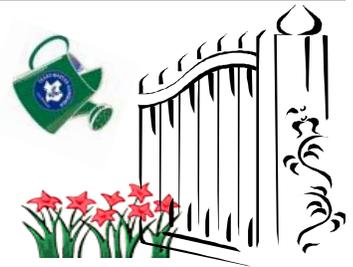




# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume V, Issue 6

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

July, 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 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/Susan Clark, co-editor

## What's Happening in July

**Every Saturday, 8:00 a.m. through 1:00 pm** - Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market. Visit the Ellis County Master Gardener's booth! They have lots of free handout, plants to buy, some products to purchase and be sure and pick up a copy of the E-Garden newsletter!

**Saturday, July 2 - 14 Annual Crape Myrtle Festival and Parade.** The parade begins at 10:00 and will come up College Street, turn west at the square, turning on Main Street and end at Getzendaner Park. Veterans to be honored. Because of construction at Lumpkin's Stadium, the Festival is moving to the Sports Complex at Highway 287 and 151 Broadhead Rd. **Tailgate Party** at 5:00 pm, **Battle of the Bands** at 6:00 pm, and **fireworks** at 9:00. Lots of activities for everyone, especially the kids. Bring a blanket to spread out on the grass for a picnic and to watch all the activities.

**Saturday, July 2, 9-12 noon** - Pettigrew Academy, 806 E. Marvin, is hosting its Annual Nature Exchange. It's FREE. For more info please call 972-923-1633.

**Monday, July 4** - Weston Gardens, 801 Anglin Dr., Ft. Worth, 76140. Lots of holiday sessions and activities. Call 817-572-0549 or [www.westongardens.com](http://www.westongardens.com) for more info.

**Saturday, July 9, 9:00 a.m.** - EarthTones Greenery Summer Auction.

**Saturday, July, 9-12 - Cedar Ridge Preserve - Conservation in Action Workday.** Work in the butterfly garden and on the trails. Water and snacks provided. Call Jim Varnum at 214-543-2055 or [jvarnum@aol.com](mailto:jvarnum@aol.com). (See article on page 7).

**Monday, July 18 and Tuesday, July 19 - Canning & Preserving Classes.** Garden Inspirations, 108 Ridgecrest, Waxahachie, 75165. Learn to make jelly, do pickling and how to use the pressure cooker. Choose from the morning or evening sessions each day. For information, contact Marilyn Simmons at [marilyn@gardeninspirations-tx.com](mailto:marilyn@gardeninspirations-tx.com) or call 214-497-3918.

**Saturday, July 23, 9-11 a.m.** - Downtown Farmer's Market Annual Grill Fest, hosted by the Ellis Co. Master Gardeners.



### 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

## Annual Grilling Festival!



The Ellis County Master Gardeners will host a grilling festival at the Waxahachie Farmer's Market, on the downtown square, **Saturday July 23, 2011**. The grilling will be done courtesy of Mark Arnold, Ellis County AgriLife Extension Agent. The fruit and vegetables will be donated by the Farmer's Market vendors and the Master Gardeners. Grilled fruits and vegetable will be served from 9:00 am to 11:00 am, or until they are gone.

**Free** of charge to all Farmers Market attendees.



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Pepper Photo by Linda Moxley

### Baked Corn Casserole

By Dan Eubanks

2 cans 14 ¾ oz. cream style corn  
 1 can 15 ¼ oz. whole kernel corn  
 1 (6-oz.) pkg. yellow cornbread mix  
 1 can evaporated milk  
 ½ c. chopped onion  
 ½ c. chopped green bell pepper  
 8 oz. shredded cheddar cheese  
 2 eggs, beaten  
 1 T. sugar  
 ½ stick margarine, melted  
 1 (2-oz.) can pimentos

Combine all ingredients Mix well and pour into a large baking dish or 12x10x3 inch foil pan. Bake at 350 degrees for about 45 minutes or until slightly browned on top and firm.

### Odds and Ends

- Keep plants with berries and caladiums well watered.
- On a hot afternoon, wilting is a sign of stress. It may be from lack of moisture or that a plant cannot take up available moisture in the soil through its roots. Wait until morning. If the plant is still wilting —it needs water.

### Facts About Peppers

Like their relatives the chili peppers, bell peppers originated in South America. Seeds of a wild variety date back to 5000 BC. Bell peppers are low in calories; and, the capsaicin in peppers increases your body's metabolism. They also are high in potassium, very high in vitamin A, and particularly rich in vitamin C. Even a small red pepper contains more vitamin C than a whole orange!

