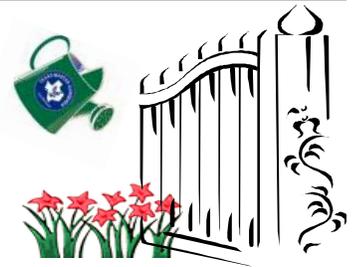




# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume III, Issue 10

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

November, 2009

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](http://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 November?

**Garden Inspirations** is taking applications to be a part of their VIP (Veggies in Partnership) for 2010. Full or half-share programs for fresh vegetables, herbs and flowers. For more info: Marilyn Simmons, 214-497-3918, [marilyn@gardeninspirations-tx.com](mailto:marilyn@gardeninspirations-tx.com).

**Saturday, October 31, 9:00 am - ? - The Greenery Fall Auction.**

**Saturday, November 7 - Weston Gardens - "Texas Jams & Jellies with Tea"...**

Weston Gardens will host a tea tasting all day long. Print out flyer and receive 15% discount on purchases. RSVP: 817-572-0549, [www.westongardens.com](http://www.westongardens.com) to print out flyer.

**Saturday, November 7, 11-2:00 pm - Texas Discovery Gardens - Fall Plant Sale.** Our 2008 Fall Plant Sale proved so popular we're making it an annual affair! Enjoy a selection of perennials and annuals at a reduced price as we clear out the greenhouse for the winter. Plants go quickly, so line up early for the best deals. Fine Print: Before the sale...Enjoy our annual garden walk on native trees. The walk will end right in time for you to shop! There is no member's discount in this sale due to already reduced prices. Information: [http://www.texasdiscoverygardens.org/upcoming\\_events.shtml](http://www.texasdiscoverygardens.org/upcoming_events.shtml)

**Monday, November 17, 7p.m. - Garden Inspirations, "Gifts from the Garden for the Holidays".** Marilyn Simmons and Arlene Hamilton. Sample a delicious dish from Chef, Jeri McGinty. Location: 108 Ridgecrest, Waxahachie, 75165

**Friday, November 20, 3:00pm - Pettigrew Academy.** Free Pie Social...public invited. 806 E. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie. Call Kim Bauman, 972-923-1633 for more info.

**Saturday, November 21, 9-noon - Cedar Ridge Preserve - Conservation in Action!** Habitat Restoration & Trail Maintenance at Cedar Ridge Preserve happens the 3rd Saturday of every month throughout the year, rain or shine. Volunteers remove non-native plants, restore trails, and work in the butterfly garden. Repairing trails reduces erosion trouble spots and removing non-native plants saves water and nutrients for plants native to the area. We'll provide snacks, water, pruning shears, shovels, and work gloves. All you need to bring is sun screen and bug repellent. Although we provide equipment, some volunteers like to bring their own gloves and a favorite tool. Questions? Contact info: [CRP@yahoo.com](mailto:CRP@yahoo.com).

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**Lighthouse for Learning**  
(with the Ellis County Master Gardeners)  
For reservations, call Melissa Cobb, 972-923-4631

**Mondays, Nov. 2 - Nov. 30, "Ag 101" Designed for New or Small Acreage Landowners - Session B.** Ag 101 is also offered in November. Students may choose either session A or session B. Instructor: Mark Arnold, Ellis County Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources. Four classes, 6-8:00pm. 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

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## *It's November - What Needs to be Done?*



### **Rosa "China Doll", Polyantha Rose, Sweetheart Rose**

*from the garden of Carolyn Ross*

#### **Planting and Sowing**

- Plant the spring-flowering bulbs that you ordered in August soon after you receive them. An application of high quality bulb food at the time of planting will help promote more blooms next spring. Repeat before spring growth begins.
- November through February is a good time to plant new trees and shrubs.

#### **Fertilizing and Pruning**

- Don't spare the pruning shears when transplanting bare-rooted woody plants. Cut the tops back at least 1/3 to 1/2, to compensate for the roots lost when digging the plant.
- Prune obviously dead or damaged branches from shade trees now. Waiting until late-winter will make them difficult to distinguish.

- Fertilize your winter color beds with a balanced, water-soluble plant food each time you water.

#### **This and That**

- Place orders for seeds this month so you will have them available when you are ready to plant. By ordering early, you will be more certain of getting the varieties you want.
- Dig and divide spring-flowering perennials.
- Run all gasoline-powered engines dry before storing. Have equipment repaired now while repair shops are relatively idle, and shop the pre-winter close-out models for replacement equipment.

