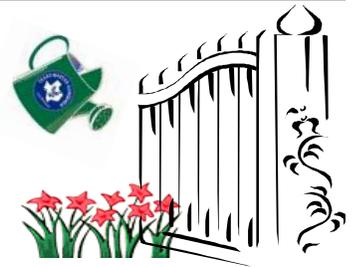




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VI, Issue 7

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

August, 2012

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

Waxahachie Fourth of July Parade



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

God Bless Our Military Personnel



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Save The Date!
Saturday, March 16, 2013



Cactus photo by Melinda Kocian

Facts About Cactus

Cacti are a group of plants that are not only easy to grow, but offer a variety of shapes, color and form. They can be grown in any sunny, well-drained area. They require little maintenance. They make excellent houseplants and many hardy varieties may be grown either inside or outside.

History - The first settlers of Ellis County, the Towanka Native Americans, ate the prickly pear that, before being eaten, had the spines removed with tweezers made of deer antler.

Modern science has found that when the pad of the prickly pear is cooked it becomes more nutritional.



Photo by Mox Moxley

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

Planting

- Put out fall vegetables during the first of the month to produce a crop before the first fall freeze. The average date for the first fall freeze in this area is Nov. 15th. However, it could occur a week or two before or after that date. It is best to use transplants if available. Many vegetables can be planted from seed such as corn, winter squash and beans. Leafy (green) and root crops can be planted later in the month. A planting guide for fall vegetables can be found on the web site: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/>.
- Plant seeds for bluebonnets and other wildflowers in full sun and directly in the ground. The soil should be free of weeds and grass and the surface should be lightly cultivated. Make sure the seed makes good contact with the soil. Water well as these plants must germinate in the late summer or fall.
- Plant fall-flowering bulbs such as spider lily, naked ladies, rain lily, fall crocus and oxblood lily. Put them in the ground twice as deep as the diameter of the bulb. These bulbs may not bloom the first year.

Fertilize and Pruning

- Prune most roses by cutting out dead canes and weak *spindly* growth. Cut back stems about one-third. Fertilize and water well for beautiful fall blooms.
- *Salvia greggii* (autumn sage) can be cut back at least by one-third. Do not flat top any blooming shrub; always leave the tops in a rounded, natural shape. If pruned now, it should display great fall and early winter color.
- Prune abelia after it blooms.
- Prune other prolific growing shrubs and vines to keep them in bounds (for example, variegated privet, elaeagnus, hollies, trumpet vine, and honeysuckle).
- Pinch back the tips of fall-blooming perennials such as Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*), *Salvia regla*, Mexican mint marigold, copper canyon daisies, mums and aster, if their buds have not already set.

Garden Watch

- Continue to follow the "Home Owner's Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule" 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 them from peach tree borers.
- Many insects are prevalent this time of year. Identify the insect and only use a pesticide if it is necessary. Treat grubs and chinch bugs in turf with a labeled pesticide if they were a problem last year, or if three or more grubs are found in a square foot of turf.

Odds and ends

- Select and order spring-flowering bulbs that grow in this area.
- Use Texas natives and adapted plants that are drought tolerant (for example, salvias, Turk's cap, pink skullcap, lantana, Texas betony, butterfly bush, flame acanthus and ornamental grasses). See Texas Superstars at web site: <http://www.texassuperstar.com>.

Grill Fest 2012

Put on by the AgriLife County Extension Office
And the Ellis County Master Gardeners



Preparing the veggies



Serving

Saturday, July 14, the Ellis County Master Gardeners, along with the AgriLife Extension Service, put on their annual Grill Fest. The master gardeners and various vegetable vendors from the Waxahachie Farmer's Market supplied all the fruits and vegetables that were



washed, seasoned, skewered and then grilled by Mark Arnold, the County Extension Agent for all to taste.....**free!** The purpose is to introduce the residents of Ellis County to the Farmer's market as well as to encourage them to buy fresh locally grown produce from residents of Ellis County and all the different ways you can prepare them using local produce, during these hot summer months.