## It's July...What Needs to be Done?

### Planting

- Set out fall tomatoes and peppers from four-inch pots, or tomatoes planted from seed in June.
- Use varieties that are early maturing and tolerant of the summer heat. Best varieties for this area include: 'Celebrity,' 'Juliette,' 'Porter (improved),' 'Cherry', and 'Sweet 100'. Some tomato varieties have the letters **VFNT** after the label. This means that they are resistant to nematodes, and certain diseases.
- Plant peppers from transplants.
- Annual color plants to put in the ground now include: Dahlberg daises, pentas, purslane, moss rose, copper plants and zinnias. Keep them well watered.
- Plant lawn grass sod. It should look fresh and recently dug. It will need water twice a day until established, then at least twice a week.

### Pruning and Fertilizing

- Dead-head all blooming plants and fertilize sparingly. Clean up container plantings by removing dead leaves and flowers.
- Pinch off flowers of herbs that are going to seed to encourage additional foliage.
- Pinch off the tips of new growth of fall flowering plants to keep them compact (for example, Mexican bush sage, Mexican mint marigold, asters, and chrysanthemums).

### Garden watch

- Grassy weeds, such as dallisgrass, crabgrass, and goose grass, must be weeded by hand. The herbicide, MSMA, for Bermuda turf is no longer available.
- Dead turf that does not respond to irrigation may have cinch bugs. Check by parting the blades and look for small black bugs with white diamonds on their back. Treat with an insecticide for chinch bugs. Brown areas in lawn may be caused by grub worms. Check by grasping a handful of turf and pulling. If the grass easily comes up you may need to treat for grub worms, especially if you had them last season.
- Weed nutsedge by hand in mulched areas. It has underground rhizomes with nutlets. Get them all or it comes back. It can be controlled in lawn areas by applying Image or Manage. It will usually require two applications. Best to apply two to three days after mowing. Read and follow label instructions.



Canned Peppers Photo by Patsy Major

## Vegetable Gardening

By Pat Dockins  
Ellis County Master Gardener



### VEGETABLE GARDENING IN JULY

Well, July is living up to its usual standard – hot and dry. Believe it or not there are still some things you can do garden-wise. **Water – Harvest - Plant.**

Keeping your garden watered during this time is probably the most important thing you can do. Watering in the early morning or late evening will help reduce water loss from evaporation. A soaker hose under a 3-inch layer of mulch keeps the water where you want it – on the roots and not on the leaves of the plants. Water deeply when you do so the roots will grow deeply. Shallow watering just won't be enough during the summer heat.

Remember those tomato plants will go semi-dormant around this time but if you will water them regularly and keep them alive they will perk up when the weather cools off a bit and you'll have a fall crop. Peppers do better in hot weather; just remember to keep them watered.



Your okra plants should still be producing well; in fact it loves hot weather. Of course it needs water once a week or so. Keep it picked often and your crop will last until you tire of it. Just stop picking and it will stop producing. Let the seed pods mature and dry on the plant and save them for next year.

Black-eyed peas are another crop that is suited for our hot climate. Water regularly without getting the leaves wet. It produces its own nitrogen under the soil, so be careful not to provide any high-nitrogen fertilizer during the growing season.



Watermelon and cantaloupes are ready now. When ripen on the vine they are the best ever.

Remember sitting under a shade tree eating watermelon that was iced down in a number two tub? Could anything be any better?

#### Plant now for your fall garden

Seeds for tomato, peppers and eggplant can be planted now. Choose tomato seed varieties that mature in less than 75 days. Try Merced, Bingo, Celebrity, or Surefire. Winter squash, pumpkin, okra and black-eyed peas also can be planted now. Toward the last part of July until the middle of August you can plant potato-seed pieces.

The weeds this year have been something else. It seems like each year a particular weed is prominent. One year it's Dal-lis grass, another clover; this year it's a weed that made stickers that when I was a kid we called goat-heads. Pulling it recently, I was reminded of a time when we all went barefooted as soon as school was out and didn't wear shoes until it was time for school again in September. My big brother once found me sitting on the ground holding my foot just crying my eyes out. "What's the matter?" he asked. "I've got a sticker" I bawled. "Here, I'll pull it for you". "No! I screamed, "It'll hurt". "Okay" he said as he walked off. Over his shoulder he called back to me "Every time you take a breath it goes in deeper". I held my breath for as long as I could before I finally pulled it out. From then on I never hesitated to pull a sticker. Ahh...memories.

## Hot and Dry July

By Linda Clemens  
Ellis County Master Gardener

### Mulching and watering the right way.

Depending on the mulch, it should be 2-6" thick. The coarser the material the more mulch that is needed. Mulch helps retain soil moisture and keeps competing weeds from germinating.

Water deeply and infrequently. In our clay soils try 1" of moisture one time per week (or even less). Sandy soil may require more frequent watering. Try two times per week. Check to see if water is penetrating by digging in the soil. It is best to water in the early morning or late evening and then take it easy from the heat of the day.