#### **Garden Watch**

- Protect peach and plum trees from bacterial stem canker and peach leaf curl with a spray application of Bordeaux mixture after all of their leaves have fallen.
- Eliminate sources of disease problems next year by removing fallen, mummified fruit from around the base of tree.
- Check houseplants for pests (mealy bugs, whiteflies, spider mites, aphids, roaches, ants) before bringing them indoors for the winter. If necessary, spray with an insecticide before bringing them inside. A subsequent application may be necessary to eliminate any newly hatched pests. Follow label directions carefully.

#### EarthKind™ Tips for November

Proper placement and selection of trees and shrubs can have a positive effect on energy consumption. Trees that can provide cooling shade in the heat of summer and allow winter's warming sun in, are of high importance. For more information visit: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/EKDesign/planning.html>.



### **Asps Infest North Texas**

By Glen C. Moore  
Extension Agent - IPM



Stinging caterpillars or asps infestations have been particularly heavy in many parts of north Texas this fall. This caterpillar is often abundant and may infest shade trees and shrubbery around homes, schools, and in parks. Asps, *Megalopyge opercularis* belongs to the insect family known as flannel moths and are the most common stinging caterpillar found in Texas. Flannel moths get their name from the flannel-like appearance of the wings of the adult, which are clothed with loose scales mixed with long hairs. These caterpillars are clothed with fine hairs and venomous spines. The spines, when brushed against the skin, produce a painful rash or sting. The best known flannel moth and stinging caterpillar in Texas is the puss moth caterpillar, *Megalopyge opercularis*, commonly called an "asp."

#### **DAMAGE**

Puss moth caterpillars rarely cause serious damage to trees; however they can pose a health hazard to children and gardeners. Intense, throbbing pain develops immediately or within five minutes of contact with the caterpillar. Stings on the arm may also result

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Vegetable Gardeners Monthly

By Rick Daniel

Ellis County Master Gardener/Vegetable Gardening Specialist

Hello, and welcome to the November edition of the Vegetable Gardeners Monthly. If you have questions that this article doesn't address, just give us a call at 972-825-5175 or contact us via the web at [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com) and ask for one of our Master Gardener Vegetable Gardening Specialists.

Now is the time to begin preparations to have a successful spring garden. If you don't plan to grow a winter garden, you can plant cover crops such as clover, hairy vetch or winter rye to protect the garden soil from erosion. Or, you can use a good cover of mulch to help prevent erosion and to retain those earth worms in your garden through the winter. Keep an eye out for the first freeze date; usually around November 15<sup>th</sup>, and harvest any tomatoes, squash, peppers, okra, etc. that are still producing before the freeze.

When finished with all gardening power tools for the winter, run them until there is no more gasoline and put them away empty. I like to take my power tools in for maintenance during the winter and avoid the spring rush. You usually get them back in a few days during the winter, where it might be a few weeks if you wait until the spring.

### Featured Vegetable of the Month

By Rick Daniel  
Ellis County Master Gardener



#### Vegetable of the Month

#### GREENS (Lettuce and spinach):

##### LETTUCE:



**Planting dates:** for seeds in spring, plant 2-4 weeks before last average frost (2-7 to 3-15). For fall, 8-10 weeks before first average frost (8-10 to 9-30).

**Planting methods:** Seeds need light to germinate, so don't cover with soil. Seeds can't emerge through even the lightest crust. Seeds will germinate in temps ranging from 35-85 degrees. Be sure beds are well pulverized and very moist before planting and you shouldn't have to water again until the seedlings have emerged from the soil. Keep the soil from crusting, which will keep the plants from emerging. Thin to 2 inches when they have 2-3 leaves and later to 8-10 inches.

**Varieties: Leaf:** Salad Bowl, Black Seeded Simpson, Red Sails **Cos or Romaine:** Paris Island Cos and Romaine

**Culture:** Thrives in healthy soil. Use lots of compost and organic fertilizers. Soil moisture is important. Use frequent, light watering. Avoid having lettuce mature in hot weather to avoid bitterness and bolting.

**Fertilizer:** Medium-heavy feeder. Use starter solution on transplants and side dress with nitrogen about two weeks after planting and again about three to four weeks later.

