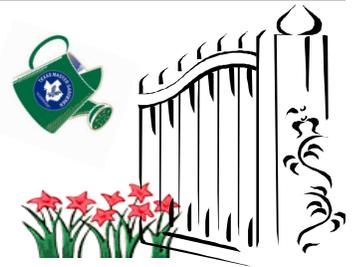




# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume III, Issue 8

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

September, 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 September?

**Weston Gardens, 8101 Anglin Dr., Ft. Worth, TX, 817-572-0549**

**Saturday and Sunday, September 5-6, 1-4:30pm. Free Tea smoothies.** For more information and to RSVP call 817-572-0549.

**Saturday and Sunday, September 12-13, 11:30 am.** - It's not too late to plant a fall vegetable garden if you start with transplants. Learn the tried and true vegetables recommended by the Texas AgriLife Extension Office. Call for more information.

**Saturday and Sunday, September 12-13, 3:00 pm.** - Learn how to design a garden using ornamental grasses, which hit their peak in late summer, fall and winter. Call for more info.

**Sat., Sept. 12 - 9:30am - Petal Pushers** - "How to Grow Food in Texas" (cont'd). Cool vegetable gardening class. Instructor: Val.

**Cedar Ridge Preserve, 7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas:**

**Saturday, September 19, 9-12:00 noon — Conservation in Action Workday.**

Tasks of the day: trail work, butterfly garden. Water/snacks provided. Wear sturdy boots or shoes with good ankle support, sun protection, gloves and a friend. Contact Julie Mobley, 972-709-7784 or [volunteers@dallasaudubon.org](mailto:volunteers@dallasaudubon.org). Web page: <http://www.audubondallas.org/cedarridge.html>

**Saturday, Sept. 26, 1:30pm. "Fall Wildflower Walk"**. Plant and wildlife guru, Jim Varnum takes you on a walk through the prairie to point and help identify fall wildflowers. Also talk about grasses, birds and butterflies; anything we see. Adults/youth/kids; bring binoculars, cameras, etc. Wear sturdy shoes with good ankle support. More info: contact Jim Varnum, 972-243-4098, or [jevvarnum@aol.com](mailto:jevvarnum@aol.com). **RSVP if bringing a group.**

**Mondays, Sept. 21 - Oct. 12, "Ag 101" Designed for New or Small Acreage Landowners - Session A.** Instructor: Mark Arnold, Ellis County Extension Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources. Join this experienced instructor as you cover topics: soils and soil fertility, soil testing, pasture management, basic livestock productions and pond management. Four classes; 6-8:00pm. Cost: \$20.00.

**Mon., Sept. 21, 7:00pm** - Garden Inspirations - Organic Procedures in the vegetable and perennial gardens. Subject: tree workshop. Fall is a great time to plant trees and we will cover trees for all seasons and all areas. Chef Jeri will come and prepare a dish from the vegetable garden. 108 Ridgecrest, Waxahachie (off 813 Rockett), 214-497-3918; public welcome.

(Continued on page 8)



## 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 September - What Needs to be Done?



### Planting and Sowing

- There is still time to sow wildflower seeds. Consider bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, coneflower, gaillardia, black-eyed Susan, evening primrose and many others.
- Plant fall perennials (mums, fall asters, copper canyon daisies) now.

### Fertilizing and Pruning

- Apply a high-nitrogen or all-nitrogen fertilizer to your lawn early this month. This early-fall feeding is perhaps the most important one of the year.
- Wisterias that don't bloom well may need to be root-pruned. Use a sharpshooter spade to cut horizontal roots 15 to 18 inches away from the plant's trunk.

### This and That

- Divide spring-flowering perennials such as irises, Shasta daisies, gaillardias, Rudbeckias, cannas, day-lilies, violets, liriopse and ajuga.