It was estimated approximately 550 were served.

The Downtown Waxahachie Farmer's Market goes on into the month of October.

Grilled Cheese and Texas Watermelon Sandwich (Serves 12-16)

Ingredients:

- 1 Texas watermelon cut into 16 - 1/2"-slices (approximately the size of a slice of bread)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 8 oz. Arugula leaves
- 2 lbs. Halloumi cheese, cut into 8 - 1/2"-slices
- 4 T. Texas extra virgin olive oil

Directions:

- Preheat charcoal or gas grill to medium (350° to 450° F) using coals or gas burners under only half of the grill area.
- Cut the 16 slices of Texas watermelon in half and divide between two trays. (Tip: Cut watermelon into quarters to make it easier to slice.) Season with salt and pepper.
- Divide the arugula leaves among the watermelon slices on one tray and set aside.
- Lightly brush both sides of the *Halloumi (*see info on page 4) cheese with Texas extra virgin olive oil and put them on a cookie sheet.
- Place the oiled cheese slices on the pre-heated grill using care to avoid direct heat. Grill for about 10 minutes turning frequently until golden brown.



(Continued on page 4)

Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



Blending the Herbs of Summer

How does your garden grow? With the extra rain we had last month and the temperatures remaining mostly in the 90s while creeping into the 100s only occasionally, your herbs and vegetables should be thriving and producing an abundance of fresh produce and flavors for your table. This is when all of the hard work last winter and spring pays off. Whether you are growing your own vegetables or purchasing them at the local farmers market, August will provide you with an abundance of tomatoes, peppers, melons, and peaches. In the herb garden basil, bay, onion chives, garlic chives, lemongrass, lemon verbena, lavender, rosemary, oregano, sage, and thyme will be producing and in need of regular harvesting. Blending a variety of herbs with fresh vegetables and fruits is what summer is all about. Here are some quick and simple herbal blends to add to garden fresh vegetables and fruits.

Gather a bundle of basil, onion chives, garlic chives, and parsley. Chop and sprinkle over tomato slices, top with mozzarella, a drizzle of good olive oil, salt and fresh ground pepper.

In a jar with a tight fitting lid combine balsamic vinegar, olive oil and light brown sugar. Shake vigorously. Drizzle over cubed tomatoes and cantaloupe. Sprinkle with fresh chopped mint, salt and pepper.



Herbes de Provence: Blend 1 tbs. each basil, marjoram, savory, Mexican mint marigold, and thyme, 1 tsp. each lavender buds and fennel seeds. Use in eggs and sauces, with pizza and pasta, or as a marinade with fish and poultry. Combine some Herbes de

Provence with cream cheese, a little milk to thin, some minced garlic, salt and cayenne pepper. Use as a spread on baguette slices, topped with summer-ripe tomato slices and fresh arugula



or spinach.

Melon Salsa: Combine 1 cup each honeydew, cantaloupe and watermelon seeded and cubed, 2 jalapeño peppers, seeded and minced, juice of one lime, a small bunch chopped cilantro, mint and basil, salt and pepper to taste.

Combine in a blender. Refrigerate overnight for best flavor. Serve with chips or over fish, shrimp or chicken.

Jalapeño – Peach Jam: In a food processor coarsely grind red jalapeños, peaches, and one red sweet pepper to make 3 cups of mixture. In a large sauce pot, combine mixture with 2 cups white wine vinegar and 6 cups sugar. Bring to a full boil and boil for 5 minutes. (You might include a sprig of cinnamon basil, remove before next step). Remove from heat and add two 3 oz. packets of liquid pectin. Return to full rolling boil and boil for one minute. Remove from heat and skim off foam. Pour into 7 or 8 sterilized, hot, half-pint canning jars. Seal with sterilized lids and rings. Process in a hot water bath for 5 minutes. Set aside to cool. Jars that have not sealed should be refrigerated and used within a few weeks.

