



Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume II, Issue 2

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

February, 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



Master Gardeners Prepare for Lawn and Garden Expo

(see page 5 with related information)

The Ellis County Master Gardener's Lawn and Garden Expo is slated for Saturday, March 29, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Waxahachie Civic Center. According to Linda Moxley, 2008 Expo chairperson, "Members began preparing immediately after last year's show. With less than two months to go, we are busy in the (Waxahachie High School) Greenhouse planting seeds, labeling plants and repot-



20 Master Gardeners participated in a workshop to address the time-

This year the Master Gardener of particular interest to butterfly-attracting plants, plants difficult to find. Teams of Master Gardeners visited members' farms and rural property to dig native cacti, perennials and trees. Lois Yarborough, Co-Chair of the Expo Plant Sales, said, "The antique roses we rustled and propagated earlier this year will be ready to show off their beautiful blooms in new flower beds. There will also be several varieties of tomatoes available for purchase this year." Yarborough stresses that the Master Gardener's intent is to provide plants that are not typically found in the nurseries and are not available in the Expo exhibitor booths.



Homer McCain, Co-Chair of the Expo Plant Sales and a veteran Plant Sale committee leader, acknowledges that, "We may have more plants for sale this year than ever before; due to our ability to utilize the Waxahachie High School Greenhouse in exchange for instructional assistance." He added, "We are trying to offer a selection of unusual plants that will do well in this area, given our difficult soil and harsh growing conditions. "

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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:

What's Happening	2
Lighthouse for Learning	2
Know Your Zone	3
Plant of the Month	4
Did You Know?	4
2008 Expo	5
Peace Lilies	6
Planning Your Spring Garden	6
February Garden Chores	7
News Release - Greenbugs	8
Things To Do In February	8
February Flowers	9
What Else?	10
Getting Ready	11
2008 Calendars/Sponsors	12

What's Happening in February

Saturday, 9-6:00 - Sunday, noon - 5:00, February 9-10th, -Weston Gardens, Ft. Worth. "Roses, Chocolate and Tea". Sample selection of gourmet teas and chocolates as you shop for fabulous roses. For more information, call 817-572-0549.

Tuesday, February 12, 7:00 pm, The Greenery, Waxahachie - Drip Irrigation; presenter: Robert Shugart, Ellis County Master Gardener

Saturday, February 16, 9:00 am until it's over! - The Greenery, Waxahachie, All day auction. Come in Thursday and Friday to preview what's for sale and also pick up bid sheets.

Saturday, March 8, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. - The Greenery, Midlothian, 972-723-0702, All Day Organic Day .

9:00 am - "Organic products available in the Dallas Metroplex"; presenter: Gary Harrell, our representative from Harvest Supply

10:15 am- "The Organic Perennial Garden", Presenter: Tropical John from Natural First

1:00 pm. - "Lawn and Garden Organic Procedures"; presenter: Andy, from Lady Bug Products

2:15 pm. - "Perennials and Spring Shrubs"; presenter: Les Martin with Tawokoni Plant Farm

Saturday, March 1, 10:30 - Petal Pusher's Garden Emporium, Cedar Hill; "Rose Day".

10:30 - "Propagate Your Own Roses", presented by Glen Schroetter, Propagate Director of the Antique Rose Emporium.

1:00 - "Tried, True and What's New", presented by Vicki Thaxton

Saturday, March 29, Petal Pusher's Garden Emporium, Cedar Hill, All Day "Organic Day", 10:30 - Organic Disease & Pest Control, presented by Lucy Harrell.

Lighthouse for Learning

(with the Ellis County Master Gardeners)

For reservations, call 972-923-4631, extension 142)

Ag 101 - Session A, (4 classes), Mondays February 18 thru March 3, 6:00 - 8:00 pm., *Designed for New or Small Acreage Landowners;* **Instructor:** Mark Arnold, Ellis County Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources. Covering topics such as soils and soil fertility, soil testing, pasture management, basic livestock productions and pond management. **Students may choose either session A or session B** (see April below for Session B). Cost: \$20.00.

Monday, February 18 - 6:00—7:30 pm - Getting Started with Roses; **Instructor:** Jim Suggs. You will learn about bed preparation, plant selection, placement and care of roses. Cost: \$10.00

Thursday, February 21 - 6:00—7:30 pm - Planning and preparing Your Vegetable Garden; **Instructor:** Nancy Prikryl. Organizing your vegetable garden, soil preparation, planting tips, adaptable plants for Ellis County area. Cost: \$10.00

Monday, February 25, 6:00—7:30 pm - Sprinkler Systems; **Instructor:** James Bell. Learn how to use your sprinkler system correctly. Learn what's new in the water saving areas of lawn sprinklers. Cost: \$10.00.

Thursday, February 28, 6:00—7:30 pm - Jr. Master Gardener Training; **Instructor:** Mimi DeLoach. Learn how to inspire young gardeners and how to teach them gardening in a new way. This class is designed for leaders working with children, such as teachers, Boy- and Girl Scout leaders. Cost: \$10.00.