### Garden Watch

- Applications of pre-emergent weed killers must be made early this month, before seeds begin to germinate. Depending on which weeds you are targeting, it may be necessary to apply two different products; one for broad-leaved winter annuals such as henbit, dandelions, and chickweed, and one for grassy winter weeds such as Rescue grass and annual bluegrass.
- Apply a final treatment of Image or Manage before mid-month to control nutsedge in your lawn and garden beds.
- Eliminate fire ants in your landscape by broadcasting a 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 AgriLife Office for more information.

### EarthKind™ Tips for September

Compost is nature recycling; it provides constant fertilization, as well as loosening and conditioning the soil. The latest estimates indicate that 20 to 50 percent of the waste that enters our landfills is compostable material. For more information visit: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/compost.html>.

## Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



### Texas Greeneyes

*Berlandiera texana* DC.

**Sunflower Family (Asteraceae)**

Size: 2-4 feet

Blooms: April - November, Perennial

Greeneyes is found on sandy or caliche slopes, bluffs, roadsides or streamsides. Stems and leaves are covered with soft hairs. The triangular, alternate leaves have toothed edges, and may have short stems, or none. Daisy-like yellow flowers, two inches across, usually have eight rays or petals, which are notched at a narrow tip, but they can have a few more or less. The center disk is light yellow to greenish, becoming red to maroon as the disk florets open. Flower heads are loosely clustered. A deep taproot gives greeneyes the drought tolerance sought for a xeric garden or landscape. It blooms over a long period of time.

## Vegetable Gardeners Monthly

By Rick Daniel

Ellis County Master Gardener/Vegetable Gardening Specialist

Hello, and welcome to the September 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 Specialist.

It's time to add to that already growing fall garden. Fall vegetable gardens are one of my favorites, as it means summer is ending and cooler weather is upon us. I much prefer facing the cool winters than I do the scorching hot summers! It's time to sow beets, lettuce, mustard greens and English and snap peas early this month and you can plant transplants of broccoli, Brussels' sprouts, cabbage and cauliflower early this month as well. Garlic cloves and onion seeds can be started mid-month. You can sow kale, parsley, radish, spinach and turnip seeds throughout the month.

### Featured Vegetable of the Month

*By Rick Daniel  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



### Vegetable of the Month

#### **BROCCOLI:**



**Planting dates:** For spring, set out transplants in early spring (Feb 1-March 15) and for fall plant late summer or early fall. (August 20-Sep 15).

**Planting method:** Transplants are easiest, but if using seeds, plant ¼ to ½ inch deep. When the fifth leaf emerges, transplant seedlings to 4-inch pots before transplanting to garden. Plant 12-24 inches apart, but 15 inches is considered to be ideal. Broccoli transplants should be planted deeply, just below the first leaves. Soil should be moist when transplanting. Can plant in full sun to light shade.

**Varieties:** Packman, Galaxy, Green Comet, Heirloom, Calabrese, Early Green, Emperor, Waltham.

**Culture:** Likes cool weather, moisture and plenty of fertilizer. The best quality broccoli is produced when temperatures are 45-70 degrees. With mild winters, broccoli can be harvested throughout the winter. Plants should be large and vigorous before the heads start to form, and this is ensured by well prepared soil, plenty of moisture and fertility.

**Fertilizer:** Several weeks prior to planting, prepare soil with lots of organic matter and fertilizer. Spade in 2-3 inches of organic matter about 8 inches deep. Use starter fertilizer when transplanting. Fertilize when the heads begin to form and are about the size of a fifty-cent piece. Sprinkle a handful of organic fertilizer around each plant. Continue to fertilize after first harvest. For fall gardens, consider using a high nitrogen fertilizer.

**Harvest:** 50-80 days from transplants. Harvest heads when they are about 2/3's of their potential size, which is 6-8 inches Use a sharp knife and cut above the side buds, which will continue to mature into smaller heads that can be harvested later. If yellow blooms appear on the heads, then you waited too long.

Gardening is a matter of your enthusiasm holding up until your back gets used to it.