**Harvest:** Harvest small thinning plants anytime. Harvest leaves before they mature. Lettuce can be cut and allowed to grow again.

##### SPINACH:



**Planting dates:** For spring gardens, seed 4-6 weeks before last average frost (1-10 to 3-15), or as soon as the soil has reached 50 degrees. For fall, plant 9-10 to 10-31. Spinach seeds germinate poorly in warm soils and will go dormant if soil temp exceeds 77 degrees.

**Planting method:** Broadcast the seed or plant in rows 4-6 inches apart and 1/8 to 3/4 inches deep. Soaking the seeds in cold water in your refrigerator for 24 to 48 hours is helpful. Tamp the soil lightly after installing the seeds. Thin plants to 4-6 inches apart about two weeks after emergence and then water lightly.

**Varieties:** For late winter and early spring use Bloombdale, Longstanding or America. For fall planting use Melody, Coho, Iron Duke, Hybrid 7 and Dixie Market.

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

**Culture:** Spinach is a cool season crop and should be planted to allow it to mature during cool or even cold weather. Spinach likes temperatures between 50-60 degrees. Prepare beds with compost. Give spinach room, crowded conditions cause stemming and poor quality plants. Mulch is very important. Be sure beds have adequate moisture before planting and avoid watering again until after seeds have germinated, as this can lead to seedling diseases.

**Fertilizer:** Fertilize the soil at planting time with organic fertilizer and again after the first major harvest of leaves. About two weeks after thinning, apply a light application of nitrogen fertilizer.

**Harvest;** Harvest foliage anytime the leaves are large enough to use. Small leaves are more tender. Crinkle leaf types are best for fresh use.



### November Herb of the Month

Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)

Come November we start thinking Thanksgiving, family gatherings, and lots of good food! At the top of the food list is our traditional turkey and at the top of the turkey list is one of my favorite herbs: Garden Sage. Whatever your family dressing recipe includes (cornbread, white bread, chestnuts, oysters, etc.) you can bet sage is on the list.

The genus *Salvia* comprises more than 900 species, many of them found in the Texas landscape. Garden sage (*S. officinalis*) is the most widely known and used of the salvias. It is a woody perennial shrub growing to three or four feet in the garden. The gray-green leaves have a strong musky fragrance and a pebbly surface. The plant produces spikes of lavender to purple flowers in mid-summer that are attractive to butterflies, bees and hummingbirds. Sage should be grown in well-drained soil in sunny raised beds or large containers, and kept on the dry side. Here in Texas it will tolerate a bit of shade and requires good air circulation.

As with most herbs, harvest no more than a third of the foliage after the blooming period. Fresh or dried sage belongs in every kitchen. To dry you can remove the leaves from the stems, place them on a tray or wire rack in a cool room away from heat or strong light. They will be crispy dry in several days. Stir and turn the leaves at least once daily. I prefer to tie the sage stems in small bundles and hang from the rafters of my potting shed. After they are crisp dry I remove the leaves from the stems and grind with a mortar and pestle then store in spice jars in the pantry. Freezing or refrigerating is also an acceptable way to store sage. But of course, fresh harvested from the garden, chopped and used preserves the flavor best.

Happily there are a number of cultivars of *S. officinalis* that are easy to grow in the southern garden. Madalene Hill and Gwen Barclay introduced a new cultivar recently called 'Newe Ya'ar' which seems to tolerate our hot humid summers better. I would recommend you look for it at a nursery that specializes in herb plants. For added color and variety in the herb garden try golden sage, purple sage, and tricolor. All have colorful foliage and make wonderfully showy garnishes.

Sage came to America with our earliest settlers but has been around for thousands of years. The Romans considered the plant sacred and performed special rites and ceremonies for the harvesting. We continue to use it as a digestive aid, diuretic, antiseptic, stimulant, and tonic and to cure exhaustion, depression, stress and general fatigue. Pregnant women and nursing mothers should avoid drinking strong infusions of sage tea.

Here are a few ways to put sage to work in the kitchen:

- Grilled sage and cheese sandwiches on rye bread
- Herbal butter with 1 tbs. each chopped fresh sage, sweet marjoram, chives and parsley with 1 cup softened butter
- Halve small new potatoes and layer over sage leaves, olive oil and sea salt. Bake in a 350 ° oven until soft.
- Toss pasta with chopped sage, garlic and olive oil.
- Tuck sage leaves, rosemary and thyme around the turkey as it roasts. Baste to keep the leaves from drying
- Tuck sage leaves under the skin of turkey or chicken before roasting.
- Heat a jar of apple jelly with several sage leaves. Serve as a condiment with left over turkey or with cheese and crackers.

