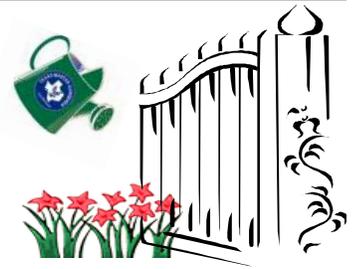




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume IV, Issue 6

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

July, 2010

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

What's Happening in July

Saturday, July 3, 10:00 a.m., Crape Myrtle Festival Patriotic Parade. Downtown Waxahachie starting on College Street before heading south on Main Street and left on Grand Avenue, ending at Getzendaner Park.

Garden Inspirations' Saturday "classes" at the Waxahachie Farmer's Market... \$10.00 each

- July 3, 8:00 a.m., **Kid's Corner**, 4th of July Craft
- July 10, 8:00 a.m., **Learn about Summer Fruits**
- July 17, 8:00 a.m., **Fresh Cut Floral Arrangement** class, made easy
- July 24, 8:00 a.m., **Canning Class**, learn about jellies
- July 31, 8:00 a.m., **Beautiful Birds**, learn about backyard birds

Saturday, July 10, 9:30 - Petal Pushers, Cedar Hill, 813 Straus Rd., 972-291-7650. Val's program is on "Getting Ready for the Fall Gardens"

Saturday, July 17, 9-11 a.m., Master Gardener hosts **Grill Fest** @ Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market.

Saturday, July 17, 9-11 a.m., Cedar Ridge Preserve, 7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas, 972-709-7784. "Conservation in Action Workday", www.info_CRP@yahoo.com.

Monday, July 19, 7:00 p.m., Garden Inspirations' "**Rain Water Collection**". Take advantage of our natural resources; collect rain water. We will give you the latest and greatest in rain water collection information. 108 Ridge Crest, Waxahachie, 214-497-3918.



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



After a 2-year absence, the Ellis County Master Gardeners will have our float in the Saturday, July 3 parade. Wave to us!

A Useful Link for your plant questions:

TexasA&M Plant Disease Handbook
<http://165.91.154.132/TEXLAB/Index.htm>

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It's July - What Needs to be Done



Pomegranates (*Punica granatum*)

Photo by Linda Moxley

There's nothing like harvesting fruit from your own trees. Research findings concerning the health-related benefits of pomegranates may prompt you to add them to your list. The red-orange flowers, attractive fruit and dense, bushy growth habit make this fruit tree desirable. They are well-adapted to practically any soil with good drainage and require full sun.

Planting and Sowing

- Set out fall tomatoes and peppers from 4" pots or tomatoes planted from seed in June.
- Plant crape myrtles while in bloom from nursery stock. They would rather be in the ground than in containers; keep them well watered.
- Plant lawn grass sod. It should look fresh and recently dug. It will need water twice a day.

Pruning and Fertilizing

- Deadhead all blooming plants and fertilize sparingly. Clean up container plantings by removing dead leaves and flowers.
- Pinch off flowers, including herbs, that are going to seed to encourage re-blooming and additional foliage.
- Keep fall flowering plants compact by pinching tips of new growth. For example: Mexican bush sage, Mexican mint marigold, asters, and chrysanthemums.

Garden Watch

- Spot spray Bermuda lawns with the herbicide MSMA to kill grassy weeds such as dallisgrass, and crabgrass.
- 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. Check for grub worms by grasping a handful of turf and pulling. If grass easily comes up you may need to treat it especially if you had them last season.
- Weed nut sedge 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. **FOLLOW LABEL DIRECTIONS.**

This and That

- Keep berried plants well hydrated.
- 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.

Tips for July

"Wherever I go in America, I like it when the land speaks its own language in its own regional accent." Mrs. Lyndon Johnson, "*Wildflowers across America*", 1993

Master Gardener's Grill Fest!!