~Author unknown

## Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton  
Ellis County Master Gardener



### Sunflower – September Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton

**Sunflower** (*Helianthus annuus*) sometimes called *maize de Texas* (Texas corn), the common sunflower is an American plant that has been widely cultivated and much improved from its modest ancestry. Here in Texas, these sun-worshippers are blooming now in meadows, along roadsides, and in gardens to the delight of butterflies, birds, and people. Millions of acres of land in the US are devoted to the production of sunflower seed oil.

To grow well, sunflowers need full sun. They grow best in fertile, moist, well drained soil with a lot of mulch. Seeds should be planted about a foot apart and 1-inch deep. Sunflower seeds are roasted and sold as a snack food. Sunflowers can be processed into a peanut butter alternative. It is also sold as food for birds, and can be used directly in cooking and salads.

Sunflower oil, extracted from the seeds, is used for cooking, and to produce margarine and bio-diesel. The cake remaining after the seeds have been processed for oil is used as a livestock feed. Sunflowers also produce latex and are the subject of experiments to improve their suitability as an alternative crop for producing hypo-allergenic rubber.

Traditionally, several Native American groups planted sunflowers on the north edges of their gardens as a "fourth sister" to the better known three sisters combination of corn, beans, and squash.

Lucy Harrell, an organic gardener and teacher in Arlington, Texas, encourages us to grow sunflowers in the garden as a "trap plant" for all sucking, rasping insects. The bugs are attracted to the sunflowers and less likely to damage your vegetable plants. As a companion plant, sunflowers and corn are protective to each other with insect damage reduced on both. Cucumbers benefit when sunflowers are grown near them to provide a windbreak. In Texas try growing sunflowers on the west side of the cucumber patch to provide afternoon shade.

Children and sunflowers are meant to be grown together! The seeds are large and easily handled by little fingers. They will germinate in just a few days in a small paper cup in a sunny window. One of my favorite garden projects with children is to build a flower house. Use a stick to trace out a large circle, about six feet across, drag the stick along the ground and gouge out a trench about an inch deep. Have the children drop fat sunflower seeds and dainty morning glory seeds in the trench. Cover the seeds and give them a small drink of water. Be sure the children water the circle daily until the flowers are well established. When the sunflowers are about six feet tall pull out a few to make an opening into the circle. With heavy twine weave in and out between the tops of the sunflowers and carefully begin pulling them toward the center of the circle to form a teepee. Within a few days the morning glories will crisscross through the sunflowers forming a beautiful garden playhouse where dreams and imagination will play out all summer.

### What Is This Sticky Stuff?

By Jackie Wilhite  
Ellis County Master Gardener



In a word, this is "honeydew" which is a sugary excrement secreted by aphids, mealy bugs, soft scales and white flies.

These insects belong to the order of Homoptera. Aphids are no more than 1/4-inch in size and are round-bodied insects that have piercing, sucking mouth parts that eat only the sap of the plant by feeding on the underside of leaves and stems in groups or clusters. The first signs of aphids include the stunting of plants and leaves curling.

White flies can be identified by the large number of adults that will flutter away when the plant is disturbed, resembling "flying dandruff". Immature white flies are tiny green to blackish scale-like insects on the underside of leaves. Adults are about 1/16-inch in length, have four wings and are waxy powder. Plants infected with white flies have a mottled look that will turn yellow and

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even die if not treated. White flies can be controlled with most garden variety pest controlled methods.

High pressure water spray directed at the underside of leaves can remove aphids from infested plants, if avoiding the use of chemicals. It is usually necessary to repeat this treatment several times. If black sooty mold fungus is present, it is more effective to put a small amount of liquid dish soap in a sprayer to loosen the sticky "honeydew" as well as remove the black sooty mold. If it becomes necessary to use a pesticide, treatment should be completed very early in the morning or late afternoon to protect bees. Avoid using products that are labeled toxic to bees and never use a pesticide if bees are present; bees are necessary pollinators of plants. Wait until the bees have left the plants to treat the invading pests.