Monday, March 3, 6:00—7:30 pm - Rainwater Harvesting; **Instructor:** Pam Daniel. Learn the basics of rainwater harvesting, collection systems and materials needed, landscaping and gardening with rainwater in mind. Cost: \$10.00

Thursday, March 6, 6:00—7:30 pm - Native Plants; **Instructor:** Bill Abbott. Learn what plants are native and how easy these plants adapt to your garden. Learn why and how these plants can enhance your garden. Cost: \$10.00.

Monday, March 10, 6:00—7:30 pm - Heirloom Plants; **Instructor:** DeAnn Bell. Come see what's new in "old" plants. Come see and learn about the beauty of plants from days gone by. Cost: \$10.00

Thursday, March 13, 6:00—7:30 pm - Bee Keeping; **Instructor:** Diane Hopkins. Learn all about Bee Keeping and how you can learn the skill of this hobby. Cost \$10.00.

Ag 101 - Session B, (4 classes), Mondays April 7 through April 28, 6:00—8:00 pm., *Designed for New or Small Acreage Landowners;* **Instructor:** Mark Arnold, Ellis County Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources. Students may choose either session A (see February above) or session B. Cost: \$20.00

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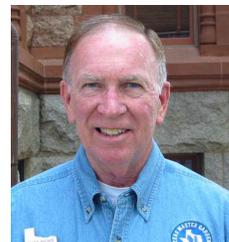
hen you have only two pennies left in the world, but a loaf of bread with one, and a lily with the other.

~ Chinese Proverb

GARDEN TALK

By Homer McCain

Ellis County Master Gardener



Do you know your zone?

Your climatic zone, that is! Are you not sure about it, or what it means? Did you buy a perennial plant (one expected to live more than 2 years) that died during the first winter?

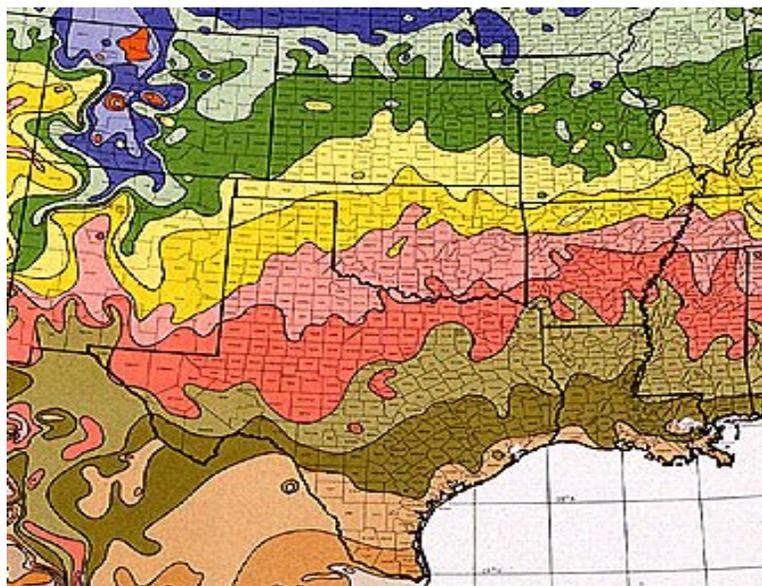
The U.S. Dept of Agriculture (USDA) Plant Hardiness Zone Map divides the United States into 11 climatic zones. Zone one being the coldest (Alaska) and zone 11 the warmest (Hawaii), with a temperature variation between each zone of 10 degrees F. Further, it divides zones 2-10 into sections (a) and (b) each having a range of five degrees from the lowest to the highest temperature. The map is based on the average lowest winter temperatures and last frost date for each zone. Unfortunately, it only considers the cold - not the heat tolerance of plants, which is important in our area, since many plants that “over-winter” in northerly zones won’t survive our hot and humid summers.

Ellis County falls into USDA zone 8 or more precisely - zone 8a. This means our coldest temperatures in the winter range (on the average) from 10-15 degrees F. When you select perennial plants, shrubs and trees it is important to know your hardiness zone. Usually, nurseries, garden references, and plant catalogs will indicate in the plant descriptions, the zone ranges – in whole numbers— that a plant can be expected to thrive. For example: a plant hardy in zone 4-8 means that it can be expected to survive at a temperate of -30 degrees F. Some plant and seed catalogs indicate on your address label, the hardiness zone for your area.

Climatic zones, though, are just a guide when choosing plants. Many other factors to consider are: soil types, degree of exposure to wind, and nearness to bodies of water. These can create variations of as much as two zones in winter hardiness. Also, rural areas may be colder than urban ones. Plants grown in containers can require one or two hardiness zones lower than plants in the ground.

The border line between zones 7 and 8 runs through the Dallas/Fort worth area. Therefore it is important to know that a plant described as hardy only in zone 8 or 9 may not be so, if winter temperatures reach 0-10 degrees F (zone 7).

When you select a plant, make sure it’s hardy in your area. If it is not labeled, or if in doubt, ask about its hardiness zone. If you have questions about which plants to grow in this area or any other gardening needs call the Ellis County Master Gardeners at 972-825-5175 or visit our web site at www.ecmga.com.