The Ellis County Master Gardeners will host a grilling festival at the Waxahachie Farmer's Market around the downtown square on Saturday, July 17. Grilled fruits and vegetables will be served from 9-11 a.m. or until they are gone. **FREE** of charge to all Farmer's Market attendees.

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.

Vegetable Garden Monthly

By Rick Daniel

Ellis County Master Gardener/Vegetable Gardening Specialist

Hello, and welcome to the July 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 and ask for one of your Master Gardener Vegetable Gardening Specialist.

Plant fall transplants of tomatoes and peppers. Also time to sow seeds for pumpkins you want for Halloween. Finish planting cantaloupe and watermelon seeds and sow winter squash seeds in early July. You can also sow black-eyed pea seeds throughout July. Late in the month you can sow bush and pole beans and Irish potatoes. It's also time to plant your fall sweet corn.

Take a look at the vegetable garden each morning. If plants are wilted in early morning, they need some water. Keep an eye out for signs of wilting and pests, as this hot and dry month is a difficult month for most vegetable gardens.

Featured Vegetable of the Month

*By Rick Daniel
Ellis County Master Gardener*



CORN: Vegetable of the Month



Planting dates: For spring, after all danger of frost has passed (3-15 to 4-30). Extra sweet varieties should be planted when soil temperature reaches 60 to 65F. For fall crop, plant 80-90 days before first average frost date (6-1 to 8-15). Fall maturing sweet corn will almost always be the highest quality, since cool nights increase sugar content.

Planting Method: Sow 3-4 seed per foot of row, 1-1 ½ inches deep. Plant rows in blocks rather than long rows to increase pollination, as corn is wind pollinated. One grain of pollen from the top of the plant must pollinate each of the silks that come out of the ears. Each silk is attached to a kernel, and that kernel will not grow unless pollinated. I plant my rows in blocks of about 1/3 of the row about 10 days apart to have longer harvest times. Thin seedlings to 10-12 inches apart when they are about 3-4 inches tall.

Varieties: White: Silver queen, frontier. Yellow: golden queen, Guadalupe gold, Bicolor: sweet G-90, Honey and pearls.

Culture: Needs loose, healthy, well drained soils. Make sure young seedlings don't suffer from lack of water and especially during the period from tasseling to harvest. Dirt plants when they are about 12 inches high, by piling extra dirt around base of plant onto roots.

Fertilizer: Heavy feeder. Use lots of compost and organic fertilizer Side dress when plants are 12-18 inches high with high nitrogen. Side dress again when the tassels and silks form. Use about half a handful of organic fertilizer per plant or about 3 cups per 25 foot row.

Harvest: 60 to 90 days. Pick when husk is still green, silks dry brown, kernels full size and milky liquid. Harvest by grabbing the base of the ear and twisting and pulling downward. Sweet corn is best when harvest during the cool of the morning and eaten as soon as possible. Don't over cook corn.

Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



July - The Herbs of Summer

Summer came much too fast for me and for much of my vegetable and herb garden but there are some herbs that love the Texas heat and continue to thrive in our 90+ degree heat. The trick is to get out there early and check things out.

I'm a pajama gardener and have discovered many kindred spirits out there. We are out in the garden when the sun comes up checking for the latest ripe tomato, or to see if there are any squash the bugs haven't found or where some extra watering is needed. I head out with my first cup of coffee just to look things over and find myself grubby and sweaty hours later wondering where the morning went. So my wardrobe of pjs far exceeds my dressy clothes.

The herbs that are thriving in July include basil, marjoram, oregano and Mexican oregano. Lemon verbena, lemon balm, and lemon grass are also doing well. All of these herbs prefer regular harvesting to keep them from flowering and going to seed. The flavor of most herbs will get bitter if allowed to flower. Some herbs such as parsley and salad burnet which have a mild, sweet flavor in the spring go bitter in the heat, whether they flower or not. Come cooler weather the new more flavorful growth will return. Just trim away the older leaves and add them to the compost.

