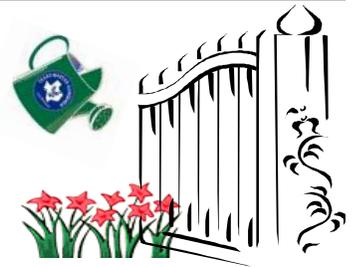




# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VI, Issue 5

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

June, 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](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 June?

**Saturday, May 26, 8am—1pm, Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market.**  
New location: 410 S. Rogers (across from City Hall in the old lumberyard building).

**Friday-Saturday, June 15-16** - Tex-Scapes Greenery Father's Day sale

**June 25 - August 13** - Fall Gardening Class, **Garden Inspirations**. For more information contact Garden Inspirations, [marilyn@gardeninspirations-txccsend.com](mailto:marilyn@gardeninspirations-txccsend.com).

**Saturday, June 30** - The Greenery Auction; new location (directly across from the old location) 3708 North Highway 77, Waxahachie.

**Monday, June 25, 7pm., "Falconry and Hawking in North Texas" hosted by Indian Trail Master Naturalists.** Free and open to the public. Pierre Bradshaw, Master Falconer and Texas Hawking Association Director-at-Large, along with Katrina – Pierre's Harris hawk, will present a fascinating program on the ancient and magnificent art form of Falconry and Hawking. Pierre, a retired wild bird rehabber/educator, has been a falconer for 20 years flying both hawks and falcons. He has flown Katrina for the past 5 years. The Texas Hawking Association serves as the representative of Texas falconry to Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. It takes place in the Banquet Hall of the Waxahachie First United Methodist Church; located at 505 W. Marvin Avenue in Waxahachie.

### Dogwood Canyon

1206 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill; south of Cedar Hill State Park Entrance

<http://tx.audubon.org/dogwood.html>

**Thursday, June 7, 9am-9pm - FREE First Thursday.** Enjoy FREE admission all day and join in throughout the day for guided hikes, animal encounters and children's arts and crafts activities.

**June 23, 9am - 12 noon - "4th Saturday"** Volunteers are invited to join us for our trail-building and habitat management activities from 9 AM -12 PM on the fourth Saturday of each month. For more information, please contact Dana Wilson, Volunteer Coordinator at [dwilson@audubon.org](mailto:dwilson@audubon.org).

### Cedar Ridge Preserve

7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas

**Saturday, June 16, 9-12noon** - Conservation in Action workday. We will continue on trail grant work. For more info, email: [info\\_CRP@yahoo.com](mailto:info_CRP@yahoo.com).



### 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

### Inside this issue:

<i>It's June, What Needs to be Done?</i>	2
<i>Wildflower of the Month</i>	3
<i>Vegetable Garden Tips</i>	3
<i>Herb of the Month</i>	4
<i>What Else?</i>	5
<i>Farmer's Market pictures</i>	5
<i>Water-How Often? How Much?</i>	6
<i>Gardening Fundamentals</i>	7
<i>Landscape Gardening</i>	8
<i>Book Review</i>	8
<i>FIREWISE Landscaping</i>	9
<i>Attracting Butterflies</i>	10

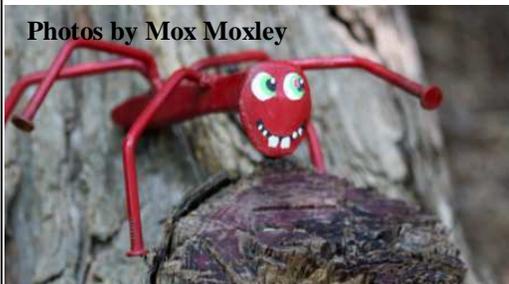


410 S. Rogers  
(across from City Hall in the old lumberyard building)  
Saturday mornings from 8-1p.m

### Visit the Master Gardener's Booth

- Good gardening tips
- Plants/herbs for sale
- Free handouts ..... Some items for a fee
- Tell a friend to sign up for the **E-Garden newsletter**... it's **FREE!!!**

Photos by Mox Moxley



### Children's Garden

It's said that gardens grow children, and this is particularly true when a child's first experiences with gardening are fun and successful. Nurturing plants and sharing the bounty are great confidence builders for budding green thumbs. Indulge your child's curiosity in bugs, worms and sprouting seeds. Offer plants that mature quickly with surprising results.

