



Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume V, Issue 7

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

August, 2011

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 with your landscape. We will feature horticultural articles that we hope you will find interesting, and 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/Susan Clark, co-editor

What's Happening in August

Every Saturday, 8am—1pm Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market. Visit the Ellis County Master Gardener's booth! There are lots of free handouts, plants to buy, and some products to purchase. Pick up a printed copy of the E-Garden Newsletter for yourself or to pass on to a friend.

Indian Trail Master Naturalists

<http://txmn.org/indiantrail/>

Monday, August 22, 7pm—8pm Wind Turbines and Bird and Bat Mortality presented by Tom Stevens, TCU Doctoral Candidate. The program is free and follows the 6 p.m. Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. It takes place in the banquet hall of the First United Methodist Church, 505 West Marvin Ave, Waxahachie.

Friday, August 26, Begins 8pm Come to the Park After Dark! Midlothian's Mockingbird Nature Park will host a night hike. Come and learn about the sights, sounds, and smells of nature at night. Located at the corner of Mockingbird and Onward Roads. Call (972) 291-2868 to sign up and for further details.

Cedar Ridge Preserve

7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas

www.audubondallas.org

Saturday, August 20, 8am—11am Conservation in Action Workday. Work in the butterfly garden and on the trails. Water and snacks provided. For info, call Jim Varnum at (214) 543-2055 or email jevvarnum@aol.com.

Texas Discover Gardens

3601 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Dallas

TexasDiscoveryGardens.org

Saturday, August 6, 11am—12pm Butterfly House Discovery Tour Go on a guided tour of the Butterfly House and get a behind the scenes look at these winged wonders.

Saturday, August 6, 10am—2pm Butterflies and Bugs! Annual Family Festival The butterfly festival was so popular, they're celebrating all insects in this second annual event. Enjoy crafts, bug displays, music, activities and more. Both events are included with admission (\$8/adults, \$6/seniors 60+, and \$4/children 3-11). Pay at the door.

Garden Inspirations

www.gardeninspirations-tx.com

Begins Saturday, August 13 AITK Canning Club Become a member for a monthly fee and join in while they "can, can, can" away in the kitchen. Contact Garden Inspirations for more info at marilyn@gardeninspirations-tx.com or call (214) 842-2100.

August 8 to August 29, various times Four Week Vegetable Garden Series Learn about fall gardening. The class starts with soil and moves to planting. This is a hands-on class. See the website for details.



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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Okra Photo by Pam Daniel

Grilled Okra

By Pam Daniel

1 lb fresh okra, chopped
1 onion, chopped
2 T. olive oil
1 T. balsamic vinegar
1 tsp. chopped garlic

Add all ingredients together in a container; shake to blend. Marinate in the refrigerator, if time allows. Grill on medium heat until okra starts to brown, approximately 20-30 minutes.

Facts About Okra

Okra was introduced to this country by the French colonists of Louisiana in the early 1700's. It is a rich source for many nutrients, including fiber, vitamin B6, and folic acid.

It's August....What Needs To Be Done?

Planting

- Sow seeds in flats for plants that may be difficult to find later in the fall, such as calendulas. You can also sow seeds of fall and winter annuals like snapdragons, dianthus, and pansies or purchase nursery stock when these become available.
- Plant seeds of bluebonnets and other wildflowers directly in the ground about one-half inches deep. The soil should be free of weeds and grass and the surface should be lightly cultivated. Be sure they make contact with the ground. Water well as these plants must germinate in the late summer or fall.
- Fall-flowering bulbs can also be planted in August, including spider lily, naked ladies lily, fall crocus, and oxblood lily. These may be a challenge to find, but worth the effort.

Pruning and Fertilizing

- Prune most roses by cutting out dead canes and weak spindly growth. Cut back the stems to the nearest five leaflets of an outward-growing bud. Fertilize and water well for beautiful fall blooms.
- *Salvia greggii* (autumn sage) can be cut back at least by one-third. Do not give blooming shrubs flattops; always leave them in a rounded, natural shape. If pruned now, they should display great fall and early winter color.
- Prune abelia after it blooms.
- Cut back other prolific growing shrubs and vines to keep them in bounds, for example, variegated privet, elaeagnus, hollies, and honeysuckle.