Combine fresh lemon herbs, chop and serve over melons and peaches. Add a bit of basil or lavender buds for a more unique flavor.

Herb Rub for Grilled Vegetables: One stick butter melted, juice and zest of one lemon, ¼ cup chopped herbs including basil, chives, lemon thyme, Mexican mint marigold, rosemary, thyme or herbs of your choice. Blend all and brush over fresh vegetables before grilling.



Stop by the Master Gardener booth at the Waxahachie Downtown Farmers Market for more recipes on the vegetables, fruits and herbs of summer.

(Continued from page 3)

- Assemble the cheese sandwiches by cutting the Halloumi cheese in half from one corner to another and placing it on top of the Texas watermelon slices with the arugula. Top with a second seasoned Texas watermelon slice and serve.

*Halloumi Cheese is white and firm, made from a mixture of sheep's and goat's milk. Halloumi Cheese has been made on the island Cyprus, an island claimed by both Turkey and Greece in the eastern Mediterranean, for hundreds of years. The name "Halloumi" is derived from the Greek word "almi" meaning brine. This refers to the brine, or salt water solution that is used to preserve the Halloumi Cheese.

Halloumi has a salty, tangy flavor and a springy texture, similar to Mozzarella. Due to its high melting point, Halloumi may be used as a grilling cheese as it browns without melting. Grilled Halloumi is an excellent appetizer or addition to any main course. Halloumi Cheese is also delicious eaten fresh in salads or sandwiches or with fresh fruit. It is often paired with watermelon in its native Cyprus. Halloumi is often accompanied by mint leaves in the packaging which not only add flavor but also preserve the cheese. Since the 1990s, the US has recognized Halloumi as a name-protected cheese from the island of Cyprus.

One Phabulous Phlox - 'John Fanick'

Perennial phlox are mostly forms of *Phlox paniculata*, which is commonly native from Pennsylvania and Illinois southward. They bloom in mid- to late-summer with immense terminal heads of white, pink, and purple flowers. There are native forms quite common to northeast Texas; these hardy perennials have been popular in Texas and Southern gardens for many generations. They are easily grown but can be subject to powdery mildew. The most common color is a pink-purple form.

Then in the early 1990's Greg Grant, a premier plantsman in the south, observed a row of summer phlox growing in St. Augustine grass, half under a live oak and half in the sun, in southeast San Antonio. Greg obtained plants from the homeowner and included them in a Texas Superstar trial of summer phlox. He named it after Mr. Fanick, a well-known nurseryman in San Antonio. 'John Fanick' is pale pink with a darker eye and particularly attractive when combined with the common pink-purple type. Experience has shown it to be the most vigorous of all the summer phlox, and it is also highly fragrant. Greg says that 'John Fanick' is one of the best butterfly-attracting plants available, especially swallowtails. It even attracts hummingbirds. It survives in heat, humidity and drought. It is an ideal cottage garden plant or can be used in Xeriscape. Use it in beds and borders to add color and fragrance. In addition, you will have bouquets of fragrant flowers that can be used as cut flowers.

During this same time period, Dr. Jerry Parsons, Extension horticulture specialist in San Antonio, found another phlox with magenta pink blossoms in an old San Antonio garden; it was included in the Texas Superstar trial as well. Results of these two trials across the state indicated that these were the top performing summer phlox. This other summer phlox is named 'Victoria'.



Summer phlox benefit from fairly frequent division. Fall or winter is the ideal time to dig the clumps about every two years and reset the individual plants. They thrive in sunny, well-drained locations but will tolerate up to about half shade. Since the flowers come at a really hot time of year they last better with some afternoon shade. Bloom height is two to three feet with a two foot spread. Plant where it will have good air circulation. Blooming starts in early summer and lasts into the fall if old flower heads are removed as they fade. A summer mulch which helps keep the root zone cool is beneficial. To encourage re-blooming and keep the plants tidy, shear after the first bloom cycle. In winter cut them to the ground after the first severe frost, and apply a little lawn fertilizer in the spring. They spread underground to form larger and larger clumps. To propagate, divide clumps in the spring or take tip cuttings in spring and early summer. Neither variety comes true from seed.