Gardening instills positive values in kids as well as teaching them valuable nutrition and life skills. In Ellis County, tiny green thumbs can participate in the Children's Gardening Workshops at the Master Gardener's Lawn and Garden Expo each March. The Ellis County Junior Master Gardener Program has an active chapter that promotes growing good kids by igniting a passion for learning, success and service through a unique gardening education.

### Odd and Ends

- Plants will need supplemental water if rainfall is inadequate.
- Visually check each sprinkler head weekly to be sure your irrigation system is working properly and clear of new growth. Perform an irrigation audit so
- that each zone is applying the proper amount of water to prevent over- or under-watering. It will also tell you how long to water each respective zone in order to apply one inch of water. Make the appropriate adjustments. Call a Master Gardener at the AgriLife Extension Service – Ellis County at 972-825-5175 for further information.
- Continue watering newly planted trees until well established which means the tree has be-well rooted with good leaf growth. Water when the top two inches of the soil is warm and dry to the touch. This may take several months for small trees and longer for large trees. Leave the open end of the hose on the ground about six inches from the trunk and let the water slowly drip for 30 or 40 minutes. Do not let the root ball completely dry out.

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

### Planting

- This is the best time to plant vinca (periwinkle), in full sun. They like the hot weather. Cora is a new type of vinca that is resistant to soil-borne diseases. It comes in many colors except yellow. Water with drip irrigation or soaker hose to keep water off the foliage.
- Warm--season color or foliage plants can still be used in containers or in the ground. Utilize 4-inch or larger nursery stock, and keep them well watered. Containers may need water twice a day.
- Buy and plant crepe myrtles in bloom to be certain you have the desired color. They come in a wide range of colors and sizes. Look for ones that are resistant to powdery mildew.

### Fertilizing and Pruning

- Prune back autumn sage (*Salvia greggii*) and mealy cup sage (*Salvia farinacea*) by one-third. Deadhead other salvias as well as annuals and perennials that will continue reblooming until late fall.
- Continue to prune as necessary, fall blooming plants such as Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*), mountain sage (*Salvia reglia*), Mexican mint marigold, copper canyon daisies, asters and mums to keep them compact and prevent buds from forming prematurely. Don't prune after September when buds begin to form.
- Every week, fertilize container plantings (including hanging baskets) with a water-soluble fertilizer.
- This is the second time to use an all-nitrogen, slow-release fertilizer on turf grasses. You can cut the amount by half to prevent excessive growth. The more fertilizer on a lawn, the more water it needs.

### Garden Watch

- Insects and diseases will be prevalent this time of the year. Treat with an appropriate organic or chemical pesticide, if needed. Vegetable plants that cannot be salvaged should be pulled up and destroyed.
- Look for small, spindle-shaped bags hanging from trees. These are bag-worms. Pull them off by hand. Insecticides are not effective once the bag has formed. They are usually found on cedars, cypress, and other cone-bearing trees. However, they can be found on other plants including oaks and barberries. They multiply, can defoliate a tree and eventually kill it.

Photo by Mox Moxley



Texas

come

## Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



### Texas Thistle - Sunflower Family (Asteraceae)

*Cirsium texanum* Buckl.

**Region:** 2-8, 10 (Ellis Co. is in Region 4)  
**Size:** 2 - 5 feet  
**Blooms:** April through August, Annual/Perennial

Although thistles are not a farmer's favorite, goldfinches and other birds eat the seed; butterflies and bumblebees are drawn to the nectar; and the larvae of the painted-lady butterfly feed on the foliage. In the great scheme of things, Texas thistle is important. A handsome plant, it has long hairs mixed with disk flowers, making a fluffy, rose-lavender globe that sits in a green bract cup.