**This is not the best time to fertilize!** Fertilizer will stimulate growth and stress your plants causing them to need even more water. It's a good time to plant more zinnias and marigolds. They will bloom until frost and won't be prone to mildew and spider mites as they are in the spring.

July is full of sunny hot days and it's time to collect seeds from perennials and annuals as well as herbs. Be prepared! Keep your clippers and basket near the back

door.

Pick a bouquet of roses and lavender, and dry upside down to have ready for other projects later in the fall. Picking flowers frequently encourages most species to flower even more abundantly.

Don't forget to properly mulch and water. Roses need plenty of water during long hot spells, particularly those planted near your foundation. Try an inch of water each week. To extend blooming time of crepe myrtles, cut spent blooms. Also, for spectacular blooms, pinch back mums to keep them compact and reduce the need of staking later. You will need to feed them later this month.

During these hot dry days, Caladiums need plenty of water to remain lush and active. Also side dress with a nitrogen fertilizer.

Carefully prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. But be cognizant to delay major pruning until winter. Severe pruning in the summer will stress the plants and even stimulate tender new growth.

Start thinking about spring. Make your selections and place orders now for spring flowering bulbs so that they will arrive in time to plant in October.

By mid- to late July start your fall gardens. It's time to plant cantaloupe, peas, peppers, pumpkins and squash. Before

sowing, thoroughly soak the bottom of the seed furrow with water and add organic matter. The seed must stay moist enough till germination. Check daily and avoid overhead watering.

Fall is just around the corner. Now is a good time to establish a new compost pile to accommodate fall leaf accumulation. Check retail gardening centers for mark-downs on any remaining plants. Plant bluebonnets and other spring wildflowers. They have to germinate in late summer and establish a root system to be ready to grow and bloom in the spring. This is a good time to divide spring flowering perennials such as iris, Shasta daisies, Ox-eye daisies, cannas, day lilies, and lirioppe. Crowded bulbs produce fewer and smaller blooms. During this dry summer it has become especially important to conserve moisture. This is best done by mulching 2-6". The more coarse the mulch the more that is required.



## Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



### Maximilian Sunflower

*Helianthus maximilliani* Schrad

**Sunflower Family (Asteraceae)**

**Size: 3-10 feet**

**Blooms July - October, Perennial**

**Range: 1-10 (Ellis County is range 4)**

Sunflowers are among the most easily recognized plants, yet species may be difficult to distinguish because of hybridizing, occasionally reddish, ray flowers surrounding a flattened, yellow or rust-colored disk. Maximilian sunflower is a particularly attractive species, with many three-inch flowers opening at the same time, in leaf axils of the upper third of the plants. It has tall, stout, hairy stems and leaves. Colonies of Maximilian sunflowers make a dramatic fall display, in roadside swales, seasonally moist meadows and prairies, and along fence rows. Sunflowers are useful; the oil is commercially important, and the thickened roots of Maximilian sunflower are edible raw, boiled or roasted. A nutritious

plant, it was believed by Indians to have medicinal value and it is now recognized as valuable in wildlife habitat restoration.

## Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton  
Ellis County Master Gardener



### July 2011 Herb of the Month – Fennel



**Fennel** (*Foeniculum vulgare*) - Is a beautiful tender perennial growing to a height of 4 feet or more in the southern garden. It's a relative of dill, coriander, caraway, cumin, carrot and Queen Anne's lace. You might find it in the produce aisle of your grocery store referred to as anise. The most common culinary fennels are green, bronze and Florence or bulb fennel. Florence fennel forms a bulb base that can be sliced and served raw as a salad or sautéed and presented as a vegetable. The ripe seeds of the plant add a soft taste of anise to puddings, spiced beets, breads, teas, sauces, liqueurs and Italian sausage. Many Asian Indian restaurants have a bowl of seeds at the checkout counter, offered as a breath freshener and digestion aid as you depart. The delicately flavored

leaves and stems are suited for relishes, salads and garnishes. Fennel leaf adds a wonderful flavor to fish and helps reduce the fish odor. Fennel stalks make a delicious bed for salmon or other whole grilled fish.

Fennel is easy to grow from seed in early spring or fall. Both bronze and green leaf varieties are readily available as seedlings from local herb growers in the spring. Once established the plants can grow from 3 to 5 feet high when in bloom. Fennel is very hardy and drought tolerant but extra water improves its appearance. Harvest mature seeds and store in a dry dark place. Collect and use the leaves fresh. They lose their flavor when dried.

Bronze fennel adds a striking background appearance to a vegetable, herb or flower garden and is a favorite plant in my garden. Although many herb growers consider swallowtail butterflies a pest to fennel, dill and parsley I suggest you plant extra for these beautiful creatures. The striped caterpillars which feed on these herbs will pupate then emerge as gorgeous swallowtail butterflies. Since my backyard is organic and a Certified Wildlife Habitat my butterfly population has exploded. Unfortunately, so has the population of predators such as birds and lizards whose favorite food is fat caterpillars. One recent day we counted more than twenty caterpillars on the fennel. The next morning all were gone while the cardinals, blue jays, and mockingbirds perched nearby looking like innocent observers.