Garden Watch

- Continue to follow the "*Home Owner's Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule*", available at the Texas AgriLife Extension Office, to protect pecan trees against pecan weevils and hickory shuckworms, which can destroy the crop.
- The same schedule also applies to peach and plum trees to protect from peach tree borers.

Odds and ends

- Select and order spring-flowering bulbs that will grow in our area.
- Use Texas natives and adapted plants like salvias, Turk's cap, pink skullcap, lantana, Texas betony, butterfly bush, flame acanthus, and ornamental grasses.



Okra Photo by Pam Daniel

Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Giant Goldenrod

Solidago gigantean Ait.

Sunflower Family (Asteraceae)

Size: 1 – 6 feet

Blooms: July-November, Perennial

Range: 1 – 10 (Ellis County is range 4)

Across the state, beautiful goldenrods hint that fall is soon to come. Positive identification is difficult; even botanists have trouble with them. They are well known for hybridizing.

All have rhizomatous roots that spread, so large colonies are common. Long, slender stems branch in the upper portion. These branches bear branchlets on which tiny yellow flowers are densely clustered. Stalkless leaves alternate up the stems. Goldenrod is wrongly blamed for hay fever; its pollen is carried by insects, not the wind. It is said that a tea from this plant was used by Indians in the treatment of digestive ailments. Goldenrod flowers yield a natural dye, shading from yellow to yellow-green. *S. gigantean* (pictured) is not found in Region 6, but several other goldenrod species are.



Lawn Watering Management During Drought Conditions

By: Jim Tachias
Ellis County Master Gardener

Water is a limited resource in Texas. During these dry times, our water supplies dry up to the point that cities and water districts must initiate rationing programs. Homeowners must learn to live with these watering restrictions and use the water wisely. Each city or water district adopts a policy based on the current conditions of its water supply and individual situation. However, most rationing programs are similar. The following "stages" will be similar to those used in your area.

Stage I. Usage for outdoor purposes such as lawns, gardens, car washing, power washing, etc., will be restricted to one of the following:

- Alternate day use for customers with even/odd numbered addresses or north/south—east/west on alternate days.
- Outdoor watering restricted to defined

hours each day.

- City or water districts will provide you with a calendar specifying which days and hours you will be affected.

Homeowner should:

- Water only in the early morning hours, between 4 a.m. and 10 a.m.
- Water only when needed and to a depth of six inches. This normally will take one inch of water over an hour's duration to water to a depth of six inches in an area. Sandy, rocky and/or sloping landscape will normally take different times to wet the soil to a depth of six inches.
- To determine how long it will take your particular sprinkler system to water to a depth of six inches, follow these steps.
 1. Set out four to six open-top cans on the lawn (tuna or cat food sized cans are best).
 2. Turn the sprinkler on for 30 minutes.
 3. Measure and record the depth of water in each can.
 4. Calculate the average depth of water from all cans.
 5. Use a hand trowel or shovel to de-

termine how deep the soil was wet during the 30 minutes.

6. Use the information on the depth of water penetrated and average depth of water as determined above to calculate how long it takes your sprinkler system to water to a depth of six inches. Example: If your system puts out 1/2 inch of water in 30 minutes wetting the soil to a depth of 3 inches, run your system for one hour to obtain a depth of six inches.

- Watering deep and only when needed will provide you with a healthy green lawn, even in periods of drought. Dry stress symptoms will develop when the lawn needs watering; leaves turn a dull purplish color, leaf blades roll, and footprints show after walking across the yard.
- Mow often enough to remove no more than 1/3 of the leaf blades at one time.
- Reduce fertility program.

Stage II. Water usage for outdoor purposes such as lawns, flower beds, car washing, etc., will be further restricted to only once a week.

(Continued on page 4)

Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



August Herb of the Month – Herbs of the Southwest

If you want to make it through August in Texas without the frustration of losing many of the plants in your herb garden, you should include a few natives. These are plants that will withstand and even thrive during our summer heat and drought.