There is one flower head to a stem. The base of each leaf clasps the hairy stem. The base of each leaf clasps the hairy stem and the alternate leaves have spiny-toothed lobes. Upper sides of leaves are dark green, but the underside is woolly. Several species are similar.

## Vegetable Gardening Tips for June

*By Pat Dockins  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



June is here and you are now enjoying the first fruits of your labor. Potatoes, turnips, tomatoes, and beets are all ready to grace your table. Okra, cantaloupe, watermelon should be up by now. Beans are plentiful now too. So, what's left to do? Well, you can still plant cantaloupes, corn, cucumbers, okra, southern peas, squash, sweet potatoes and bush beans.

Pull onions when the tops fall over and place in a shaded area for a few days then cut the tops and roots off and move to a dry place to store.

I guess the number one thing to do is a daily inspection of your garden. You must become an insect sleuth. They enjoy your plants just like you do. Squash bugs can destroy a plant almost overnight. A daily walk through is so important now. Vary your times – morning is good but some insects are active after dark. Use a flashlight and see what's going on.

It looks like we are in for another hot summer so mulching around your plants will help hold the moisture and keep the weeds to a minimum.

Here are the tips in a nutshell:

- Watch for insects
- Water when necessary
- Mulch
- Harvest regularly to keep production going

Enjoy!

## Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton  
Ellis County Master Gardener



### Organic Pest Management

Over forty years ago, Rachel Carson in her book *Silent Spring* opened our eyes to the fact that we have endangered the earth and ourselves with the use of chemicals. Today the hot phrase is "Going Green" where many of us try to follow organic practices such as composting, mulching, soil and water conservation. But when it comes to pests the task can seem overwhelming. Pesticides, even organic ones, are not always the best answer to pest control. The use of herbicides and pesticides, even organic ones make no distinction between good bugs and bad bugs. Long term use can have many negative impacts, including suppression of the bacteria and organisms that break down the food that feed our plants. Long term use can also lead to pollution of our waterways.

Certain plants can encourage biodiversity and a healthy population of beneficial insects in your garden. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) relies on the use of plants known to attract beneficial insects that prey on pests that damage plants and crops. The three 'Ps' of beneficial insects are pollinators, predators and parasites. Pollinators, such as honeybees fertilize flowers, which increases food production. Predators, such as lady bugs consume pests as food. Parasites use pests as nurseries for their young. All three of these 'Ps' will be actively working in a healthy, bio-diverse garden.

Here are a few plants that will help manage the pests that invade your garden:



Chives, garlic, leek, onion, and shallot are excellent protective companions for roses and will help protect from mildew black spot, aphids and many other pests. Onion repels cabbage butterflies. Chives and garlic are good for fruit trees and tomatoes. To make an insect repellent tea grind three hot peppers, four large onions, and one whole bulb of garlic together. Cover with water and allow to stand overnight. The following day strain the mixture through a fine sieve. Add enough water to make a gallon, add 2 teaspoons of canola oil. Spray on infected plants thoroughly covering all sides. Do not use during the heat of the day as the oil may burn the plants and don't get any in your eyes as the peppers will irritate.

Chamomile tea can be made by soaking the dried flowers for a day or two in water then spraying over young plants in the greenhouse to prevent damping-off.

Chrysanthemums are beneficial to strawberry plants and are the source of pyrethrum, a direct contact insecticidal effective against soft bodied insects.



Dandelions are beneficial because of their long taproots which transport minerals, especially calcium, upwards from deeper soil layers and deposit them nearer the surface. They therefore return to the soil minerals that have been lost through seeping downward.



Asters, cosmos, coreopsis, marigolds, and larkspur are good to plant throughout the garden.

Nasturtium planted with squash will keep away squash bugs, will repel whitefly in the greenhouse and when planted near broccoli will keep down aphids. They are beneficial to potatoes, radishes, cucurbits, and members of the cabbage family.

Peppers (capsicum) are effective in protecting plants from viruses. Sprays were found effective against tobacco mosaic virus, potato virus and several others.