Average Annual Minimum Temperature

Temperature (F)	Zone
Below -50	1
-45 to -50	2a
-40 to -45	2b
-35 to -40	3a
-30 to -35	3b
-25 to -30	4a
-20 to -25	4b
-15 to -20	5a
-10 to -15	5b
-5 to -10	6a
0 to -5	6b
5 to 0	7a
10 to 5	7b
15 to 10	8a
20 to 15	8b
25 to 20	9a
30 to 25	9b
35 to 30	10a
40 to 35	10b
40 +	11

I t's February - What Needs to be Done



Featured Plant for February

Easten Redbud *Cercis Canadensis*

A small deciduous tree with purple or white flowers in late winter or early spring on bare branches before the heart-shaped leaves unfold. Easy to grow in any soil and is draught tolerant. Use as ornamental tree for spring color.

Exposure: Sun or Shade
Size: Ht. 20-25' Spread: 20'-25'
Spacing: 15-20'

Planting and Sowing

- Sow cool-season vegetables directly into your garden this month. Cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, and potatoes should be planted 4 weeks before the last average frost date (March 15 in Ellis County). Lettuce, radishes, carrots, spinach, beets, chard, and turnips should be planted 2 to 4 weeks before the last average frost date.
- Plant bare-root roses mid-month.
- Plant blackberries, and fruit and nut trees this month. Contact an Ellis County Master Gardener or your county extension office for more information on the best varieties.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- Prune damaged, rubbing, or unwanted limbs and trunks from your crape myrtles.
- Mow your mondo grass and Asian jasmine at the highest setting to even them up. New spring growth will quickly correct their initial sparse appearance.
- Cut back your rose bushes by half and just above an outward facing bud. However, wait until after their spring bloom to prune climbing and "once-blooming" roses.

Garden Watch

- February sprayings to control pests and diseases on fruit and nut trees are very important. Contact an Ellis County Master Gardener or your county extension office to obtain a copy of the "Homeowner Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule".
- Spray hollies, euonymus, and shade and fruit trees with horticultural oil (also referred to as "dormant" oil) to control scale and over-wintering insects.

This and That

- Fall-flowering perennials such as mums, fall asters, and Mexican bush sage should be dug and divided this month, before spring growth starts up.

Tip of the Month

If you combine the knowledge that plants need a continuous source of nutrition with the fact that the major pollutant in ground water is nitrates from plant fertilizer applications, then the idea of using slow release fertilizers makes EarthKind sense.



Mark Your Calendars!

The 2008 Ellis County Master Gardener's EXPO is set for March 29th

Join the growing list of 2008 EXPO Sponsors:

Gold Shovel Sponsors

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Premier Ag and Lawn
The Greenery
Waxahachie Daily Light
KBEC 1390

Silver Spade Sponsors

Vintage Bank
Waxahachie Civic Center

Green Thumb Sponsors

CNB (Citizens National Bank)
Ennis Garden Club
H-E-B
Holcim
Tex-Scapes Greenery

Anyone wishing to become a sponsor of the 2008 Expo, can find additional information on our website: www.ECMGA.com or contact James Kocian: 972-814-0699, or expo.ecmga@yahoo.com or Jamey Guarascio -Cosper at 972-268-5493.



Master Gardener Lawn and Garden Expo It's for Everyone!



Circle **Saturday, March 29** on your calendars! *Ellis County Master Gardeners* host their 8th Annual Lawn and Garden Expo at the Waxahachie Civic Center that day from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. This year's event is a multi-dimensional, educational extravaganza...In other words, it's going to be a **REALLY BIG SHOW!** There are learning opportunities for all family members.

The Children's Gardening Workshops

Allow children to experience the joys of hands-on garden-related activities. This program was initiated last year; its success prompted doubling the workshop area this year. Activities are designed to address diverse learning styles and interests. The workshops will operate continuously from 9 a.m.—4 p.m. Each child must be accompanied by an adult.

Keynote speakers

Gaye Hammond, a talented Rosarian, EarthKind enthusiast and provocative speaker, will offer ideas on “Introducing Children to the Joy of Growing Roses” at 1 p.m.

Neil Sperry, The popular horticulture author and garden-talk-show personality presents “*Growing Green – The Art of Responsible Gardening*” at 2 p.m. At 3:30 p.m.,

Dotty Woodson, Extension Horticulturalist and TV gardening pro, offers tips on “*Landscape Plants that Flower all Summer.*”

Adult Workshops

DeAnn Bell, Master Gardener, provides a “**Container Gardening**” demonstration plus planting tips and techniques starting at 9 a.m.

Nancy Prikryl, a Master Gardener and Master Naturalist, will share her knowledge and enthusiasm for “**Butterfly Gardening**” at 11 a.m.

Robert Shugart, Master Gardener, will be front and center at 1 p.m. to share his expertise regarding “**Vegetable Gardening and Drip Irrigation.**”

Dan and Debbie Rayfield, Two birders from Midlothian, will discuss “**Bluebird Habitat and Houses**” at 3 p.m. Their program includes a birdhouse construction demonstration.