During the past few weeks my screened porch has become a caterpillar nursery and I've become a doting mother making countless trips to the garden to replenish the food supply for 15 hungry babies. I spent most of last evening corralling four of the little darlings as they searched for a more secluded place to pupate. As of today there has been one successful hatching, five pupae, and ten fennel munching caterpillars growing fatter by the day.



The nursery has added a whole new dimension to gardening and reinforces my love of organic gardening. My grandsons will arrive in a few days and I will send some pupae home with them. I also plan to take some over to the master gardener's butterfly garden on the hike and bike trail. My fennel supply is not sufficient to feed the number of eggs this brood of butterflies will produce.

When you have a garden, you have a future.  
When you have a future, you are alive.  
If you wish to be happy all your life, become a gardener.

## Grasshoppers

By Maureen Nitkowski  
Ellis County Master Gardener



With a name that is almost idyllic in conjuring fields of waving summer grasses and silly insects popping about, a gardener might expect grasshoppers to be a non-problem. Indeed, it is true that years can go by with few problems due to grasshoppers, and then suddenly things change for the worse. What happened?



Grasshoppers lay their eggs in the soil ½- to 2-inches below the surface in an egg pod in the fall. If the weather during egg-laying is mild and dry, more eggs are produced varying from 20 to 120 per pod. The eggs begin to hatch in late April and progress through five or six nymph stages in a matter of 40 to 60 days. The nymphs look like tiny versions of the adults. If the weather at hatching time is cool and damp, the nymphs can be infected by a protozoan which can cause death or decreased egg-laying ability. Commercial products which contain the spore form of this microorganism (*Nosema locustae*) can be used to somewhat control the nymph population only until they are larger than ½ inch. Another product which is an insect growth regulator can also be used effectively at this time. It does take 3 to 10 days to see results. A naturally occurring fungus (*Entomophthora grylli*) causes high mortality under warm, humid conditions. If these warm, humid conditions prevail, the news looks good for gardeners and bad for grasshoppers.

What would happen if there was a dry, mild autumn followed by a dry spring? These autumn conditions mean increased egg-laying; then the dry spring cuts back on the fungal and protozoan infections of the nymphs, which yields a large population of hungry grasshoppers. If these conditions persist for several years the grasshopper population keeps increasing until they are limited by predators, disease, and lack of food. Again, the early nymph stages (less than ½ inch) can be treated with the spore (Nolo Bait) or growth regulator (Dimilin 2L). Later nymphs or adults are more difficult to control. Some foliar insecticides which contain cyfluthrin (Bayer Advanced or Tempo), bifenthrin (Talstar) or deltamethrin (Suspend) can give some residual control. Always read the label carefully and follow directions if you choose to use insecticides.

Since we cannot change the weather, is there anything a gardener can do to control grasshoppers? First of all, keep the area near your home and plantings closely mowed to eliminate food for the newly hatched nymphs. Next, monitor for the presence of grasshoppers starting in late April and use the treatments which are effective on the ½ inch nymphs. Lastly, keep a weather journal for the year so that you can be prepared.

*The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no endorsement by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service is implied. Educational programs conducted by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service serve all people regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.*

### Cedar Ridge Preserve 7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas

**Hexalectris Orchid Survey Reaches a milestone.** A milestone was reached on June 28 when the survey team, consisting of Marcy Brown Marsden, one of her students and 4 Texas Master Naturalists found and catalogued 100 individual Texas purple spike or Texas crested coralroot orchids (*Hexalectris warnockii*). This high number of orchids was not expected. In earlier years up to 75 have been found in one day and up to 300 in one season.

*H. warnockii*, named after Barton Warnock, a Trans-Pecos botanist, is one of 8 Hexalectris orchid species in the world (U.S., Mexico, Guatemala). Seven are found in Texas, mostly in the Trans-Pecos region and 5 are found at Cedar Ridge Preserve in Dallas.

You are welcome to participate in the Survey, which runs through the first three weeks of July. We cannot guarantee 100 orchids every day, but you may see 3 species during this period: *H. warnockii*, *H. nitida* and *H. arizonica*.

**Survey dates:** July 5, 7, 9, 12 and 14. July 9 is a special day for photographers. **Census dates:** July 22, 23. **Meet at CRP** at 7:30 a.m. Wear field clothing, bring insect repellent and water. Please RSVP to Master Naturalist Jim Varnum, 214-543-2055 or [jevamum@aol.com](mailto:jevamum@aol.com) by the night before to be sure the next day's effort is still on.





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