Petunias protect beans against beetles.

Sunflowers are a soil-improver and a companion for corn and cucumbers. They are also a trap plant, luring insects away from more valuable plants.

Sage, mint, thyme, rosemary, tansy, wormwood and rue make excellent insect repelling teas. Use 2 cups of fresh leaves in 3 cups boiling water. Steep for 2 -3 hours, strain, add 1 teaspoon liquid non-detergent soap. Dilute with 2 cups water and spray infected plant thoroughly.

## It's June...What Else Can I be Doing?

By Carolyn Foster, Ellis County Master Gardener



This is the season for family vacations and very little rain. Proper watering is critical during this time of the year. If you're going away get someone to water those container plants and ground covers. Perennials and ground covers grow slowly the first year after planting and speed up as they become better established. So, extra care of plants the first year is very important. Water deeply and infrequently, moistening the soil about 4 to 6 inches down. Make sure plantings are weeded and mulched 3 to 6 inches deep; this will choke out weeds. Trim and prune dead or broken branches, stalks and stems and overgrown or leggy plants. Remove spent blooms from plants. This will help plants survive the Texas heat that's on its way.

If you think that planting annuals will guarantee you nonstop color from spring to fall, think again. Unless it's self-cleaning, once an annual plant has produced a good crop of flowers and they've set seed for the next generation, that's it. The plant thinks its job is done. So, how do we keep the blooms coming? **Deadhead.** Simply remove the flowers **before** they set seed. The more you clip, the more the plant will churn out. Same thing with veggies, the more you pick the more they produce. Most will bloom or produce until frost if the brutal heat doesn't get them first. So, get out there and clip away or pick, pick, pick. You'll fill your house with flowers and your fridge with great "home grown goodies".

When plants start to get leggy and overgrown one of the best things you can do is to prune them back a bit. Many plants are renewed and revived by this process. But sometimes plants go into "**HEAT CHECK**". It's a plant's version of a summer vacation. Lobelia, Alyssum and French marigold are some plants that like to chill out when the weather gets hot. Don't worry, when the nights get a little cooler, they'll start to bloom again. Until then just keep them watered and watch out for pests. When they start to bloom, feed them every 3 weeks and they'll put on a show.

Now don't forget to make regular "pest checks" so they won't get out of hand.

You can take "cuttings" from your favorite plants. Start with a good rooting hormone. Take a 4" to 6" cutting from a plant that is healthy and strong from a mature stem. Use clean, sharp clippers and clean with a solution of 1 part bleach to 8 parts water after each cut. Wrap the cutting in a wet paper towel and cut again about 1/4" below a node (where leaves meet the stem) when you're back inside. Pinch off the lower leaves of the bottom half so the stem is bare. Keep upper leaves in place but no buds or flowers. Dip in rooting compound and put into the well misted growing medium (potting soil, rice hulls, etc). Firm soil, water lightly or mist again and cover base of plant with plastic. Remove plastic 1 hour a day to prevent mildew. In 3 to 5 weeks you should see new shoots forming. Remove plastic, protect as you would any young plant and you're good to go..

## 2012 Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market...new location!



## Proper Watering of Landscapes - How often? How much?

*From Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener*



In a few months we will be in the midst of another hot Texas summer, one coming on the heels of last year's poor rainfall record. Properly watering plants during the summer tends to be one of the most confusing and misunderstood gardening chores. Often, ardent gardeners do not recognize inadequate watering until it is too late and plants are badly damaged or dead.

'How often should I water?' and 'How much should I apply?' are a couple of the most-often asked questions from gardeners. Since water is both essential for healthy plant growth and often costly to apply in quantity during the summer, it is important to get it to the plant's roots efficiently and keep it there.



The following are several suggestions for easier and more effective watering. These techniques apply to all gardening, from shade and fruit trees and vegetable gardens to lawns and house plants.