Do you have questions for a Master Gardener? Send them to [ellis-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:ellis-tx@tamu.edu) with "question for Kim" in the subject heading. We have specialists in most fields of gardening who would love to help answer your questions. Or call the AgriLife Office at 972-825-5175.

## ***Living Screens***

*By Jackie Wilhite, Ellis County Master Gardener*



Now is a good time to evaluate your landscape to see what plants are meeting or exceeding your expectations.

This year's consistent triple digit temperatures and lack of regular rainfall makes it a perfect opportunity to evaluate the sun to shade ratio, especially for areas receiving full sun all day. While most of our native plants and those that have adapted to this area like full sun, most plants can benefit from at least some afternoon shade. Evaluations should be done now and any corrective measures should be scheduled for the cooler temperatures of the month of October. This will allow the plants to become better established with the help of cooler daytime and nighttime temperatures and more plentiful rainfall.

First notice should be given to the areas where the family spends most of their time outdoors such as patios and backyards, or unsightly areas like service areas. If a plant is simply suffering from too much hot afternoon sun, it might need to be moved to a location that is partly shaded. But, if the entire patio is too hot to use then maybe a screen planting would be beneficial.

Incorporating screens instantly transforms a space into an enclosure of privacy and security while adding a touch of charm and elegance. A fence is an instant screen but add a vine to that fence and the space becomes one of living beauty. Small decorative fences make good screens for service areas like the air conditioner or trash containers. Likewise a trellis, wooden lattice works, or pergolas are also excellent choices. A trellis or pergola with a vine trained to cover them provides shade which in turn lowers the temperatures in the covered area.

Careful forethought about these areas use, size of the area and plant desired are relevant to the success of the plating. A living screen can be established in three years by trellising a climbing evergreen vine. The top evergreen vines that could be used in this area include cross vine (*Bignonia capreolata*) and Carolina Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) both are Texas natives. Clematis (deciduous to semi-evergreen) makes an ideal delicate coverage possibility for service areas like in front of the air conditioner where airflow should not be minimized.

There are several annual vines that can be planted from seed that include hyacinth bean, cypress vine and morning glory, just to name a few. These annuals can even be planted in containers and trained on a trellis or along a fence. Remember, an area used for covering a picnic table or near entrances should not have a vine covering the area that produces sweet smelling flowers because bees, wasps and ants will be a constant problem.

Wisteria makes beautiful coverage for large supports like pergolas but the spring flowers attract the pollinators like bees and wasp and in a short time the vine becomes so large and heavy that it could pull down a lightly framed structure. Save the heavy vines for large structures away from the heavy foot traffic and allow the pollinators to do their job.

These are just a few of the possibilities when it comes to planting living screens in the landscape.

For further information, contact the Ellis County Master Gardeners at the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, 701 South I-35E, Suite 3, Waxahachie, or call 972-825-5175 or email [ellis-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:ellis-tx@tamu.edu).



## Landscape Gardening

By Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener



### Do you have need for an outstanding shrub?

Check out the Chinese fringe-flower (*Loropetalum chinense*), (not to be confused with Chinese Fringe Tree (*Chionanthus retusus*)). The Chinese fringe-flower was introduced in the United States in the early 1990's. It is also native to Japan and northeast India. This shrub, with purple leaves, has outstanding pink flowers. It blooms in late winter to early spring and sporadically throughout the summer. The Chinese fringe-flower prefers full sun to partly shaded sites. It does need some water. Mulch will help keep it moist and protect the roots. It is easy to propagate from cuttings year-round.

The height is 6-15 feet, and it spreads 8-10 feet. Check the size listed on the cultivar – some can grow to 20' in height. This is a large shrub; plant in an appropriate place taking into consideration the height and width it could get to! The *Loropetalum* branches can be cut and used in the home and forced for early bloom.