Master Gardener Information Area

Head for the if you have a troubling lawn and garden question. Master Gardeners will be available all day to discuss your lawn and garden concerns and provide free reference materials pertinent to many common questions. In addition, Master Gardener experts with knowledge in specific areas have been scheduled to appear in the area at the following times:

9:00—11:00 a.m., Jim Tachias—**Turf and Lawns**

11:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m., Shirley Campbell—**Perennials/ Annuals/Companion Plants**

1:00—3:00 p.m., Dexter Hollabaugh—**Trees/Tree Diseases/Tree Health**

3:00—5:00 p.m., Robert Shugart—**Vegetable Gardening**

Year after year, Expo attendees rave about the diversity and number of lawn and garden exhibitors available. This year, over **100 booths will display the latest products and services and an array of plant materials.** It is in the exhibit area that many attendee questions are answered – be it questions about landscaping, pest control, hardscaping, tools/equipment or plant selection. Traditionally, exhibitors have had elaborate displays in hopes of winning the Expo's coveted Outstanding Booth and Most Creative Booth Awards.

Master Gardener Plant Sales Another very popular Expo feature; a cooperative agreement with the Waxahachie High School to use their greenhouse has permitted Master Gardeners to have more plants to sell this year than ever before. To coincide with the Adult Workshop topics, the sale will feature butterfly-attracting plants, natives, tomatoes and hard to find plants (9:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.).

Where will you head first at the Expo? Keynote speakers, workshops, information area, plant sales or exhibits? There is something for everyone!

Peace Lilies: Bringing comfort in our time of sorrow

By Kim Ellis, Ellis County Master Gardener



Losing a loved one can feel like the most difficult time of our lives. We are saddened by the loss of their friendship, love and companionship. We feel a sense of comfort as neighbors and friends rally around us to support us and do their best to ease our pain. As the days go by and everyone else goes about their lives we are left alone with our sorrow and we begin our new lives without our loved one by our side.

As a young girl I assisted my mother in serving the families in our congregation who had suffered this loss. My responsibility was to make sure all the plants and flowers made it to the families homes. In a rare and quiet moment at my own grandfather's funeral, my mother expressed how she hated receiving flowers for funerals. "It's bad enough Paw Paw is gone, but now I'm going to have to throw these beautiful flowers out in a month because they will be dead too." It was a moment of deep sorrow for her. I decided at that moment that the next time I had the privilege of serving a family in their time of need, I would do everything I could to help the flowering plants they received to last as long as possible.

When my own father died I received a stunning Peace Lily. Its leaves were deep, waxy green. I had seen plants like this in office buildings and had always wondered how a plant could do so well indoors. I did what Daddy always said to do, "if you don't know the answer, look it up." So off I went to the college library. I learned that I needed to make sure to give it bright light. It was January and it was dormant. I would not see any flowers until the spring. I have since learned the importance of semi-shade during the spring months. There are some Peace Lilies (S. Mauna Loa) that grow as large as 2 ft. tall.

I was intrigued as I watched the leaves move toward the sunlight that beamed through the window. It did not take long to learn that this plant needed to have a moist soil at all times. It loved a nice warm, humid room. Sitting one on a tray with pebbles created enough humidity to combat the dry air of my heated apartment. I sometimes misted its leaves too.

Whenever it would get too dry the leaves would droop as if it was saying to me "I'm thirsty". On sunny days I would have to turn the pot as the leaves would become lopsided. This plant wanted to live! Every leaf sought the soft rays of sun and reached for its warmth.

As the spring months approached I noticed little bright green leaves popping up. Before long I realized I was going to need a bigger pot. I learned the importance of repotting this plant every year. It can become root bound if not divided out when repotting.

My hard work had finally paid off when one morning in late spring I noticed an oval shaped white flower. It was beautiful. The Peace Lily remains my favorite to this day.

Since I have become a Master Gardener I have learned the scientific names of many plants and how they are best grown and cared for. Yet in the still of the night, when the little girl inside me begins to miss her daddy, I wander into my plant filled kitchen to water the dozen peace lilies I now own. I may clean their dusty leaves with a warm paper towel if needed.

This week I lost a very dear friend, Sherry Eoff. I dedicate this article to her. She was very encouraging as I worked through out this past year to obtain the volunteer hours needed to become a Master Gardener. She will be missed.

Planning Your Spring Garden

by Kim Ellis, Ellis County Master Gardener

The cold winter months of January and February are a great time to start planning your spring garden. There are a few basic things to do before you start planning. The first thing you should do is grab a notebook or pad of paper to record your ideas as they come to you while you stroll through your yard. Next, take some time to walk through your yard. Look around and think about what you loved about last year's garden and what you didn't. One of the best things about gardening is, if you don't like it, you can always change it! Be sure to make note of your tree tops. There may be sunshine in abundance now, but will there be when the tree tops fill in with lush green leaves this spring? This is also a good time to check any lawn decorations for cracks, chips or rust. Remember to look at the whole big picture, what do you want to see happen in your yard this year? Finally, don't forget to take a few measurements while you are out there. If you are planning a

new bed, measure the site so you will have a good idea of how many plants you can put in it.