- Mornings tend to be cool and without strong winds, so the amount of water lost to evaporation is much less than during the middle of the day.
- Ideally, use a drip or soak system instead of a regular sprinkler, which wastes a lot of water and drenches the leaves, which are prone to damage as well as disease.
- With population growth and climate change putting increasing pressure on freshwater supplies, it is becoming more important than ever to save water.
- Most experts recommend substantial, infrequent watering for established plants, typically a total of about one inch of water per week (including rain). One or two applications a week encourages deeper rooting, which promotes stronger plants.
- Never water strictly by the calendar. We don't drink water 'every ten minutes' or 'every hour', so why should plants be watered 'every two days' or 'once a week'? Instead, learn to recognize dry plants and soil and use these as your tip-off for watering. Too many factors determine how fast a soil dries for us to put watering on a regular basis.
- When the plants are dry, water thoroughly. Water lawns so that the soil will be wet several inches down, to encourage deep rooting and drought tolerance. One of the worst mistakes people make in their gardens is trying to 'sprinkle' them each day by using their thumb and the end of a running hose. Most gardeners just don't have the patience to stand in one spot long enough for deep water penetration.
- Water trees by taking the sprinkler off the end of the hose and letting water run slowly for several hours out under the drip line (not near the trunk). Be sure that runoff does not occur.
- Most plants should be watered in the morning. Evening watering increases the likelihood of disease invasion, as the majority of diseases develop most rapidly in cool, moist conditions.
- While watering your lawn, try to keep water off the leaves of trees and shrubs as much as possible. This is especially important for such plants as crape myrtle and roses, which are troubled by leaf diseases which spread rapidly on wet surfaces.
- Symptoms for plants which have been kept too wet are about the same as for those kept too dry. Roots in waterlogged soils die and do not take up water, so plants wilt and turn yellow. Try not to water a drowning plant!
- Organic matter, such as shredded pine bark and composted manure, can increase water absorption when they are worked into our native soil.
- To keep moisture in the soil, use a thick mulch such as shredded pine bark, grass clippings or tree leaves. In addition to reducing evaporation, mulches also keep the soil cooler and make weed pulling much easier.

*(Continued on page 7)*

(Continued from page 6)

- Be especially careful to keep newly planted trees and shrubs well watered. Their developing root systems are sensitive to under- and over-watering. But again, don't drown them.
- Always soak chemical fertilizers into the soil immediately after application. These materials are excellent sources of plant foods, but they are also salts, and can pull water out of plant tissues, resulting in burn, unless they are watered into the soil.

Gardeners often wonder what type of sprinkler is best. Generally speaking, most do a satisfactory job of making an even application. However the most efficient and effective type is the impact sprinkler (the kind used on golf courses and athletic fields).

For plants to thrive during the upcoming summer months, they will need plenty of water, but equally important is properly applying the much-needed water.

For more information on preparing your landscape for the hot, dry weather go to <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind>

*Source: Dr. Douglas F. Welsh, Professor & Extension Horticulturist,*

## Gardening Fundamentals ...

*By Jamey Guarascio-Cosper, Ellis County Master Gardener*

### **Location II – In ground or above?**

As I walk around a local garden center, I spot a plant I want. I walk over and read the tag on the plant: "Invasive" ... eew! Rather than giving up on planting it in my yard, I make plans to build a new raised bed to keep the tubers from taking over.

Planting directly in the ground (an in ground bed) has some advantages. For starters, there is plenty of room for root growth. Larger crops can be grown, and crop can spread out to help with air circulation. For native plants, the soil contains a lot of the nutrients the plants need to survive. Also, not too much pre-planting work is required.

A disadvantage is the soil quality. Most soil benefits significantly from additives, especially organics being mixed in with the existing soil. Compost can make the soil more porous, less compact, and provide missing nutrients to the soil. You can also amend soil quality and acidity levels (pH) by adding compost, shale, peat moss, and other materials to the existing soil. Another disadvantage is dormant seeds. Once existing soil is tilled, a plethora of seeds may be activated and growth begins. A weeding nightmare!