There is an excellent specimen in the IDEA Garden, which is located in the Tyler Rose Garden or you can check for pictures on the internet. The color of the bloom is very attractive. The foliage is evergreen in the winter.

Ellis County Master Gardeners have a website at [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com). Check this website for information on gardening in Ellis County, sign up for our monthly Ellis County E-Gardening newsletter or access other websites including Texas A&M horticulture website. Questions for Master Gardeners will be answered with a return telephone call or email if you leave a message at 972-825-5175.

### What to do in August

- Trim off faded flowers on crape myrtles to encourage later re-bloom.
- Caladiums require plenty of water at this time of year if they are to remain lush and active until fall. Fertilize with 21-0-0 at the rate of one-third to one-half pound per 100 square feet of bed area, and water thoroughly.
- Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning from now until midwinter. Severe pruning at this time will only stimulate tender new growth prior to frost.
- Sow seeds of snapdragons, dianthus, pansies, calendulas, and other cool-season flowers in flats, or in well-prepared areas of the garden, for planting outside during mid-to-late fall.
- It is time to divide spring-flowering perennials, such as iris, Shasta daisy, oxeye, gaillardia, cannas, day lilies, violets, liriopie, and ajuga.
- Don't allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture.
- A late-summer pruning of rose bushes can be beneficial. Prune out dead canes and any weak, brushy growth. Cut back tall, vigorous bushes to about 30 inches. Prune just above an outward-facing bud so your bush won't grow inward. After pruning, apply fertilizer, and water thoroughly. If a preventive disease-control program has been maintained, your rose bushes should be ready to provide an excellent crop of flowers this fall.
- It is not too late to set out another planting of many warm-season annuals, such as marigolds, zinnias, and periwinkles. They will require extra attention for the first few weeks, but should provide you with color during late September, October, and November.

What a man needs in gardening is a cast-iron back, with a hinge in it.

~Charles Dudley Warner, *My Summer in a Garden*, 1871

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

By Mindy Phillips, Ellis County Master Gardener



September in Texas is still a summer month. Weather may be wet or dry, windy or not, but you can pretty much count on it being hot. Plants are still growing and need the same care they did all summer long.

This is a great time of the year to look for bargains on those pieces of lawn and garden equipment and toys you've been eyeing all summer. Keep checking regularly and find mark-downs on everything from tools to furniture.

We never know when it will rain – or even **if** it will rain – in September. Monitor rainfall in your landscape with an accurate rain gauge and adjust your sprinklers accordingly. Lawns need 1-1 ½ inches of rain weekly. Eliminate water running off into the streets by checking your sprinkler system and not watering to the point of runoff.

This is also a good time to check your automatic sprinkler system. Run a 2-3 minute schedule and check each sprinkler head to see it is aimed at the grass and is delivering the water you think it is. I have to pull St. Augustine runners off the pop-up sprinkler heads every month or so to keep the sprinklers doing their job; besides, it's fun to play in the sprinklers when it is hot.

Even though early September is still hot, we need to be thinking about what fall and winter will be like for our landscapes and gardens. What we do now and into the fall will determine how well our spring gardens will do. Here are a few tasks to be done in early September each year:

- This is the time to do the last lawn fertilizer application of the growing season. Use a high- or all-nitrogen fertilizer according to package directions. Water it in well if you aren't lucky enough to have it rain right after you finish spreading the stuff!
- If you use pre-emergent fertilizer in the fall for spring weed control, you will need to do this by mid-month in most years. Check with a reputable nursery for their recommendations about the timing, but do it now because the window of opportunity is disappearing soon.
- While the lawn needs fertilizer, the trees and shrubs don't. Stop fertilizing trees and shrubs by mid-September to allow those plants to slow down and get ready for winter. If you fertilize now, trees and shrubs put on tender new growth just in time to have it frozen off with the first freeze in November. This time of year with all the pre-winter chores, it is nice to have one thing **not** to do!