Mexican Oregano [pictured below] (*Lippia graveolens*) and (*Poliomintha logiflora*) are not true oreganos, but have a strong smelling oregano scent and flavor. They are two of several species native to Texas and Mexico. These small perennial shrubs with bright green leaves yield an essential oil similar to that of oregano. Their blue-pink flowers bloom all summer and are attractive to hummingbirds. When you find Mexican recipes calling for oregano, the leaves of these plants would generally be used. The flowers can be used in teas.



Sweet Marigold, Mexican Mint Marigold (*Tagetes lucida*) is another perennial Texas native that should be in your herb garden. This is one of the last herbs to flower in the fall. Texas herbalist Madalene Hill often told us to expect our first freeze two weeks after Sweet Marigold blooms. When I have remembered to

track this, I have noted a frost in my garden within 12 to 15 days of blooming! Use the flowers in salads and as a garnish. The anise flavored leaves are used to season any kind of meat, poultry, fish, and eggs. It is best used fresh. It is an excellent culinary substitute for French tarragon, which is seldom grown successfully in our southern gardens.

Epazote [pictured to right] (*Chenopodium ambrosioides*) is a short-lived perennial or annual in the North Texas garden. The leaves are used to flavor Mexican foods and to marinate meats. Add a few stems to



the bean pot during the last ten minutes of cooking to take gas out of field beans. In addition to its culinary uses, dried epazote is an effective room freshener. This plant can be invasive and will take over unmanaged gardens, so use caution when planting. One plant will grow to six feet high and have a spread of three feet.

Hoja Santa (*Piper auritum*) is an aromatic herb with a heart-shaped, velvety leaf. The name means "sacred leaf" in Spanish. It is also known as yerba santa, Mexican pepper leaf, root beer plant, and sacred pepper. The leaves can reach up to 12 inches or more in size. The complex flavor of Hoja Santa is not easy to de-

scribe; it has been compared to licorice, sassafras, anise, nutmeg, mint, tarragon, and black pepper. It is native to the Americas, from northern South America to Mexico, and Southwest USA. In my garden, Hoja Santa prefers a shady location, reaches four feet in height, and covers a five to six foot area. In North Texas, it will die back in the winter and

reemerge in mid-summer. The fragrant leaves are often used in Mexican cuisine to wrap fish or meat for cooking, and as an essential ingredient in mole verde. It is also chopped to flavor soups, such as pozole, and in eggs. In Central Mexico, it is used to flavor chocolate drinks. Hoja Santa is generally used fresh.

Warning: The essential oils within the leaf are rich in safrole, a substance also found in sassafras, which has been shown to be carcinogenic in animals. In 1960, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration banned sassafras bark along with sassafras oil and safrole as flavoring agents because of their carcinogenic properties. The Council of Europe imposed the same ban in 1974, although some toxicological studies show that humans do not process safrole into its carcinogenic metabolite.

Lawn Watering Mgmt. (Continued from page 3)

Homeowner should:

- Same as Stage I. A lawn watered to a depth of 6 inches should be able to go a week without damage unless there are multiple 100+°/windy days.
- Continue to mow as needed.
- Reduce fertility program even more.

Stage III. All water usage is prohibited except by hand-held hoses.

Homeowner should:

- Hand water as much as you can ac-

ording to the allotted time.

- Foundations and trees are most important.
- Water only areas that are showing severe drought stress.
- Most warm season turfgrass species can survive short periods of drought stress. When under severe drought stress, grass may go dormant. Once watering or rains begin again, grasses will recover assuming the drought has not been too severe. Recovery will be slow. Grasses that are able to go

dormant during a drought are buffalo grass, zoysia japonica, and bermudagrass. Other species do not possess this type of drought tolerance.

- Eliminate fertilizing applications.

Stage IV. All outdoor water usage is prohibited.

Homeowner should:

- Mow as needed or not at all
- Stop fertility program.
- Grass that dies will have to be replaced after the drought ends.