Above ground beds – raised beds and containers - offer the advantage of quality soil because you control the soil that goes into those beds. Generally, the soil you fill the beds with has been purified or heated to kill dormant seeds, some bacteria, and insects. Keeping weeds out of raised beds is easier than in-ground beds. And another notable advantage is that controlling pH balances is easier with raised beds as well.

However, as with everything else, there are drawbacks. Raised beds tend to dry out more quickly, you have limited space for quality root growth, and cost. Cinder blocks, railroad ties, stone, cement, wood, AND soil – these items can put a serious dent in your wallet. And they are not necessarily "one-time" expenses. To keep my raised beds up to par, I add more dirt each spring since they "shrink" over a season as the components break down. Wood rots and boards have to be replaced. Painted surfaces have to be re-painted every so often to keep them looking sharp.

With containers, I removed all old dirt each Spring, scrub the pots with a 1/10 bleach mixture and allow them to air dry before starting off with my new planting.

Regardless of whether you use a pot, above ground beds, or an in ground planting, the most important consideration is drainage. Few plants enjoy wet feet and an area that doesn't drain well is a recipe for disaster.

As I get older, I find I personally prefer raised beds because I don't have to get down on my hands and knees to weed and to harvest, which is more comfortable on my knees and back. But I encourage you to try your hand at each to see what works best for your "yardening" style.

Happy planting!





## Landscape Gardening

Submitted by *Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener*

Ellis County Master Gardeners have a website at [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com). Check this website for information on gardening in Ellis County, sign up for a monthly newsletter or access other websites including Texas A&M Horti-

culture website. Questions for Master Gardeners will be answered with a return telephone call or email if you leave a message at 972.825.5175.

Dr. William C. Welch, *Professor & Landscape Horticulturist, Texas AgriLife Extension Service*

### Coreopsis (*Coreopsis grandiflora*)

Perennials are finding their way back into many gardens after many decades of absence. By definition, perennials are plants that return each year from a permanent crown or root system.

*C. grandiflora* is a native to Texas along with a number of other Coreopsis species. The species itself is a useful and colorful plant but is tall and falls over after spring rains or wind. New selections, such as 'Baby Sun' and 'Sunray' are valuable because they are compact and therefore, more useful in the landscape. Plants of these two varieties are usually 8 - 10" tall with bloom heads reaching to eighteen inches. 'Sunray' is a double flower more orange than yellow in color. 'Baby Sun' is single and a rich, golden yellow. 'Zagreb' and 'Zamphir' are also low-growing va-

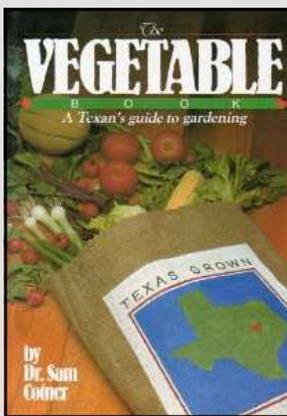
rieties - the latter has rolled petals which are unusual for flower arranging. Culture is undemanding with a sunny location being the primary requirement.

Coreopsis are very drought and heat tolerant. They flower from April through most of the summer. Like most spring and summer flowering perennials, they should be divided and reset in the fall. This should be done every one to two years. New plants can also be started from seed, which is available from many mail order seed sources. Started plants are being grown and made available by nurseries specializing in perennials and native Texas plants.

Although most people use the genus name coreopsis, *Hortus Third* lists the common name as tickseed, which describes the mature seed of the plant. Annual forms of Coreopsis bloom earlier and are more common than the perennial types. *Coreopsis tinctoria* is especially conspicuous in mid-spring with its fine textured foliage and dark red, or bi-colored red, brown and yellow disc flowers.



With increasing emphasis on utilizing our native Texas plants, Coreopsis seems a logical choice for homeowners. Groups of 'Sunray' or 'Baby Sun' spaced 12" apart are highly effective as a mass display in the landscape. Once established, they are exceptionally heat and drought tolerant and are among the easiest perennials to grow.