During this heat wave water is the most important need. Even with a thick layer of mulch my herbs require a good soaking every three or four days. One reason I love growing herbs is that they don't require as much feed as other plants. I fertilize my beds with a weak solution of seaweed and fish emulsion every four weeks or so. This may pick up a bit with cooler weather. The volatile oils in herbs that give them their wonderful flavors are diminished with too much fertilizer.

Back to the Herbs of Summer. When you think of basil, marjoram and oregano, don't you automatically think of tomatoes? Try fresh tomato slices with fresh mozzarella cheese and basil. How about a simple tomato sauce with fresh tomatoes, onions, a little garlic, olive oil, and the three herbs of summer simmered for about 30 to 40 minutes.

Note: Add the basil at the end of the cooking time to preserve its flavor, season with salt and pepper and serve over pasta. Yum! Try the same ingredients but don't cook. Add some chopped Greek olives and serve over toasted Baggett slices.

So get out early in comfortable clothes, keep your garden and your body healthy and enjoy the results of your labor with flavorful fruits, vegetables and herbs.

Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Amsonia spp.

Dogbane Family (Apocynaceae)

Blue Star

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

Size: 1 - 4 feet

Blooms: April through November, perennial

Amsonia is stiffly upright, with dark green, shiny foliage setting off the inflorescence. Blue, pale blue, or white star-shaped flowers, are loosely clustered at the top of each stem, often barely surpassing the alternate leaves. Normally blue star grow in a moist environment, often in marches, ditches, bogs or floodplains. It is recommended for use in the garden where it thrives with a little extra water, but *A. ciliata*, a western species of this lovely plant, lives in drought-prone habitats, growing on limestone and chalky hills in Regions 4, 5, 7 and 8.

Landscape Gardening

by 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 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.



Sunflowers - Enjoy the Flowers....Give Birds a Treat

by Cynthia W. Mueller

Master Gardener, Galveston County

Sunflowers are an essential part of the summer garden. Besides their decorative qualities, they play an important part in agriculture by the production of seeds for fuel and cooking oil. In the home landscape, they are also important sources of food for wildlife and birds.

Garden sunflowers may be found in heights from 15 feet to about 3 feet and are descended in part from the Common Sunflower (*H. annuus*). There are many, many varieties ranging in color from white through yellow, red, chocolate and often bands of contrasting colors.

Perennial Varieties: There are approximately 50 species of sunflowers native to North America, and 38 of these are perennial species such as Jerusalem artichoke and Maximilian sunflower (*Helianthus maximilianus*). Others include:

- Silverleaf Sunflower (*H. argophyllus*) - Stems and leaves covered with silky gray down, especially on younger growth. Flowers golden with purplish brown center, plants 5 to 6 feet tall. Silvery leaves used in fresh and dried flower arrangements.
- Cucumberleaf Sunflower (*H. debilis*) - Four-foot plants with multiple branches, excellent for cutting. The three-inch flowers have a purple disk and yellow rays.
- 'Lemon Queen' is a single form suitable for cut flowers, and the old favorite 'Flore Pleno' is fully double and lasts in the garden for many years.

One way to distinguish annual from perennial sunflowers is by examination of the roots. Annuals have the usual stringy roots, but on perennials roots often have thickened into storage tubers.

Ornamental Annual Sunflowers: Garden sunflowers are usually annuals created by the crossing of several species and the range of choices has greatly expanded in the last few years with the introduction of red coloration, which produced many beautiful new hybrids such as the deep-red 'Velvet Queen' or the yellow and red bicolor 'Joker.'

Some fancy modern sunflower varieties are rather delicate, and the seeds expensive. It's often a good idea to begin germination of the seeds on moist paper towels, gently rolled up and put out of harm's way for several days. Or, lay them out on a dampened paper towel on a dish and cover with another moistened towel. Unroll the toweling and inspect seeds daily after the first week or so. Remove vigorously sprouting seeds and replant 1/4 inch deep in peat pots that can be buried in the ground intact with the young sunflower plant.