Now that you have assessed the landscape and have had a myriad of ideas, it's time to think about what you want to see. Starting with the end in mind can squelch any frustration that may arise as you meticulously plant seedlings or plugs this spring. If you are focusing on flowers this year you can design your beds based on color, size of bloom or even when they will bloom. The choices are endless. Keep in mind water requirements. If you are going on a two or three week vacation this summer you may want to plant something that does not require a great deal of water, like a beautiful New Gold Lantana. Not only is this plant drought tolerant, heat loving, and low maintenance, it will also give you

(Continued on page 7,

(Continued from page 6)

bright, vibrant yellow blooms from spring till frost. This Texas Superstar will also attract butterflies to your garden. A good freeze could end this flowers season before it begins so be sure to plant it after the average last freeze date of March 15. If you live in the northern parts of Ellis County you may want to wait until March 31st.

If you just can't wait for color in your garden there is still time to get a few tulip bulbs in the ground. While tulips are a perennial in other parts of the country, they are considered annuals in Texas. It just doesn't get cold enough this far south for these lovely spring flowers to bloom a second year. If you get them in the ground now, you stand a good chance of having a great backdrop for those Easter pictures with the kids.

For you vegetable gardeners, be sure to plan your tall growing plants on the north side so they will not shade your low growing plants. Be sure to check for low spots in the yard. Planting your veggies at the base of a hill can reduce the amount of sun they get. You will want to make sure you have a well drained and sunny location too. If you have a large yard, consider adding a drip irrigation system. It's no fun dragging around a garden hose in 100 degree heat during the dog days of August!

Finally, make sure you put it all down on paper. As you search the home centers and nurseries, you may change your mind a few times before you actually decide to plant something. With a little thought and planning you can have a beautiful garden for your family and friends to enjoy all season long.

February Garden Chores

By Nancy Fenton, Ellis County Master Gardener



Cold weather and blustery winds make for procrastination on outside jobs. There are a few things to check on before settling down with a good seed catalog, pencil and paper. First check the sprinklers and make sure they are **off**. Water can be shut off to them or unplug the power. What ever you do to winterize them, check it again. My sprinklers have been on for a total of 3 week this year, due to all the rain we have had. The best thing you can do for your yard in the water area is to buy several rain gauges. I have three, one in the front out from under the trees, one on the porch, and one back under the trees in the back. If we have had one inch or more of rain in 7 days, my sprinklers stay off. The brown areas and dying lawns this spring were mostly due to over watering and fungus.

Plan a day towards the end of the month to cut back all those bush roses that bloom so well in the spring. You can cut them back one third to one half, thinning out canes that cross each other and dead wood. Be aware that this pruning will stimulate growth in the next 30 days so don't do it too early in the month. Climbing roses bloom mostly on old growth so **don't** cut them back until they bloom. While they are blooming is the perfect time to cut climbers and bring the blooms into the house or share them with your neighbors. It's also a good time to get rid of any of those pesky branches that slap you in the face or legs when you mow!

If you have a good day and want to be out, trim up the ornamental grasses that have turned brown. They can be cut all the way to the ground and still come up full and lush. Any of the other brown, dead looking plants you aren't sure of can be cut back to four to six inches from the ground. They'll look better and if they come up again you are that much ahead!

When it turns cold and blustery again, curl up with a pencil and paper and plan your flowers beds and garden. If you are like me and forget sometimes what was where, a quick picture with names helps! Save putting more bulbs, except onion sets, into the ground until it warms up. Now is the time for onion sets, flowering Kale and other cold hardy plants.

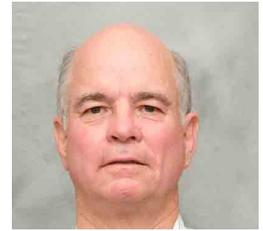
1. Check to make sure the sprinklers are off.
2. Cut back bush roses one third to one half.
3. Trim up the brown, dead looking stuff.

Flowers have an expression of countenance as much as men or animals. Some seem to smile; some have a sad expression; some are pensive and diffident; others again are plain, honest and upright, like the broad-faced sunflower and the hollyhock.

~ Henry Ward Beecher, Star Papers: A Discourse of Flowers

News release: Greenbug Numbers Highly Variable in Wheat

By Glen C. Moore, Extension Agent - IPM (Entomology)



Greenbug numbers remain relatively light to moderate in most fields of early planted wheat (October through the first half of November) or plants ranging from 3 to 6 inches in height. Heavier greenbug numbers have been detected in a few fields, but again, in most fields numbers are light and sporadic, with the exception of injury to smaller plants that emerged later in tractor tracks.

Greenbugs reproduce rapidly at temperatures between 55 and 95 degree's F and their natural enemies reproduce slowly when temperatures are below 65 degree F. Consequently, the lower temperatures have greatly slowed beneficial insect activity and with greenbugs un-checked, their numbers can increase rapidly. Therefore, producers should continue to monitor fields for this insect.