Water on the leaves can promote powdery mildew; if possible, irrigate with a soaker hose or drip irrigation.

Use 'John Fanick' phlox in drifts in a perennial border for summer color. Include it in a butterfly garden to attract many types of butterflies, and in a cut-flower garden. As a cut flower, it maintains its wonderful fragrance and a long vase life. It looks fabulous planted with tall, blue-blooming salvias in back, and Laura Bush petunias, or white, pink, or purple verbena in front.



Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Eryngo - Carrot Family (Apiaceae)

Eryngium leavenworthii T. & G.

Region: 1-5, 7-9 (Ellis Co. is Region 4)

Size: 4 feet

Blooms: July-October, Annual

This is not a thistle, but wear a pair of gloves if you want to handle it. In August, the eryngo plant turns from gray-green to purple. If cut when the color first changes, then hung upside down in the shade to dry, the color will last for months. The flower head is most unusual, with a two-inch-tall purple cylinder sandwiched between a color of deeply lobed, spiny bracts and a crown of small, erect, spiny leaves. Stems are leafy and branch widely in the upper portion. The deeply incised leaf

blades are stalkless and clasp the stem. The pointed tips have stiff spines. Eryngo grows on clay, limestone or gravelly soils of plains, prairies and grassland.

Vegetable Gardening

By Ron Cochran
Ellis County Master Gardener



Cruciferous Family



It's August but, believe it or not, it is time to prepare for your fall garden. It will start to cool somewhat next month and soon be time to plant our fall gardens

Now is the time to remove the spent, dead or poor-producing plants from our garden area or garden plot. Cultivate the soil and add compost and fertilizer

and top with 2- to 4-inches of mulch and have the rows or plots ready for fall planting in September.

The cruciferous family, which may include broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kohlrabi, turnips, mustard greens, kale, rutabagas, and Brussels' sprouts, does very well in the fall although I have had limited success with the Brussels' sprouts. Many other plants are also suitable for fall including spinach, carrots, lettuce and beets. It is so nice to go out on a cold blustery day and harvest fresh vegetables from your own garden.

Harvest of lettuce, radishes, mustard greens, turnips greens, spinach and maybe fingerling carrots should start in late October if

planted in early September. In November, expect broccoli, cabbage, full sized carrots, and collard greens.

Recommended varieties and planting dates can be obtained from your local Ellis County Master Gardeners.

Braised Cabbage

Ingredients

2 T extra virgin olive oil
3 slices bacon, cut into 1-inch strips
1 small onion
salt, black pepper, fresh dill - to taste
½ tsp. caraway seeds
¼ tsp. crushed red pepper
½ large head cabbage, cored and thinly sliced or shredded
4 to 6 oz. water or chicken broth or beer (I prefer to use wine)

Directions

In a large pot, add the oil and cook the bacon until browned and crispy. Add the onion seasoning with salt, pepper, dill and caraway and cook over high heat until slightly browned, turning once. Add cabbage, stirring to mix. Add liquid and braise until the cabbage has wilted.

Serve and enjoy.

What's Happening in August?

Monday, August 20, 6:30 - Rainwater Harvesting Class - The Master Gardeners, along with the city of Waxahachie, will be offering a Rainwater Harvesting class. **Location:** Parks and Recreation Building. Applicants must pre-register in person at the water department in City Hall, 401 South Rogers. Attendees will go home with a water barrel. Cost of class is \$30.00. Classes fill up fast.....first come, first served. For more information, please call 972-937-7330, extension 181.