These precautions don't need to be taken with varieties more similar to "wild" sunflowers, such as 'Silver and Gold' which is a hybrid of the wild species *H. argophyllus*. This treelike annual may reach 12 feet in height, loaded with smaller yellow single blooms. The seeds are slim, but extremely attractive to birds, and the soft, downy leaves are silvery in color. More sturdy varieties may be planted in clusters 1" deep in the garden where they are to remain.

Full sun is important to sunflowers and you can actually observe the flower heads turning through the day to face the source of sunlight. Jerusalem artichokes (*Helianthus tuberosus*), a form of sunflower with an edible tuber, received their name from the Italian word 'Girasole' which means 'turning to the sun.' These were an important food crop to native peoples of the Americas. The Japanese have created new strains of sunflowers such as 'Cinnamon Sun' and 'Chocolate Cherry' lacking the usual pollen, so that they may be used in floral arrangements without the usual messiness of scattered pollen.

Sunflower varieties for seed production include specialized strains bred for enormous heads, such as 'Russian Mammoth' or 'California Greystripe'. The new cultivar 'Sunzilla' offered by Renee's seeds is not only quite tall but has an extra-sturdy stalk as well. Storms or heavy winds often wreak havoc with taller sunflowers. Growing in full sun helps to keep plants compact. These large heads need to be carefully dried after harvest before the seeds are removed to be stored.

Birds with beaks for processing seeds, such as cardinals, finches and sparrows all enjoy these seeds. It's fun to allow some of the

(Continued on page 7)

Ellis County Master Gardeners Tour Oklahoma Gardens

By Nancy Fenton, Ellis County Master Gardener



Mid-May found 22 Ellis County Master Gardeners on a bus dodging heavy rains and spawning tornados on their way to a solid 3 days of flowers, turf, trees, and vegetables. The 1st stop was the Noble Foundation in Ardmore, Oklahoma. Sam Noble was an oilman who poured his money into a foundation to stimulate good land usage including crops, livestock, and environmental research plus practical help for landowners. In addition to having one of the largest areas under glass in the US for research and plant hybridization, they make staff available to go out to family farms and ranches to work with owners on making their property more productive with environmentally sound practices. The only downer was that they limit their staff visits in a 100-mile radius from Ardmore. Darn!!!

Dodging more showers, Will Rogers Memorial Gardens in Oklahoma City was the next on the list with a quick tour of the reflecting pool and exhibit area of the Murrarh Building.

Somehow the rains came and went, stopping when the bus stopped and doing its thing when everyone got back on.

More gardens were in store after a good nights sleep. Stillwater's OSU Botanical Garden was the 1st stop on day 2 with tours of turf areas, trees, as well as theme gardens. The variety of turf being tested was amazing as well as the information from the turf experts.

After lunch it was on to the Bastani Plant Farm and the 1st chance to actually buy some plants. This family owned plant farm is only open to the public on limited days since they are a specialty nursery. No common plants here! Owners Steve and Ruth Owens travel looking for fun, hardy, unusual plants and they find them! After a tour of the OSU campus, tired campers headed for dinner and a good nights sleep.

The last garden was the Stout Gardens in Oklahoma City on the way home. They specialize in daylilies and iris and have lots and lots. The varieties were endless since the Stouts are hybridizing beautiful iris and daylilies. The trip back to Waxahachie was quick but crowed with plants (Master Gardeners can hardly go anywhere without bringing home new plants!!!)

July Is Crape Myrtle Time

By Nancy Fenton, Ellis County Master Gardener



Look around at all those gorgeous blooming trees! Those are the crape myrtles Waxahachie likes to claim. If you don't have them, try them. There are varieties for every space, taste, and color preference! They can run from 2 feet (miniatures) to 20+ feet (tree size). They are all ultra hardy and do very nicely on natural rainfall after the first year! The key is to pick your color and know the maximum height you can tolerate in that space (no 20+ feet ones under your power lines!!!)