Late planted fields, or those in which wheat emergence was delayed by dry conditions, are more of a concern at this time, since lower numbers of greenbugs can cause economic injury. Inspections should be made at five different sites per 20 acres while walking diagonally across a field. Each inspection site should consist of 1 linear ft. of row and the number of greenbugs estimated/recorded at each site. Producers should check fields during the warmest part of the day when greenbugs are more likely to be exposed on the upper parts of the plant. During the morning hours, colonies of greenbugs are being detected near the base (crown) of the plant, at or just below the soil surface.

Yellow or brown plants caused by greenbug feeding in spots in the field may indicate a need for treatment. Occasionally, colonies of 25 to 50 greenbugs per ft. of drill row can cause economic injury to very small plants. Treatment on larger plants, 3 to 6 inches in height should be made when greenbug numbers reach 100 or more per linear ft. of row. Plants of 4 to 8 inches in height should be treated when 200 or more are found per linear ft. of row.

Some insecticides include; Lorsban 4E or Nufos 4E at 0.5 to 1 pt./acre, Dimethoate 4E at 0.5 to 0.75 pt./acre, Proaxis at 3.84 ozs./acre, Warrior at 3.84 ozs./acre, Mustang Max at 3.2 ozs./acre, Malathion (5 lb.) at 1.5 pt./acre, and Methyl parathion (4 lb.) at 0.5 to 1.5 pt./acre.

Malathion has a 7 day waiting period between application and grazing. Lorsban, Nufos, Dimethoate, and Mustang Max have a 14 day waiting period between application and grazing. Methyl parathion requires a 15 day waiting period between application and grazing. Proaxis and Warrior requires a 30 day waiting period between application and grazing.

Low temperatures slow the activity and effectiveness of most insecticides. It may take twice as long for an insecticide to kill at 45 degrees F. as it would at 70 degrees F. For best results, apply insecticides when temperatures are above 50 degrees F. If an application must be made when temperatures are lower, use the highest rate recommended.

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.



Things to do in February

By James Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Planting: The time is right for cold-hardy annual flowers such as pansies, violas, pinks, snapdragons, sweet alyssum, wallflowers and petunias. Bare-rooted roses should be planted now into well-prepared garden soils in raised planting beds. Finish planting bare-rooted fruit trees, pecans and grapes early this month. February is also the time to plant frost tolerant vegetables such as onions, broccoli, spinach, collard greens, beets, radishes and lettuce.

Pruning: Most trees and shrubs can be trimmed now; however, if the plants were planted in the proper location with the proper spacing, they should not need pruning. Fruit trees should be pruned to eliminate the water sprouts and to maintain a bowl shape. Wait to prune spring-flowering shrubs, most climbing roses and vines until after they finish blooming in the spring. If necessary, bush roses can be pruned now by 1/3 to 1/2. Also take out any dead wood. **Don't commit Crape Murder; do not "top" your crape myrtles!**

Fertilizing: For quick growth, fertilize annual flowers and vegetables with water soluble fertilizer. Early in the month, use high nitrogen fertilizer on your asparagus.

Featured Flowers of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Silk Tree *Albizia julibrissin*

Albizia julibrissin is a small, fast-growing, deciduous tree that is native to southern and eastern Asia. It is an invasive plant, spreading easily by seed in the areas it is hardy, and a cause for concern as it threatens to overtake native trees and shrubs in those areas. It is hardy only to zone 5 or 6 and doesn't live long, even in warmer climates. As such, it is rarely offered commercially, although new dark-leaved and weeping varieties are coming on the market, and sterile varieties are under development.

But despite its numerous, serious drawbacks, it is indisputably a highly ornamental tree, sporting exotic pink flowers in the middle of summer. Gardeners may find it called by many common names, including silk tree, mimosa tree, or pink siris.

Type of plant:	Trees	Cold hardiness:	Zone 6a to Zone 10b
Bloom color:	Pink	Height:	30-40 ft.
Bloom time of year:	Mid Summer	Spacing:	10-12 ft
Sun requirements:	Sun to Partial Shade		

Lizard's Tail *Saururus cernuus*

Lizard's Tail is a hardy North American native plant and will thrive in a wetland setting, either as a marginal or bog plant or submerged in a shallow water garden. Its native range stretches from Ontario, Canada to Florida and Texas.

In bloom, the plants produce drooping, tail-like flower stalks covered in tiny, fragrant white blossoms. The heart-shaped leaves provide interest all season. It is an herbaceous plant, adaptable to full sun or shady settings, reaching a height of 1-3 feet, depending on growing conditions.

Left unchecked, it can grow aggressively; but cultivated in a container, it is a worthy and delightful plant that provides texture and interest to any water garden.

Type of plant:	Perennials, Ponds and Aquatics	Cold hardiness:	Zone 5a to Zone 11
Bloom color:	White/Near White	Height:	18-24 in.
Bloom time of year:	Mid Summer, Late Summer/Early Fall, Mid Fall	Spacing:	12-15 in.
Sun requirements:	Sun to Partial Shade		



Japanese Rose *Rosa rugosa*

The rugosa rose hails from the coastal areas of Japan and Korea. Its name alludes to its distinctive, wrinkly leaves. Like many species roses, it withstands black spot and mildew with aplomb, and thrives in poor soil. After putting on a show of fragrant blooms in pink or white tones, it sets large, gold or orange-colored hips making it a good plant for wildlife habitats. Adding to the list of virtues, rugosas are also salt-tolerant.

