closely to achieve best results. Using a labeled mound drench in garden beds and high-traffic areas can eliminate this problem.

Let the Master Gardeners help you by contacting the office at 972-825-5175 or visit us on the web at www.ecmga.com.

~~~~~

If it's early Spring, it's Asparagus Time!

By Melinda Kocian,
Ellis County Master Gardener

If the tulips, thrift, red buds, and wildflowers are blooming — it must be spring! If those things are happening, that also means my asparagus is also coming up! Since Easter was early this year, I wasn't able to have a dish of the delicious long green vegetable to serve my family for dinner. I did, however, have a few sprigs (4 actually) cut, when the monsoon came. The 30+ acre water conservation lake that we are on backed up and my entire vegetable garden was under water!! Thank goodness, now that the water is receding, my beautiful asparagus spears are coming up like crazy! Whew! I would hate to have lost a 10-year old crop and start all over again!

Last year I featured a recipe for Cream of Asparagus Soup. To view it, go to our website www.ecmga.com. The recipe is in the March 2007 issue. For information on growing and harvesting asparagus, also go to our the website; looking under "publications" you will find information on asparagus as well as any other vegetable you are interested in.



Here is this year's recipe:

1 bundle of asparagus, with the tough part of the stalk removed (see note)
olive oil
lemon juice
salt/pepper
grated Parmesan or Asiago cheese

Fill a large pot with an inch of water. Suspend asparagus over the water —I use a perforated steamer basket. Bring water to a boil, cover with a lid, and steam until asparagus spears are tender when a sharp knife is inserted into the stalk of a spear. Don't overcook; you want the color of the asparagus to be bright green. When tender remove to a oven safe elongated platter. Turn you oven to broil and preheat.

Meanwhile, drizzle some fresh lemon juice and a small amount of olive oil over the asparagus, add salt and pepper to taste, and cheese over the asparagus and put under the broiler, on a rack in the middle of the oven. Broil just until the cheese starts to develop a hint of brown. Serve immediately.

NOTE: To separate the tough stalk from the tender part of the asparagus, hold each individual stalk in your hands, one hand holding the top end, the other the bottom. Gently bend the spear; it should break right where the tough part begins.

www.ecmga.com - Remember it!

This is the Ellis County Master Gardener Association website, with links to more than 100 other websites. Following these links will yield information on a wealth of subjects; everything from bat conservation and bird gardening to home landscaping and water conservation.

Also, the website has information regarding Ellis County Master Gardener projects. On the website you can access to read or subscribe, for free, to the E-Gardening newsletter, which also includes upcoming events taking place in our community!