August Gardens

By Carolyn Foster
Ellis County Master Gardener



As we wait for cooler temps, continue to water and deadhead perennials and annuals to keep blooms coming. Remove any worn out annuals or veggies. Now is a good time to pick up fallen and decaying fruit and other dead plants. Clean up any fallen rose and peony leaves. All of these can harbor disease and pests that will overwinter in beds. Remember to trash it, not compost it.

Late blooming perennials such as Helianthus, Heliopsis, and Rudbeckia will give great color for fall. Feed summer annuals and container plants with a general 20-20-20 or 5-5-5 fertilizer. Shear the tops off leggy petunias, then feed and water. Keep feeding chrysanthemum until the buds swell and begin to open. Remove faded flowers and hips before you feed roses and water well for a final fall flowering. Dig, divide and replant bearded iris rhizomes and Oriental poppies.

You can prepare fall planter beds by cultivating the soil 12" deep, then working in 2" to 3" of organic matter or compost with a small amount of balanced fertilizer. Now is a good time to sow fall and winter flower seeds such as calendulas, Iceland poppies, English primrose, pansies, violas, snapdragons, stock, and forget-me-not.

You can sow perennial seeds (Shasta daisy, coreopsis, columbines and black-eyed Susan) now. Cool weather crops, such as carrots, parsley, radishes, Swiss chard, lettuce, and beets seeds can be sown.

Wait before planting any new trees or shrubs in the heat. If you must, keep them well watered. August is a good time to take cuttings, collect seeds, and divide perennials. Look for these signs when it's time to divide: the center of the plant has died out; the plant is no longer flowering as profusely as before; or it is crowding out the space of other plants.

Water is one of our greatest resources, CONSERVE IT. When watering during hot weather, do it early in the morning. In the heat of the day, water will evaporate before the plants get to use it. Use a sprinkler with large drops of water instead of a fine mist. Check hose connections, pipes, and valves for leaks. Even a small dribble can waste hundreds of gallons of water in a day.

Remember drought stressed plants have less water in their plant tissues. Chemicals that enter the leaves will be more concentrated and may burn the leaves, so water several hours before applying chemicals. Always read the label and follow instructions carefully. Remember with chemicals—"MORE IS NOT BETTER". Until next time, keep growing smart.

Dog Days of Summer

From: Rita Hodges, County Extension Agent, Family & Consumer Sciences, Ellis County

Whether you call them "The Dog Days of Summer" or describe it as an "Indian Summer," we are in the hottest part of the year.

As you go outdoors to enjoy the sun and blue sky, the Texas AgriLife Extension Service wants to remind you to take a few precautions when exposed to the Texas sun and heat.

When working outdoors, you should always protect yourself from the harmful Ultraviolet (UV) rays being emitted by the sun. Over time, these UV rays cause damage to the skin, making it less elastic and contribute heavily to the development of skin cancers. Approximately 90% of all skin cancers occur on



sun-exposed skin. While you should avoid deliberate sunbathing, you should use a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 while in the sun. Apply sunscreen 20 minutes before going out into the sun and reapply every two hours.

Another summertime concern is dehydration, or not enough water in your body. When your body loses too much fluid, it begins to take fluid from the blood, which leads to cramping in the muscles and may result in shock. Early

The American Academy of Dermatology suggests wearing a hat, sunglasses, and protective clothing when ex-

posed to the sun. symptoms of dehydration are dry mouth and sticky saliva in addition to dark urine and reduced urine output. To reduce the risk for dehydration, drink plenty of fluids, water, or sports drinks, especially when working outdoors in the heat. You should also avoid drinks containing caffeine and alcohol; they increase urine output and make you dehydrate faster. Should you notice cramping, feeling dizzy, or fatigued, stop whatever activity you are doing and rest somewhere out of direct sunlight.

Everyone should be able to enjoy a sunny day. By taking a few precautions while in the sun, you won't have to pay for your day of play.