## The Vegetable Book

*A Texans Guide to Gardening*

By Dr. Sam Cotner

Article submitted by Robert Shugart, Ellis County Master Gardener

If you are serious about vegetable gardening you need this book by Dr. Sam Cotner. Copyright 1985, this book covers all vegetables grown in Texas from A to Z and in that order. It starts with Asparagus on page 1 through Watermelon on page 369. Zucchini is under the heading of squash. Other less common crops are also discussed in the last 18 pages.

He usually begins with a short history of the specific vegetable followed by the area in Texas that it is most productive. He even explains why it grows better in specific locals if that is the case. He covers preparation of planting beds and why the prep is important. He tells you how the crop develops, when and how to fertilize, care and cultivate, right through to harvest.

Each Vegetable Chapter ends with a "Quick Problem Solver Chart" covering weak growth, insect pests, and problem characteristics of each plant.

I keep a copy of this book beside my chair in the den and a copy in my truck. Before I consider a vegetable for my garden, and several times before planting it, I read the chapter on that vegetable. I may refer to the book several times as the crop develops to insure that I haven't missed a step in the process. Yes, I pick it up and read just for pleasure during cold winter months. If I have success with a crop it is because of this book and the blessings of God and Mother Nature.

In preparation for this article I did some research. The book is generally not available. I checked with Half.com and Ebay and the best price they show for a used copy is in the \$72.00 range with one copy asking \$200.00 and another \$300.00. Half Price Books does not have any copies.

Texas Gardener Magazine is the publisher and according to Deborah, the office manager, they plan to do another printing in the

(Continued on page 9)

## FIREWISE LANDSCAPING

By Lee Dann, Ellis County Master Gardener

The horrific losses in Texas last year have been a shocking reminder of how vulnerable we are to wildfire. Many of our communities are developed adjacent to natural wildland (the Wildland Urban Interface or WUI), exposing us to the possibility, or even the probability, of nearby wildfires. The largest concentrations of high-risk WUI areas in Texas can be found in counties along the I-35 corridor from Dallas to San Antonio and along the I-10 corridor from San Antonio to Houston. (Now read that sentence again)!

We can coexist with the wildland, but we need to understand that fires are a natural, necessary and beneficial occurrence in nature. We in the WUI can take proactive measures to decrease the chances of our structures becoming fuel for those fires.

While attending a Master Gardener Firewise Specialist workshop in Georgetown this January, I learned from the Texas Fire Service that by practicing Firewise Landscaping, we can increase the chances of our homes surviving a wildfire. Individual property owners can practice Firewise Landscaping, and entire communities can join together to create Firewise Communities.

The first step is to concentrate on the area within a 30' circle around your home. Just a few of the things you can do are:

- Maintain a fuel break in the 5' area immediately surrounding your home. Keep this area free of debris and dead leaves. Vegetation should be low growing, well-spaced, and not in direct contact with the structure. Mulch used in this area should be gravel or some other non-flammable material. Choose plants with a low-flammability rating.
- Remove leaves and debris from the roof and rain gutters where they could be ignited by burning embers.
- Gravel walkways, driveways, sidewalks and well-maintained lawns can provide fire breaks, so use them whenever possible.
- Remove the vines growing up trees – they can act as wicks, sending ground fires up the trees, causing the crowns to ignite and spread from tree to tree, and to the roofs of buildings. Crown fires are much more difficult to fight.
- Clear the ground around your outbuildings. Even a few feet clear of weeds and debris can provide a firebreak.
- When purchasing lawn furniture or decking material, consider using non-flammable materials. Enclose the area under your deck to block burning embers from entering under your home.
- Do not store firewood, gas cans or gas-powered equipment close to the house.
- Keep trees pruned to 6-10' above the ground, and don't allow broken branches or dead leaves to accumulate.

Obviously some of us live in WUI communities where our personal property is extremely close to our neighbor's property. That's a good example of the possibility of a community uniting and creating zones around the entire neighborhood as well as practicing Firewise Landscaping at our own homes.