Texas A&M recommends some good varieties for our mid-Texas areas. Their sizes and names are as follows:

RED	2' -3' 3''-6' 5'-12' 10'-20' 20' +	POCOMOKE Dwarf Low Flame Cheyenne, Tonto Comanche Arapaho	PURPLE	2'-3' 3'-6' 5'-12' 10'-20' 20'+	Velma's Royal Delight Dwarf Royalty Zuni Lipan Muskogee, Wichita
PINK	3'-6' 5'-12' 10'-20' 20'+	McFadden's Pinkie Caddo Osage Biloxi	WHITE	5'-12' 10'-20' 20'+	coma Byer's White Fantasy, Kiowa

You'll notice not all sizes have all colors available in hardy plants. Take your pick of size and color. Buy from a reputable nursery (ask if they'll take it back if it isn't the right size and color. Good nurseries will!) Plant that baby in the full sun and water thoroughly each week until the days no longer hit 85° or higher. All new plants need special care and Crape Myrtles are no different. Your investment in thought, time and money will bloom and bloom and bloom!

If you have problems with your existing crape myrtles, check with the Master Gardeners at the Waxahachie Farmers' Market on Saturdays or call the Texas AgriLife Extension at 972-825-5175.

Ellis County Master Gardeners Take Field Trip to EarthKind® Test Beds

By Lee Gabor, Ellis County Master Gardener



Dr. Steven George, renowned Extension Horticulturist and an AgriLife expert on EarthKind® Roses, welcomed Ellis County Master Gardeners on June 8th to the National Trial Test beds at Gussie Field Watterworth Park in Farmers Branch, Texas.

The City of Farmers Branch works with the Agri-Life Extension Service, a part of the Texas A&M System, to provide a location for the more than 140 tested plants. Following the initial creation of the test beds, Farmers Branch Park and Recreation personnel have maintained the mowing of the area.



Since the installation of test beds, there have been two plantings of rose cultivars. The soil was not amended and roses were watered with irrigation only during the first year. The goal of the Earth-Kind® program is to discover cultivars that can be ignored yet thrive in the Texas heat. According to Dr. George, some Earth-Kind® cultivars are well suited for planting all the way to Canada. The bushes planted on the ends of each lengthy bed were not included in test trials, since they would receive favored treatment of winds.

Dr. George led the group along the various grassy walkways as he described individual plants, offering the name of the cultivar as well as a history of the development. He emphasized that Earth-Kind® roses must be on their own roots and not grafted. He also indicated which roses are from the Dr. Buck selections. Dr. George stated that some of the cultivars in the test beds will not develop well enough to be designated as Earth-Kind® roses.

In addition to the test beds at the park, the Dallas Rose Society has created bordered beds of display roses.

The 12-acre park, which is adjacent to a waterway lake and fountain, is located at 2610 Valley View, a mile or two east of I-35 just north of 635. Benches, swings, and picnic tables are available for visitors.

Following the lecture at the test beds, the group met Dr. George at the Farmers Branch Historical Park, 2540 Farmers Branch Lane. This 22-acre site features three EarthKind® test beds as well as an area of roses on trellises. A house originally on the site now serves as the business office for the park. The front of the home is adorned with an informal flower garden.

Dr. George mentioned that about 10,000 people visit the historical area for the July 4 festivities.



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smaller sunflower heads to continue to dangle from the plants so that the birds' antics while feeding may be watched.

Sunflowers are an ancient food crop. Scientists recently discovered remains of seeds from 300 B.C. and estimate that they have been grown for food for more than 4,600 years in Mexico. Evidently sunflowers were independently domesticated by American Indians in the Mississippi valley. The larger size of the prehistoric seeds show that they were a product of domestication.

Garden Checklist for July

- Trim off faded flowers on crape myrtles to encourage later re-bloom.
- Evaluate the volume of water delivered from lawn sprinklers to ensure healthy, stress-free grass during the heat of the summer. One thorough watering which will deliver one inch of water at a time is better than several more shallow sessions. The amount of water available through flower bed sprinklers may be checked by placing several shallow pans among shrubs or flowers
- 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.
- 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 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.