For further information, contact Rita M. Hodges, County Extension Agent-Family & Consumer Sciences, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, 701 South I-35 E, Waxahachie or call (972) 825-5175 or e-mail: rmhodges@ag.tamu.edu



Landscape Gardening

From: Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener

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

August—Time to Sow Seed for Fall Transplants

If you haven't already done so, this is the time to begin sowing seeds for fall transplants. By starting now, you can have pansies, calendulas, Johnny-Jump-Ups (violets), flowering cabbage, flowering kale, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, lettuce, and other cool season transplants ready to put in the garden in September or early October.

If starting your own transplants has been disastrous for you in the past, especially in the spring, then take heart because starting fall transplants is easier. Since the soil is not as cool as it is in spring, there is not much damping-off disease. Gardeners can start the transplants outside where they get plenty of sunlight. It is best if the transplants don't get too much sun; morning sun and afternoon shade make a good combination.

Although many containers can be used to grow seeds, the most convenient is the foam coffee cup. Simply poke three or four holes in the side toward the bottom of the cup. Write the name of the plant variety on the side of the cup where it will remain without getting lost. An additional advantage of the coffee cups is that they're white and reflect heat.

The next major concern is a potting soil mix. Many standard potting soils will work fairly well, but you can make your own. To one bushel each of vermiculite and peat moss (finely ground pine bark can be substituted for peat moss), add ten tablespoons of



0-20-0 (superphosphate) and one half cup of garden fertilizer, such as 12-24-12. Mix the material thoroughly by putting the ingredients out on the drive, scooping into the bottom and throwing each shovelful on top, pyramid fashion. Another technique is to roll the mixture back and forth in an old tarp. The soil should be slightly watered down so it's damp, but not soggy.

Most seeds should be barely covered with the soil mix, but some tiny seeds like lettuce should not be covered at all. Water them in thoroughly, preferably by setting them in a pan of water and allowing the soil to soak from the bottom. Allow the containers to drain and then put them into a plastic bag out of sunlight. Within a few days the seedlings will begin to grow. As soon as this happens, take the containers out of the bags and put them in a well-ventilated area. As the seedlings begin to make growth, use any soluble houseplant fertilizer to keep them growing vigorously.

If you've had problems with disease in the past, you might want to use a fungicide twice: once at planting and again at germination. Lightly dust the seeds prior to planting. A fungicide can also be used to drench young seedlings just as they come up. Before you know it, you'll have a pot full of tiny seedlings that can either be transplanted into individual containers, or if there aren't too many in the pot, held until time to go into the garden. Perhaps the simplest

technique is just to plant two or three seeds in each pot, thinning them to one plant after a few weeks.

If you opt for transplanting, be sure that you handle the young seedling only by the leaves. If you grasp the stem and damage it, the young seed-



ling will be stunted. Pots for transplants should be filled to within 1/4 inch of the rim. A pencil can be used to make a hole in the center of the potting soil mixture. This is where a little moisture is critical; dry soil won't allow the hole to stay open. Carefully lower the seedling roots into the hole and then use the pencil again to firm the soil against the root system. Water the plants carefully. Shade the young seedlings for several weeks from direct afternoon sun, and continue watering thoroughly as needed.

To Do List: August, 2011

- By the end of August, select potted plants of perennials such as Autumn Asters (*Aster oblongifolius*) or ornamental salvias for excellent fall color. These will become permanent occupants of the flower bed, capable of extended color for several years.
- By August, many fall vegetable seeds and even small plants may be set out for later production. Be careful to give extra water, and a little shade

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In the Garden

With Susan Norvell

Ellis County Master Gardener



August can be a difficult month to garden in Texas, so here's some tips to make the experience easier and more productive. The best tip I can give you for August gardening is to watch out for the heat, for both you and your plants! Wear a hat and light colored clothing, work in the early morning whenever possible and drink plenty of water and stay hydrated. Remember, you need the water just as much and probably more than your plants! Please remember to be water-wise. Our lawns and landscape plants need the equivalent of one inch of water per week.

For you vegetable gardener's, depending on the temperatures, you can sow seeds for fall crops of black-eyed peas, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, corn, okra, and squash early-to-mid month. If possible, position new plants in the shade of existing plants, to protect them from the late afternoon sun. Remember to keep the seedbeds moist until your new plants



germinate.