Monday, August 27, 7:00 p.m. - Indian Trails Master Naturalists - "Attracting Hummingbirds" hosted by Steve Woodward. Steve is the owner of the Wild Bird Center, in Fort Worth, supplier of seed and supplies to the Fort Worth Zoo and Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge. Steve has been a backyard birder for nearly 20 years. He will show us the secrets to attracting hummingbirds to our yard. Learn all about the fascinating biology, habits and history of these tiniest of all birds. Steve will explore their world and show us how to draw more hummingbirds to our own yard and keep them coming back year after year. More info: fortworth@wildbird.com, www.wildbird.com/fortworth. Location: Waxahachie First United Methodist Church Banquet Hall, 505 W. Marvin Ave. This follows a 6:00 p.m. meeting that is open to the public.

Saturday, September 29 - 9-4p.m. - Progressive **Fall Garden Tea Tour**, benefitting the **Green Garden Club** (on behalf of Garden Inspirations). Five beautiful perennial gardens in Waxahachie, Ovilla and Ennis. Three local Chefs, including Chef Kevin Stewart. At each house an artist from the Ellis County Art Association will paint *en plein aire*, A French phrase that means "In the open air" - the artists will paint a scene of their choice in the gardens, all paintings will be available for purchase.

The tour begins with a mug of tea in a shady garden with beautiful winding pathways, a stop from a garden designed like a New York City herb bed; have a tasty scone or muffin (Gluten-Free & Vegan options available) while you sip on a cup of breakfast tea, drive through the Farm County Roads to your tea lunch destination and dine at the beautiful 17 acre home of the Kocian's. While you gaze over rose bushes and enjoy a light breeze from the 30-acre lake, you will have a seated lunch with Pecan Chilled Soup, A wonderful hearty salad, and grilled quail with a rose-lemon glaze. Once you have enjoyed your third stop you

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will move on towards downtown Waxahachie and find yourself in the most wonderful culinary herb garden of Arlene Hamilton. Have a sweet tooth? We have a special treat for you at the fourth stop. Once you have perused through the herb gardens you will finish your tour in Ennis, and your eyes will be as wide as the lily pads. With many water gardens that will fill you with delight - our garden club members will hand you a to-go tea, Texas Style as you reminisce your garden tour adventure on your way back home. Sign up today! Tickets are limited...register now.

Please visit www.GreenGardenClub.org to read more information, the menu and to register.

Go Texan - Southwest desert and Texas Native Plants



Southwest desert and Texas native plants not only enhance the environment, they stamp it with authenticity. Many native plants are also pest- and disease-tolerant, reducing the need for disease and pest control. They tolerate weather extremes ranging from intense heat and drought to hard freezes. In areas with lower rainfall, cacti, succulents and other hardy Southwest desert plants are also finding favor with landscapers and homeowners who appreciate the breathtaking beauty of the Chihuahuahua desert. With their various shapes, sizes, textures and colors, these plants can add accent and interest to lawns and gardens and provide

year-round green color and dazzling seasonal blossoms. To find Texas-grown native and Southwest desert plants, simply look for the GO TEXAN logo.

GO TEXAN is the Texas Department of Agriculture's unified marketing initiative promoting products made and grown in Texas. The logo stamps Texas products with Lone Star pride. When you want the best, GO TEXAN.



Tips for Landscaping Success with Texas Native and Southwest Desert Plants Selecting a Location

Assess your property's landscape conditions. Is it in full sun or shade, dry or wet? What is the soil type, and is supplemental irrigation necessary? Evaluate how you will use your landscape. Learn about the dominant native plants and associated flora in your area and how they exist in natural areas. Gathering this type of information will help you choose the ideal plants for your site.

Choosing the Right Plant

After selecting a location, you are ready to mixing species, choose plants that naturally plants that have good branching structure and culents, buy from a licensed supplier to ensure and not illegally harvested from the wild.



select the right plant for your landscape. When grow together in your region. Choose individual appear healthy. When purchasing cacti and succulents that the plants have been grown in the nursery

Planting

Dig the hole larger than the root ball of the plant. Position the plant so that the soil line from the pot is level with that of the ground and use the remaining soil to fill the hole. Thoroughly water new plantings.