Once September is about half over it will be time to think about next year's flowers. If we are to have great blooms in the spring our work is cut out for us in the fall. Here are a few tasks to be done now for next year's bloom.

- Perennials over the years can get crowded and then they don't bloom as well. This is the time of year to separate those plants that bloom in the spring. The general rule of thumb is to divide and replant spring bloomers in the fall and fall bloomers in the spring. That way you don't interrupt their bud setting.
- Spring bloomers that need to be divided can be shared with other gardeners or replanted in another part of your landscape. These spring bloomers include lilies, daylilies, iris, daisies, cannas, violets, gaillardias, and Rudbeckia. To separate overcrowded plants, gently fork or spade around the clumps, lift them, and pull or cut apart, leaving green growing parts on each piece. The smaller pieces can be planted anywhere the conditions are right – shade for shade-loving, sun for sun-loving. Keep them watered and mulched for their protection. They will repay you with lots of blooms come warm weather.
- Remember **not** to prune spring blooming trees and shrubs. They bloom on this year's growth, so leave them alone for now. Spring pruning is done after the blooms are finished. Trees and shrubs in this category are redbuds, forsythia, and viburnum.

By the end of the month we are usually able to believe the brutal heat of summer is coming to an end but the hot weather is still with us. Here are a few tips for your landscape to end the month of September:

- Anytime this month you can sow wildflower seeds for next spring. Prepare the beds by raking soil so seeds can contact the ground. Sow seeds according to the directions and water in. Remember these are natives and live without our care and interference, so don't over water or fertilize. Covering with a thin layer of mulch is also recommended. Some seeds to try are bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush and Indian blanket, coreopsis, coneflower, black-eye Susan, and gaillardia. You can also sow these seeds around your perennials as long as they will receive full sun.
- Local nurseries and mail order catalogs have a wide selection of wildflower seeds this time of year.

Late September is also time to think about your houseplants and patio plants that will need to come indoors before the first freeze in November. This is a great time to repot houseplants that may need bigger pots or replenished soil. Your patio plants can stay outside another couple of months, but if they are looking ragged now prune them for later growth or take cuttings from healthy stems and root them for winter enjoyment inside.

I have had good luck over-wintering caladiums in pots the last couple of years. I stop watering when I bring the pots into the garage in November; letting the potting soil dry out, and remove all dead foliage. Then the bulbs spend the winter not freezing but not trying to grow either, and when I put them out in the late spring heat, they grow into lovely full pots of colorful leaves one more year.

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**Mon., Sept. 21** - 6-week Landscape Design Class will begin; for more info call Marilyn at 214-497-3918.

**Saturday, Oct. 3, 9-11:00am** - 2nd Annual Iris Giveaway, hosted by the Ellis County Master Gardeners at the Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market.

**Thursday, Oct. 8, 7-9:30pm** - Household Canning Class - Instructor: Chef Jeri McGinty, 972-998-5879. Focus on safety, sanitation, tools, and ingredient variety. Students will work on a canning project during the class session. Please bring a chef's knife and cutting board with you to class. Cost \$45.00; 1728 Bluff Springs Rd., Ferris, Texas.

**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.

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### Lighthouse for Learning

(with the Ellis County Master Gardeners)

For reservations, call Melissa Cobb, 972-923-4631

**Monday, September 28 - 6-8:00pm.** —**Iris**—Join DeAnn Bell and David Smith to learn the origin of the name, early uses and view a spectacular media presentation. Plus take home a rhizome to plant in your yard. Cost: \$10.00.

**Monday, October 5 - 6-7:30pm.** —**Fall Bulbs**—It's time to plant your fall bulbs now so the beauty of your labor blossoms in the spring. Instructor: DeAnn Bell. Cost: \$10.00

**Monday, October 12, 6-7:30pm** — **Propagation of Plants**—Students will learn the basics of Plant Propagation, increasing and multiplying plants for the house, landscape and garden. After a short presentation in the classroom, students will have hands-on experience in the WISD High School greenhouse. Instructor: Walt Friis. Cost: \$10.00.