Numerous varieties have been introduced since the late 1800s, when several hybridizers focused their efforts on creating new crosses using this beautiful healthy, vigorous growing species.

Bloom time of year:	Mid Summer
Cold hardiness:	Zone 2a to Zone 9b
Height:	36-48 in.
Spacing:	36-48 in.



Smooth Luffa *Luffa cylindrica*

Look, it's okra! Or is it a dish sponge? No, wait - it's a huge gourd! Really, it's all three. Well, maybe it's not really okra, but "vine okra" and "climbing okra" are among the common names for *Luffa cylindrica*, which can be cooked and eaten while the fruits are still young and tender.

This sprawling vine needs a long season of warm, sunny days to produce yellow flowers followed by green gourds that will slowly mature into tan, then dark-skinned, light-feeling fruit that should be harvested before frost kills the plant.

Once the mature gourds are harvested, the outer layer can be peeled off and the dry seeds removed, leaving the natural fibrous sponge which can be bleached and then used for luxurious bath scrubs.

Type of plant:	Annuals, Vegetables, Vines and Climbers	Sun requirements:	Full Sun
Bloom color:	Bright Yellow	Cold hardiness:	Not Applicable
Bloom time of year:	Mid Summer	Height:	4-6 ft.
		Spacing:	12-15 in.

Parrot Tulip 'Flaming Parrot' *Tulipa*

If parrot tulips could take out a classified ad, it would probably read like this: Flamboyant, fun-loving flower, looking for daring gardener willing to make a bold, fashionably late statement next spring.

To put it mildly, parrot tulips are an arresting sight. The large flowers appear late in the season sporting fringed or lacinated edges and stripes that would make a race car driver's heart skip a beat. First introduced at the 1889 Great Exhibition, parrot tulips evoke a strong reaction among gardeners, who either love them in all their glory, or consider them too brash and brassy.

Like most parrot tulips, 'Flaming Parrot' has a striking pattern. Planted in a swath, the yellow and red flowers create a fantastic finale in the tulip garden or make bold statement as cut flowers.

For best results, plant tulips in reasonably well-draining fertile soil in the fall, fertilize with bone meal, or a specially-formulated bulb fertilizer, and set your watch for spring.

Type of plant:	Bulbs	Cold hardiness:	Zone 4a to Zone 11
Bloom color:	Red, Bright Yellow	Height:	12-18 in.
Bloom time of year:	Mid Spring	Spacing:	3-6 in.
Sun requirements:	Full Sun		



It's February - What Else Needs to be Done

By Mindy Phillips, Ellis County Master Gardeners

This is a good month to think about this spring and summer's garden and any landscape projects you may be planning. Think about using Texas native and adapted plants in your landscape. They are hearty and water-wise and will make your gardening more successful. Using native and adapted plant choices will reduce or eliminate the need for pesticide spraying and heavy fertilization. That saves you money and helps the environment.

Plants labeled EarthKind are proven winners under all growing conditions. Their hardiness and reliability are excellent. They will save you time and money while they look great.

In Ellis County, roses need to be pruned by Valentines Day each year. Different types of roses require different types of pruning. We have rose experts in our Master Gardener group who can help you know exactly how to prune roses. (visit our website: www.ecmga.com for more information) Just be sure to get the pruning done by mid February.

If all this pruning sounds like too much work, don't give up on roses in your landscape. **Knockout** roses don't need any pruning or fertilizing. They are about as carefree as roses get. We recommend them and the EarthKind labeled roses for anyone wanting a great show without a lot of work. Local nurseries have a wide variety of these winners in stock now.

Remember that roses love full sun. If your roses aren't blooming well, they may be in too much shade. Transplant them this month to a full sun location.



(Continued from page 10)

Spring Bulbs

We all enjoy seeing early spring daffodil, hyacinth, grape hyacinth, tulips and other blooms. But once their bloom is over they aren't as pretty to see. The foliage slowly dies back, usually over 2-3 months. The bulbs store energy for the next year's bloom through those leaves so it is important to leave the foliage on the plants. But it isn't very attractive.

Here's a suggestion: Take each bulb's foliage and tie it into a loose knot. The knots look less messy in your flowerbeds and the leaves still provide nutrients to the bulbs. When the leaves are dried and pull off easily, it is time to discard them into the compost heap. Plant spring annuals around the dying bulb foliage to hide the bulb leaves from view. February is also a good time to use some general-purpose or bulb-booster fertilizer on the bulbs. Go to our website at www.ecmga.com for a list of bulbs that do good in our area.

We need to consider saving water every way we can. One way is to plan flowerbeds so that plants with similar water needs are planted together. That way plants only get the water they need. For example, a bed of wildflowers, iris and grasses needs much less water than a bed of hollies and magnolias. Planted together, plants are getting either over or under watered.