Happy Thanksgiving!

## Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



### **Greenthread** - Sunflower Family (*Asteraceae*)

*Thelesperma filifolium* (Hook.) Gray

**Size:** 8-30 inches

**Blooms:** February-December, Perennial

There are at least eight species of *Thelesperma* in Texas. All species have opposite leaves, which are divided once, twice or sometimes thrice, into segments that are ultimately linear and thread-like. Greenthread has eight yellow, three-lobed, ray flowers around a yellow or brown disk. Occasionally there may be a diffuse brown or reddish brown color near the base of the rays, but never in a definite spot. Indians made a tea from this plant, as well as other *Thelesperma* species, hence they all are sometimes called "Navajo tea." Some people prefer this tea to commercial varieties. *Thelesperma* is found in dry soils in pastures, prairies, vacant lots and on roadsides.

*(Continued from page 2)*

in pain in the axillary (armpit) region. Erythematous (blood-colored) spots may appear at the site of the sting. Other symptoms include headaches, nausea, vomiting, lymphadenopathy, lymphadenitis, and sometimes shock or respiratory stress. Pain usually subsides within an hour and spots disappear in a day or so.

#### **FIRST AID**

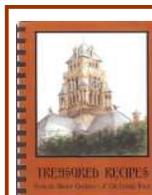
An ice pack should be applied to the site of the sting, and oral antihistamines can be administered to help relieve the itching and burning sensations. For caterpillars with stout spines (such as Io moth and saddleback caterpillar), try carefully applying cellophane tape to, and stripping it from, the sting site. This helps remove the irritating spines.

For allergic reactions, such as generalized itching or difficulty breathing, see a physician immediately. For severe pain physicians sometimes administer meperidine HCl, morphine, or codeine; aspirin is reportedly not effective. Eye injuries should also be referred to a specialist immediately.

#### **CONTROL**

Puss moth caterpillars should be controlled when they become abundant by spraying with a residual pesticide such as permethrin, cyfluthrin or other sprays labeled for control of caterpillars on ornamental plants.

*The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service is implied. 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.*



### **Ellis County Master Gardener's Cookbook**

**Can now be purchased at:**

The Greenery, ARK Country Store and  
Boyce Feed and Grain



## PLANT YOUR BULBS NOW!

By Nancy Fenton  
Ellis County Master Gardener

For early blooms next spring, plant your bulbs now. Bulbs usually refer to plants that have underground fleshy storage, but there are other plants that also have underground storage, such as corms, tubers, tuberous roots, and rhizomes. A true bulb is any plant that stores its complete life cycle underground. They are usually perennials (somewhere) that grow, flower and go dormant year after year with only one planting. Notice I said somewhere since tulips and hyacinths are somewhat annual in our climate since they need special handling and pre-chilling in our heat/cold zone.

As for me, I love the jonquils' bright yellow color in the late winter landscape plus they take no special effort! Being one of the Narcissus family, they and their relatives, daffodils and paper whites are widely available in local stores as well as mail order. The earliest kinds are the ones I like best for they stand the best chance of naturalizing (coming back year after year in increasing numbers). N. jonquils, N. v. odoratus, N. intermedius, campenelle jonquil and cheerfulness are all varieties that do well in our area. As a general rule, the larger the flower, the less likely the bulb will be to come back the next year or become naturalized as the experts like to say.

To plant these or any other bulbs, start with decent well-drained soil. In our heavy clay that can mean addition of compost and well-balanced fertilizers at least 8" to 10" deep to help start those bulbs off well. Areas under deciduous trees work out well with bulbs growing and blooming before the trees leaf out. Drifts of 25+ bulbs are eye-catching and easy to put in. After you get your bulbs in the ground, water well and get ready for spring blooms.

If you're planting lots of bulbs in lawn-like areas that don't get mowed very often, you might want to try a dirt auger (1/2-inch drill with a 3-inch bit). It makes great holes and you can put in a little fertilizer, some compost, drop in the bulb and some sand or compost on top of it. You do need to be careful not to put the bulb right on top of the fertilizer to avoid root burn. You can plant several hundred bulbs quickly this way.

However you plan to plant, the jonquils, daffodils and narcissus are worth the effort come spring after spring!