Maintaining the Landscape

New landscapes will take several years to become well established. The critical period for watering and weeding is several weeks after planting and longer if you are planting during warm and dry periods. Once established, your native landscape will require minimal maintenance. Selective pruning and clipping seed heads and branch tips encourages fullness and longer bloom periods for many perennials.

Conserving water is not as difficult as it seems....

Just a few easy tweaks to your usual routine can make a big difference and help us all have more water.

Last year's record drought showed that even a great state like Texas is powerless when it comes to Mother Nature. The good news is we are not powerless to do something about it. Drastic measures aren't necessary, we just need to all do our part. This is why we formed the **Texas Water Smart Coalition**: to show that simple, common sense steps can help conserve our precious water while preserving business and our economy. You might even save some money on your water bill while you're at it.

We've assembled a list of easy-to-follow water saving tips on this site along with links for more information. Please take the time to look over this information, share it with your neighbors at www.texaswatersmart.com.

Tomatoes.....What Happened to the Taste?

Submitted by J. R. McMahan, Ellis County Master Gardener



The tomato is the vegetable (or fruit, if you must) that we love to hate. We know how good it can be and how bad it usually is. And everybody just wants to know: How did it get that way?

Today, scientists revealed a small but intriguing chapter in that story: a genetic mutation that seemed like a real improvement in the tomato's quality, but which actually undermined its taste.

Before we get to the mutation, though, let's start with the old tomatoes — the varieties that people grew a century or more ago. Thanks to enthusiastic seed savers and heirloom tomato enthusiasts, you can still find many of them. Eric Rice, owner of Country Pleasures Farm near Middletown, Md., first encountered heirloom tomatoes when he was a graduate student in North Carolina. "I decided I really liked them," he says. He liked the vivid taste and the unusual colors, from orange to purple. These tomatoes also have great names: Cherokee Purple, Dr. Wyche's, Mortgage Lifter.

Rice now grows these tomatoes to sell at a farmers market in Washington, D.C. But he admits that all that tomato personality can make heirlooms harder to grow and sell. "Heirloom tomatoes don't ship very well because they're softer. And frankly, they're all different shapes and sizes." This makes them more difficult to pack.

There's something else you'll notice as these tomatoes start to get ripe — something central to this story. The part of the tomato near the stem — what's called the shoulder of the fruit — stays green longer. "I think it is an issue for the consumer," says Rice, "because people do buy with their eyes. ripe or not as soft and tasty there." Those cant than you might think. In this week's port that when they disappeared from taste went with them.



Here's how. Sometime before 1930, noticed a plant that was producing dis-tem to tip in a uniform way. They didn't ders. It was a new mutation, and plant called it the "uniform ripening" trait. In Fargo, N.D., released a new tomato variety containing this mutation. The variety was called All Red.

And green shoulders mean it's not entirely green shoulders turn out to be more signifi- issue of the journal *Science*, scientists re- modern tomatoes, some of the tomato's

somewhere in America, a tomato grower tinctive fruit. These fruit turned red from have any of those bothersome green shoul- breeders saw it as the next big thing. They 1930, the agricultural experiment station in

Ann Powell, a researcher at the University of California, Davis, says it spread through the entire tomato industry. "It's a little hard to find a variety in modern production that doesn't have it," she says. Powell is one of the scientists who now has discovered the genetic change responsible for "uniform ripening." She was studying some genetically engineered tomato plants for another reason when she noticed that one of the added genes resulted in green tomatoes that were really dark green. It struck her as odd. "The leaves were not dark green. It was only the fruit that were dark green," she recalls.

Since this foreign gene had interesting effects on the ripening of fruit, Powell and her colleagues started looking for a similar gene that occurs naturally in tomatoes. They found it — and by coincidence, so did another research team on the other side of the country, at Cornell University.