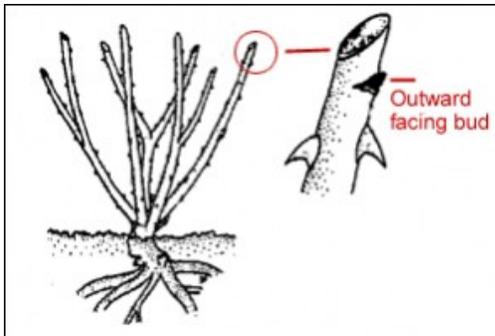
You can also sow kale, butterhead lettuce, spinach, and turnip seeds in late August. Refer to the "Homeowner's Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule", available at the Agri-Life Extension Office, for the timing of this month's spray applications to control pecan weevils and hickory shuckworms on pecan trees and peach tree borers on peach and plum trees.

Don't forget to turn the compost pile occasionally to help aerate and speed up decomposition. Be sure the pile is wet. It needs to be

the consistency of a wrung out wet sponge. Start a new compost pile to accommodate the fall leaf production.

For your perennial gardens, trim and prune dead, overgrown, and leggy plants. Continue to watch for insects

and pests and use the proper control methods. Call the Master Gardener Office for recommendations of proper pest control.



A late-summer pruning of rose-bushes can be beneficial. Remove dead canes and prune any weak, bushy type of

growth. Cut back tall and vigorous bushes to about 30 inches. After pruning, apply a complete 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.

Come on by the farmers market each and every Saturday morning and stock up on locally grown produce. Help support your local growers who consume less energy getting their products to market because they don't have to be shipped cross country.



Landscape Gardening (Continued from page 6)

to these young plants while they are becoming established. The result will be excellent cool season garden produce.

- Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning 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 for plant-

ing outside during mid-to-late fall.

- Plant bluebonnet and other spring wildflowers. They must germinate in late summer or early fall, develop good root systems, and be ready to grow in spring when the weather warms. Plant seed in well-prepared soil, one-half inch deep, and water thoroughly.
- It is time to divide spring-flowering perennials, such as Shasta daisy, oxeye, gaillardia, cannas, day lilies, violets, liriopse, and ajuga. It's

also time to plant new irises, or divide crowded, existing irises.



Gardening with Nature

By: Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener



Organic or synthetic?

That's the question. What works and what doesn't? There are many cultural practices and techniques we must understand and employ if we want to be successful at organic gardening. However, when all else fails, or when pest populations reach unacceptable levels, we call on chemical controls. Pesticide sprays are a last resort. In choosing a pesticide spray, the factor most often considered is toxicity. There is no totally safe product. It is grossly inaccurate to say that natural or organic controls are less toxic than synthetic or man-made ones. Many of the most toxic compounds are natural, while many of the least toxic are synthetic.

Products also vary in the spectrum of control. Some kill only a narrow range of insects. Others affect a wide range of insect orders. There are times when both are warranted, although for the most part, narrow-range products are the least disruptive to the ecosystem.

Another consideration is how long a product lasts in the environment. Some, such as soap, may become ineffective soon after they are applied. Others may last ten days or more. There are times when you want a product to break down quickly, and times when lasting control helps avoid many repeat applications. Nicotine sulfate (an organic) is among the most acutely toxic products available over the counter; rotenone is very hazardous to fish; bacillus thuringiensis (BT) kills butterfly larvae (caterpillars); and insecticidal soap is devastating to ladybug larvae and other soft-bodied beneficials. While organic controls tend to break down quickly in the environment, they must be selected carefully and used with caution.

Some top weapons in the organic arsenal

Insecticidal soap – works great on soft-bodied pests, including mites, aphids, and lace bugs. Mix at label rates. Apply early to avoid the hot sun. Some plants are sensitive to repeated use of soap sprays. Spray must contact pests to work, so direct-spray upward from beneath the plant.