EarthKind uses research-proven techniques to provide maximum gardening and landscape performance while preserving and protecting the environment. For more information on EarthKind Landscape Management Practices see the website: <http://earthkind.tamu.edu>.



Late Bloomers -- Looking forward to fall

By Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardeners

Already I'm dreading the heat of the summer when no one feels like working in the garden. But, fall will come and its cooler temperatures will bring us new enthusiasm. I always look forward to seeing these late bloomers putting on their show in the garden.

Autumn Sage (*Salvia greggii*): A semi-evergreen woody shrub growing 3 ft. tall and wide, and coming in all colors. Actually the flowers start in early spring and last all summer long. These salvias benefit from frequent haircuts after a flush of bloom. The August trim is especially important for good fall blooms. The tubular flowers attract hummingbirds, and the nectar brings butterflies and bees.

Mexican Bush Sage (*S. leucantha*): This plant is worth having as a background plant for its lovely lance-shaped, silvery leaves. Flowers emerge on long, draping spires in solid lavender, or lavender and white. To keep the tall plants from becoming too leggy and to encourage more blooms, prune back by half in mid-spring and early summer.

Mexican Mint Marigold (*Tagetes lucida*): Equally at home planted in the herb garden and flower border, the leaves have a distinct, anise-like scent. The leaves can be used in teas and as a substitute for tarragon in cooking. With its small yellow daisy-like flowers and its 2 to 3 ft. size, it would look great planted in front of the taller Mexican bush sage for an eye-catching combination of yellow and purple.

Fall Aster (*Symphyotricum oblongifolium*): The 2 to 3 ft. mounds with 1 ½ inch lavender flowers with yellow centers are especially nice in the fall border if combined with Mexican Mint Marigold. Requiring good drainage and detesting over fertilizing and over watering, they are a must for water-wise landscaping. Cut back the plants in spring or early summer to maintain a dense growth habit.

Blue Mistflower (*Eupatorium coelestinum*): A plant also known as Hardy Ageratum or Boneset is a prolific fall bloomer that puts on a show for four or more weeks and fairly buzzes with the activity of butterflies, bees, and other insects seeking its nectar. Its misty display of blue/purple, fluffy flowers are especially nice planted with Mexican Mint Marigold giving you the pleasing combination of blue/purple with yellow.

Copper Canyon Daisy (*Tagetes lemmonii*): The name gives you a clue. Brush against it as you walk by and the air will fill with the fragrance of citrus and camphor. This plant makes a 3 to 4 ft. tall mound with a profusion of single bright yellow blooms about an inch in diameter. The blooms are a great source of nectar for several species of beneficial insects. Give it plenty of room and it may need to be staked. It's a wise choice for the low water use garden.

Sweet Autumn Clematis (*Clematis paniculata*): Most types of clematis are best left on the pages of the seed catalogs if you garden here in Texas, but this vine is an exception. It sprawls over whatever support you provide. It explodes into a billowy white mass of quarter sized white blooms with a knock-your-socks-off fragrance. Remember it likes its face in the sun and its feet in the shade, so plant a low growing shrub or place a container at its feet to shade the roots.

Fall Obedient Plant (*Physostegia virginiana*): Did you even wonder why it is called obedient plant? The blooms on the stalk can be moved to the side and will remain in that position when you let go. This plant produces snapdragon-shaped flowers of lavender pink blooms with dark lavender purple markings. It willingly takes over a planting bed if given moist soil. It is better kept just moderately moist to curb its enthusiasm, or consider an underground barrier.



Maximilian Sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*): This relative of garden sunflowers is also willing to roam and should be kept on the dry side to tame its aggression. This sunflower is a perennial that blooms in the fall with many 3-inch yellow blooms spiraling upward along the 4 to 6 ft. tall stalks. To tame it a little bit, I cut it back severely in July or August and am gradually moving it out of the flower beds and to the pasture fence.