The researchers discovered that this natural tomato gene, when it works properly, produces those green shoulders on tomatoes. The darker green color comes from the chlorophyll in plant structures called chloroplasts, which is what converts sunlight into sugars for the plant. In fact, those dark green shoulders were making those old tomatoes sweeter and creating more flavor. The uniform-ripening mutation disabled this gene.

"We find out that, oh my goodness, this is one of the factors that led to the deterioration of flavor in the commercial tomato," says Harry Klee, a professor of horticulture at the University of Florida. Klee has been exploring the chemistry and genetics of tomato taste. He says tomato breeders made a lot of compromises like this over the years as they created tomato plants that produce more fruit and are also rugged enough to hold up under rough handling. Now, Klee says, with some of this new science, we have a chance to undo some of those decisions. "What I tell people is, we can have 100% of the flavor (of heirloom varieties) with 80% of the agricultural performance of the modern varieties, with very little work."

Breeders can start with some of the best heirlooms, then bring in some of the disease-resistance genes that modern varieties have. They should also be able to increase yields somewhat, he says. But consumers may have to change their expectations, Klee says. "They're going to have to go in and say, 'That one's got that little discoloration at the top; that means it must be good!' And the only way they're likely to show up in your local grocery store is if consumers can recognize them and are willing to pay a bit more for them. Still, for the best flavor, you might want to **grow your own**.

It's August.....What Else Needs to be Done?

By Susan Norvell, Ellis County Master Gardener



First of all, WOW wasn't July good to us? Cooler temps and blessed rain but watch out because August can bring back the heat which is tough on us and also on our 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! And 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.

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. Refer to the "Homeowner's Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule", available at the AgriLife 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.

Salvia greggii (autumn sage) should be cut back now by at least one-third. Prune your abelia after it stops blooming. Prune other prolific shrubs and vines to keep them in bounds – for example, variegated privet, elaeagnus, hollies, trumpet vine and honeysuckle.



By late August you can also sow kale, butterhead lettuce, and spinach and turnip seeds. Be sure and come by the farmers market each and every Saturday morning and stock up on your locally grown produce. Help support your local growers who consume less energy getting their products to market, as they don't have to be shipped cross country.



Prune those rose bushes and remove dead canes and any weak, brushy type of growth. Cut back tall and vigorous bushes to about 30 inches. After pruning is completed, apply a complete fertilizer and water thoroughly. It's also time to plant new irises, or divide crowded existing irises.

Plant fall flowering bulbs such as spider lilies, naked ladies, rain lilies, fall crocus and oxblood lilies. Put them in the ground at a depth that is twice as deep as their diameter. And remember, these bulbs may not bloom the first year they are planted.

Pinch back the tips of fall-blooming perennials such as Mexican bush sage, Mexican mint marigold, copper canyon daisy, mums and aster, if their buds have not already set. You can also plant fall blooming perennials now.



Now is the time to sow seeds in flats of plants that may be hard 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 1/2 inches deep. The soil should be free from weeds and grass and the surface should be acid treated to facilitate germination.

Many insects are prevalent at this time of year. Identify the insect first and use pesticide only if it is necessary. Treat grubs and chinch bugs in turf with a labeled pesticide if they were a problem last year, or if three or more grubs are found in a square foot of turf.

Select and order spring-flowering bulbs that will grow in our area. Plan next year to plant Texas natives and adapted plants like: salvias, Turks cap, pink skullcap, lantana, Texas betony, butterfly bush, flame acanthus, ornamental grasses and many others.



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Repurposing

Submitted by Marcia Recktenwald,
Ellis County Master Gardener

I have attached a couple of pictures of a palm tree stump which I have repurposed into a flower pot. We lost the 25ft. tree after the February, 2011 heavy snow. We actually thought it would "revive" itself this spring.....but that was not to be. So while I was out of town in April, my husband cut it down to what you see in picture. Two weeks ago, I dug out some of the "innards" of the stump and planted the purslane you see. The plant appears happy and is doing wonderful in there; it certainly makes for interesting conversation.