**Monday, October 19, 6:00-7:30pm**—**Hobby Greenhouse Management**—Considering buying or building your own hobby greenhouse? Learn the basics of greenhouse management, starting with choice of site, design, heating, cooling, lighting and water needs. Instructor: Walt Friis. Cost \$10.00.



## ***FERNS FOREVER***

By Nancy Fenton  
Ellis County Master Gardener

Do you just love that cool, lacy look in the cool shade? Our hot summers and alkaline soils make it a little hard in our back shady yards. There are a few ferns, that according to Linda Gay of Mercer Arboretum in Houston, that tolerate our heat and alkaline soil. At a recent Master Gardener conference she went bonkers about ferns making all of us want more. Suggestions for high alkaline areas with low water were *Maidenhair*, *Trailing Maidenhair*, *East Indian Holly*, and *Japanese Painted Fern*. *New Zealand Bracken Fern*, *Lace Fern*, *River Brooke Cloak Fern* *River Beech fern* and *Southern Wood Fern*.

Some are available locally; others will have to be ordered via special catalogs or Internet. Most do well with strong light or at least dappled, if not deep shade part of the day. Important to know, are three things:

- Is it a clumping fern or does it spread by runners?
- How big will it get at maturity? Varieties go from heights of 6 inches to the 120 inches (12 feet) of the *Bracken Fern*
- How slowly or quickly will the fern grow? *East Indian Holly Fern* grows very slowly

I've only mentioned ones that will take our high ph, but they do vary widely in growth rate and size. Prepare your soil with lots of compost, plant your area so each fern has to grow and show and then plant either late in the fall or early in the spring. Mulch heavily and water weekly until vigorous new growth appears. After new growth starts up you can back off a little on the water, but keep checking! It may take a full year for a fern to establish itself so be watchful! Fall planting allows more root growth before the plant has to take on Texas Summers, but with proper care you too can have that cool lacy look in your own yard!



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

The Ellis County Master Gardeners invite photographers from all levels of expertise to enter our first ever Photo Contest.

**Photo Contest**

**CATEGORIES:**  
Single specimen  
In the Garden  
Garden Bounty

Contest runs  
May 1 - September 30, 2007

For a complete copy of the rules and application form, please log on to: [www.ECMGA.com](http://www.ECMGA.com)

Presented by:  
Ellis County Master Gardeners and  
The Waxahachie Daily Light

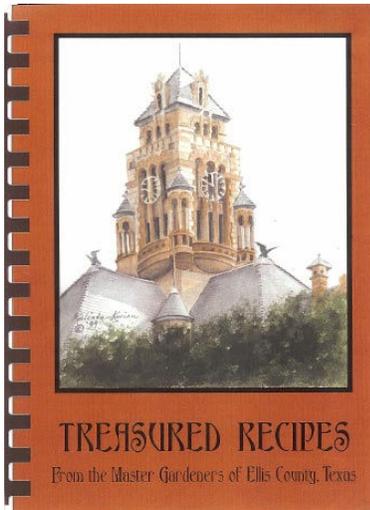
The contest will begin June 1<sup>st</sup> and run thru January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010. Winners will be announced at the 2010 Ellis County Master Gardener's Lawn and Garden Expo, E-Garden Newsletter, and the Waxahachie Daily Light and on the [www.ECMGA.com](http://www.ECMGA.com) website. In a break from 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).



**On Sale Now!**

**Ellis County Master Gardener's Cookbook**

**Only \$10.00**

(beautifully hardbound - 450 recipes)

Can be purchased at the AgriLife Extension Office; call 972-825-5175. Cash or check; **no credit cards accepted.**

**They will also be available from May 30 -October 17 at the Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market**