## Announcing the 2010 Ellis Co. Master Gardeners Photo Contest

The contest will begin June 1<sup>st</sup> and run thru January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010. Winners will be announced at the 2010 Ellis County Master Gardener's Lawn and Garden Expo, E-Garden Newsletter, and the Waxahachie Daily Light and on the [www.ECMGA.com](http://www.ECMGA.com) website. In a break from the past, this years contest will be free and all entries will be submitted by way of the ECMGA website. Simply log on and click on photo contest.

The categories are:

1. Single specimen (i.e. one tulip or a field of bluebonnets) and
2. In the Garden (full backyards, water gardens, containers etc.).

Prizes for this years contest will be: 1st place, a \$100 gift certificates; 2nd place, a \$60 gift certificate and 3rd place, a \$40 gift certificate — in each of the two categories. The gift certificates are from The Greenery, Roland's Nursery, TexScapes Greenery in Ennis and EarthTones Greenery in Midlothian.

For full details and to enter, click on photo contest at [www.ECMGA.com](http://www.ECMGA.com).



## It's November - What Else Needs to be Done?

By Dee Stroope  
Ellis County Master Gardener

**Remember, the average first frost date in our area is November 15.**

- This is the month for cleaning up the garden and getting prepared for the winter. The next several months is the time for transplanting trees and shrubs without causing stress to them, since they enter winter dormancy in November and are not nearly as susceptible to damage.
- Plant mustard, radish and spinach SEEDS early this month in your winter garden. Plant lettuce, mustard greens, peas and spinach PLANTS. This is also your last chance to plant wildflower seeds.
- We're done mowing the lawn, and we need to fertilize with a high-nitrogen fertilizer, at one-half the recommended rate. Fertilize the winter flower beds with a balanced, water-soluble plant food when you water.
- Plant perennials, trees and shrubs this month. It's also time to divide perennials, such as day lilies, bearded iris, Shasta daisies, violets, wood ferns and cannas. Remember, the iris is the official flower of Waxahachie.
- If you're not planting a winter garden, plant cover crops such as clover, hairy vetch or annual rye on the garden soil to protect it from weed infestation, help prevent erosion and till in as organic matter in the spring.
- For a green winter lawn it is time to over-seed your lawn with winter perennial rye.
- Prune out those dead limbs from trees and shrubs before the leaves fall, as it is easier to spot them now.
- Cover your strawberries with 2 to 4 inches of straw as winter mulch, and if you grow raspberries, protect the canes from the damaging winds by tying and staking them.
- Now is the time to decide if you are going to rake the falling leaves and compost them. If not, the leaves will fall and provide a protective layer over the soil. If you mow after the leaves have fallen, you will speed up the decomposing process and save yourself time and effort.
- You need to run all gasoline-powered engines dry before storing them for the winter. If repair is needed, the repair shops are not as busy and you may want to purchase new equipment at close-out sales.
- Prune your chrysanthemums back almost to the ground when done blooming.
- Prune bougainvilleas and tropical hibiscus before bringing them indoors. Inspect and clean up your potted plants by controlling the insect pests on the plant or in the soil with an organic solution.
- Protect your peach and plum trees from bacterial stem canker and peach leaf curl with a spray application of Bordeaux mixture after all of the leaves have fallen.
- Because the average first frost date in our area is November 15, get ready to protect plants before a freeze. Water the plants well and drape a row cover over them and fasten the fabric at the soil line. For individual larger plants, use water jugs by cutting off the base and sealing the top opening with foil.

Gardening is a kind of disease. It infects you, you cannot escape it. When you go visiting, your eyes rove about the garden; you interrupt the serious cocktail drinking because of an irresistible impulse to get up and pull a weed.

~ Alfred Austin



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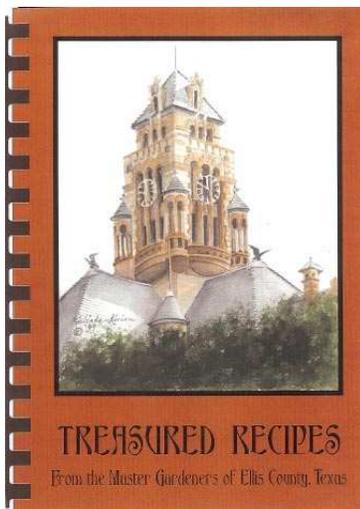
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