And don't forget the basics. Be sure your address is visible day and night from all directions, and that there is adequate clearance for fire engines to enter your property. If you live in a WUI, you may never be faced with the need, but talk to your family and decide in advance what you would need to do in the event of a nearby fire, make a list of prescriptions you would need if you had to evacuate, places to take your pets, and important phone numbers. If you are ever ordered to evacuate, this is not a request. You must leave so firefighters and law enforcement can do what they do best.

There are no guarantees that a home will be *fireproof*. But if you take action to be *firewise*, you can greatly increase the chances that your home will withstand a wildfire.

For more information on Firewise Landscaping, Firewise Communities, preparing your property for the wildfire season, and everything Firewise, go to [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org).

A list of plants and their flammability rating, along with articles, brochures and a link to the Firewise website are available on the Ellis County Master Gardener Association website, [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com), under the Resources tab. If you would like to talk to a Firewise Landscaping specialist, please call the Texas AgriLife Extension office in Waxahachie (972) 825-5175.

(Continued from page 8)

next month. If you want to pre-order call them in Waco at 254 848 9393. Deborah said that they will honor the old price in the \$25 to \$30 range for pre-orders. She commented that the only change over the years was the removal of all chemical references (Insecticides etc.)

On a sad note the author Dr. Samuel Cotner passed away on January 20, 2011 at AlzCare in New Braunfels, TX.

## When Attracting Butterflies, Don't Wing It

Submitted by Melinda Kocian

(photos by Nancy Prikryl)

Sometimes the most beautiful part of the garden doesn't come from the ground. Butterfly gardens — gardens with plants selected and arranged specifically to attract the fluttering beauties — are becoming increasingly popular across Texas. Like all of nature's creatures, butterflies require food, shelter and water. With planning, anyone can make these colorful visitors part of their surroundings year after year.

Gardeners hoping to lure butterflies to their landscape should first determine:

- The butterfly species native to your region
- Types of flowers most likely to attract nectar-feeding insects
- Host plants best suited for the developing caterpillars



Planning ahead for the right plants to attract butterflies is a must when you want to enjoy these beautiful insects in your landscape. Butterflies are a welcome sight for many Texas gardeners and landscapers as they plan and often grow their gardens to make them irresistible to butterflies.

Butterfly gardening requires some knowledge of local butterfly species, flowers that are attractive to nectar-feeding adults and host plants for the developing caterpillars.

Marigolds, nasturtiums, zinnias, hollyhocks and daylilies are among the favorites of butterflies. Also, a few of our very own Texas Superstars are popular with the butterfly population including, [Gold Star Esperanza](#), [Flare Perennial Hibiscus](#), [Texas Lilac Vitex](#) and [Lord Baltimore Perennial Hibiscus](#). The designation of a [Texas Superstar](#) is given only to the toughest, most reliable and best-looking plants that have stood up to years of field trials by Texas A&M University's Agriculture Program. During the field trials, the plants receive minimal soil preparation, minimal water and no pesticides.



The following tips will help make your garden, backyard or landscaped area a haven for butterflies:

- Locate in a sunny area. Butterflies like direct sunlight and heat.
- Provide shelter by planting along a fence, hedge or building if wind is a problem.
- Avoid using chemical pesticides.
- Provide a warm resting spot by placing a board or a few flat stones around the garden.
- Fill a shallow saucer with water and sink it into the soil.
- Provide food plants for the caterpillar. These can include milkweed, thistle, clover, goldenrod and other natives in a spot where their invasive habits will not be a problem. Other menu favorites are carrots, dill, parsley and nasturtium. Choices for the annual border include marigolds, red salvia, zinnias, lantana, cosmos and impatiens.

Whether it's a backyard or a landscaped garden, make the most of your outdoor area this season by creating an inviting area for butterflies. Get monthly email updates showcasing Texas food, wine, restaurants, recipes, gardening, style and more. Subscribe to Go Local. GO TEXAN. and learn about everything the Lone Star State has to offer. Send an e-mail to [gotexan@TexasAgriculture.gov](mailto:gotexan@TexasAgriculture.gov) with "sign me up" in the subject line and your name and email address in the body copy.





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