Sedum (*Sedum spectabile*): Sedum has blue-green, roundish foliage, and bears bright pink flowers in round, flat heads in late summer. Established plants can be 18 to 24 inches tall. It's a butterfly magnet and one of the best plants for a water-wise garden. 'Autumn Joy' is easily found in our local nurseries. I have also had good luck with 'Neon' and 'Vera Jameson' (a low grower more like a groundcover).

All of the above perennials like full sun. Obedient plant, sedum, and blue mistflower can take part sun. Planted now they will need attentive watering for the next few weeks until their roots become well established.

As we wilt through the summer months, think "fall" and plan to add some of these late season performers to your landscape now and extend the color season on into the fall.



It's July - What Else Needs to be Done?

By Diane Hopkins, Ellis County Master Gardener

- To add color during the summer, plant firebush, copper plant, Dahlberg daisy, hybrid purslane, Gold Star Esperanza and pentas. Plant tomato and pepper transplants and direct seed pumpkins for your fall vegetable garden. Shade the young plants from excessive heat by using shade cloth, boards or wood shingles.
- Prune trees to remove dead, damaged or disfiguring branches. Reshape shrubs gently during this time. Pinch out the growing tips of copper plants, coleus and other annuals that are becoming lanky.
- Container plants and hanging baskets should be fed each time you water them.
- Apply a diluted solution of a water-soluble, complete-and-balanced analysis to keep them vigorous.
- Mulch heavily and to make watering more efficient and less time-consuming consider installing a drip irrigation system.

With the hot, dry conditions of summer upon us, look at your landscape and consider new plantings that will grow well with limited water. The hardiest, heat-tolerant and insect and disease-resistant have been tested and selected by Texas A & M University, these plants are known as the Texas Superstars™. To obtain a list of these plants go to www.texassuperstar.com. Some additional tips you can use to lessen the long-term impact of these hot, dry days are to incorporate organic matter into your soil and mulch heavily over the plants entire root area. Don't forget to keep fresh water available to the birds coming to your garden, thus reducing the insect population that attack landscape plants weakened by the heat.

“Deadhead” or remove seed structures and cut back annuals, perennials and roses to prompt re-bloom. Additional fertilizer should always be applied after deadheading. Try foliar feeding in the early evening.

Pecans need supplemental water to ensure optimum kernel development this month, water from beyond the drip-line to half the distance to the trunk. Webworms may appear on pecan and other trees; the biological spray B.t. (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), or the insect nerve agent, Spinosad will provide control.

Prepare the site for your fall vegetable garden and start seed flats of broccoli, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage and other cool season transplants.

The key to gardening during a Texas summer is to grow plants that tolerate the summer heat. Whether as bedding plants or container plants one or more of these may be a good choice.

- Firebush – Hummingbirds adore the bright-orange trumpets that bloom until frost. When cool temperatures arrive in the fall the whole plant turns brick red.
- Variegated Tapioca – Showy golden and green leaves are accented by hot pink petioles. It will tolerate full sun and grow to five feet.
- Tropical Butterfly weed – This butterfly magnet has yellow, orange, and red flowers.
- Lantana – There are many cultivars of lantana. Give them bright sun and prune to keep tidy during the growing season. “New Gold” and trailing lantana are Texas Superstars™.



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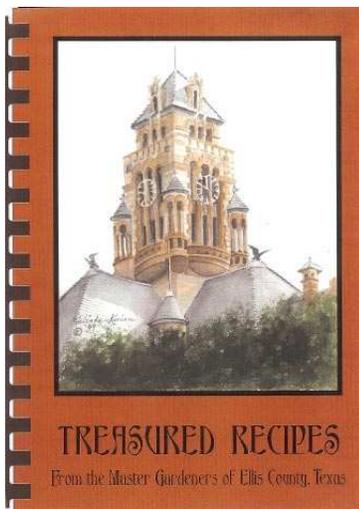
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