Harvesting rainwater is another way to save water. The Ellis County Master Gardeners have information on how to catch rain and save it for future watering purposes. We also offer classes on rainwater harvesting.

The end of February is a good time to prepare your yard tools for a long summer of hard use. Sharpen blades, repair power equipment, and organize your supplies. Unless you were really well organized last fall when you put everything away, you probably need to get tools ready now for a repair-free season of gardening. Happy gardening!

Call the Master Gardener office for a list of these recommended trees, shrubs and flowers for Ellis County. You can also check out our website at www.ecmga.com or call the office at 972-825-5175.



TIME TO START GETTING READY!

By Nancy Fenton

President of Ellis County Master Gardener Association



Spring will be here before we know it and now is the time to begin to take stock of what you have, what you need and what you want. Let's start with the big items like lawnmowers, ledgers, etc. Early February is the ideal time to pull out the mower and check the oil, sparkplug and air filter. (Or take it down to our local shop and have them do it) We'll need them sooner rather than later and if we wait, everyone else will be in line in front of us for the necessary parts. If you have decided that this is the year to replace that 10-year-old mower, then start looking and talking to the dealers. I like to buy locally since it usually assures me of good service, but a word of warning to you. Don't consider purchasing anything from a dealer that doesn't offer a money back guarantee. Mowers and big equipment are an investment and it's hard to tell if they are going to do the job until you get them on your yard. This is called customer service and if you don't get it up front, how can you get your warranty work done?

Time to sharpen the blades on the mower and edger and replace them as needed. A dull blade pulls up the runners and/or leaves stray blades of grass standing over the yard. Your mower should start easily. If not check the plug and the air filter. An air filter can get clogged easily if you are mulching.

All your hand tools can take a look-see and even a swipe of oil and whetstone. I have a small whetstone that I use on clipper blades and diggers. My husband takes a file to my shovels and forks. They do dig a lot better with a nice sharp edge to them.

While you are back there in the tool area, check your fertilizer spreader. February 15-March 15 is the time span recommended for putting out corn gluten meal as a pre-emergent weed killer. I put mine out at 20 pounds per 1000 square feet. I usually put it out one week and then my lawn fertilizer the next week.

The Master Gardeners' EXPO is just around the corner in March and I never know how much I need until I get out there and see all the displays of neat new plants and equipment. By checking now and finding out what works and what doesn't, I can make a beeline for my needed items before they sell out!

The warm days call to me and I'm looking around for areas that I start new beds. If I can just get them turned and all the good stuff added now on one of these bright days before it's time to plant!! Good luck with yours!

I'd rather have roses on my table than diamonds on my neck. ~ Emma Goldman

2008 Gardening Calendar Now Available!

The **Ellis County Master Gardeners** are proud to announce the publication of their second annual Gardening Calendar. The full-color calendar features a plant of the month, along with monthly gardening advice on planting, fertilizing, pruning and maintenance of your lawn and gardens. Also included are featured articles on the Lawn & Garden EXPO, Rainwater Harvesting, How to become a Master Gardener, the Horticultural Grant program and EarthKind Gardening. Be sure to look for money-saving coupons on the coupon pages in the middle of the calendar.

A Big **Thank You** goes out to our sponsors; it wouldn't have been possible without them. **Please visit one of the sponsors below and pickup your free calendar.**

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For more information on the Ellis County Master Gardeners; their programs and services, log on to www.ECMGA.com.



Did You Know?

By Betty Reuscher, Ellis County Master Gardener



Avocado skins great for starting seedlings!

You can make a mini indoor greenhouse using food items from your kitchen. The secret is an empty avocado skin. Garden Gate magazine describes this innovatively simple method in the January issue. Here's what to do. Halve and clean out an avocado. Pierce several holes in the curved side of the skin for drainage before filling the shell with seed-starting mix. A light potting mix will also do well. Dampen the soil and plant the seeds as directed on the seed packet. Remember most seeds do not need light to germinate. Place avocado half in clear plastic container with lid such as recycled baked potato or salad container from a fast food restaurant. Keep the soil damp during the germination period. After the seeds sprout, place the container in a window with good indirect light. As the seedlings grow, remember to keep the soil damp, not wet. Seedlings should be ready to repot when the plants reach about four inches and have outgrown their original greenhouses. You can easily plant the entire avocado with its precious cargo in a pot or an outdoor bed. The shell will biodegrade becoming part of nutrient-rich soil to nourish your new plants.

Seed and Seedling Programs

The Ellis-Prairie Soil and Water Conservation District is offering several programs for the community: The wildflower seed program offers two mixes and bluebonnet seeds, with 1-pound packages available. The seedling tree program offers several evergreen and hardwood species available for conservation plantings. The deadline for seedling orders is February 7.

Another program offers grass, legume and forb seeds for permanent pasture establishment, over seeding of existing pastures and wildlife food plots.

For more information, contact the district office at 1822 Farm-to-Market 66, Suite 102, Waxahachie or call 972-937-2660, ext. 3.