Oil – Dormant oil is fine for late winter just prior to bud-break, while horticultural oils are lightweight and can be used throughout the growing season. Spray must contact the pests to work.

Neem – Extracts of azadirachtin from neem trees are a very low-toxicity insecticide, and we now have neem oil that, in addition to being an insecticide, will also control several diseases.

Pyrethrin and Rotenone sprays – Have good 'knock-down' power and break down very rapidly in the environment.

Spinosad - Attacks the nervous system for a rapid kill of foliar feeding insect pests, but has little effect on sucking insects (aphids, leafhoppers). It's toxic to bees and persists longer in the environment than other natural insecticides.

Orange Oil – Extracted from orange peels, it controls a wide variety of insects, good and bad. Good for fire ants and fleas, but some pets (esp. cats) are sensitive to citrus oil products.

Water Wand – A high-pressure mister that attaches to a hose, the wand cleans mites, aphids, and the like from roses and other garden plants.

Newspaper and bagged leaves – For season-long weed control, place four sheets of wet newspaper around plants and cover with leaves. By season's end, the paper will be mostly decomposed and can be mixed into the soil.

Remember that your garden is also a zoo. Proper pest identification and informed pest management decisions can help you get the most out of your landscape and garden while reducing risks to you and your environment. Only 5% of insects are pests.

If you need help identifying an insect or disease, contact the Ellis County AgriLife Extension Office for a free diagnosis and recommended controls.

A Texas Blessing

Bless this house, Oh Lord, we cry.
Please keep it cool in mid-July.
Bless the walls where termites dine,
While ants and roaches march in time.
Bless our yard where spiders pass
The fire ant castles in the grass.
Bless the garage, a home to please
Carpenter beetles, ticks and fleas.
Bless the love bugs, two by two,
The gnats and mosquitoes that feed on you.
Millions of creatures that fly or crawl,
In Texas, Lord, you've put them all!!!
But this is home, and here we'll stay.
So thank you, Lord, for insect spray.

(Author unknown)



the wings looked like they had filled out. The momma hummingbird gets very nervous when they get near the babies trying to take pictures. They are careful not to touch the nest or disturb anything. Momma just flies around making her sounds and flapping her wings trying to scare them off.



These pictures were sent to us by a local E-Garden newsletter subscriber. The nest is on a lower limb of a Live Oak tree next to their driveway, which gives them a convenient vantage point for watching the birds when they sit out by their garage. They speculate the babies were born near the end of June. By early July, it appeared they were getting ready to learn to fly: the tail was up and



Article submitted by
Melinda Kocian



News from the Texas Master Naturalist Program, Indian Trail Chapter Submitted by Paul Grindstaff

Master Naturalist Training begins Sept. 8

If you think nature should be a part of our everyday life and not just somewhere to go on the weekend, the Texas Master Naturalist program is for you. The Indian Trail Chapter which serves Ellis and Navarro Counties has scheduled training classes on Thursdays, September 8—October 27. The topics cover every aspect of nature; from ecosystems and their management to geology, bugs to birds and mammals, archaeology to plants and trees, nature photography to GPS usage. Related field trips are scheduled to Botanical Research Institute of Texas, John Bunker Sands Wetlands Center and Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center.

Within one year participants will complete 40 hours of volunteer service

and take eight hours of advanced training in a area of personal interest. Indian Trail Chapter is involved in many service projects, including development of Midlothian's Mockingbird Nature Park, Girl Scout trail of bluebird nest boxes, Stream Team (water quality monitoring), Texas Turtle Watch, CoCoRaHS (rainfall monitoring....lots of zeros right now), trail building at Dogwood Canyon, and Project Wild (introducing children to nature).

Applications are available online at <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/> or by contacting the AgriLife Extension Service Office at (972) 825-5175 or ellis-tx@tamu.edu and must be submitted by August 15.

The Texas Master Naturalist program is co-sponsored by the Texas AgriLife Extension Services and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

For more information, call Paul Grindstaff, (972) 291-2868.





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My green thumb came only as a result of the mistakes I made while learning to see things from the plant's point of view.
~H. Fred Dale