



Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



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

November, 2008

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 November?

Dallas Arboretum - Pansy Trial - Help needed. We need 10 or more volunteers each week to come help us record flower count. Dates where help is needed are every Tuesday, December 1, 2008 through March 30, 2009. Contact Denise Robb, Greenhouse and Research Manager, 214-555-6586 or drobb@dallasarboretum.org.

Cedar Ridge Preserve, 7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas

Saturday, November 1, 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. "Take a Hike", Fall Tree Appreciation Walk with Master Naturalist Jim Varnum

Description: Cedar Ridge Preserve is known for its meadows and forests. In November, most of the wildflowers of the meadow are gone, so it's a convenient time to take a walk through the forest and see and study the trees. Join Texas Master Naturalist on

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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

Master Gardener's Taking Applications



The Ellis County Master Gardener Association has announced that applications are now available for the 2009 Master Gardener training program.

The Texas Master Gardeners are trained members of the local community who take an active interest in their lawns, trees, shrubs, flowers and gardens.

They are enthusiastic, willing to learn and to help others and are able to communicate with diverse groups of people. The Master Gardener training program equips participants with horticultural knowledge in plant selection, proper planting methods, disease and weed management, trees and shrubs, plant identification methods, fertilization, water conservation, soil and plant nutrition, pruning methods and more.

This is a great opportunity for community gardening enthusiasts to gain an increased knowledge in horticulture, improve their gardening skills and develop a better understanding of the gardening issues Ellis County faces. The program goal is to develop a pool of well-trained Master Gardeners prepared to serve the residents of Ellis County.

The time commitment is from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm every Tuesday and Thursday during the month of February. Additionally, trainees will be asked to complete 75 hours of volunteer service before graduating from the Master Gardener program.

The Master Gardener program offers members numerous methods for obtaining their volunteer hours while serving Ellis County. One such method is through the Junior Master Gardener program

Application forms are available on the Ellis County Master Gardener's Web site at www.ecmga.com or by calling 972-825-5175. Tuition for the program is \$100.

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Featured Plant for November

Carolina Buckthorn (Native)

Rhamnus caroliniana

A beautiful small deciduous tree with glossy green leaves and brilliant fall color. Has red berries during the summer that ripen and turn a shiny black. Can grow in shallow and rocky soil. Fruit is food to several species of birds. Plant from seed or container. Use as specimen understory tree.

Exposure: Sun to part shade

Size: Ht. up to 30' Spread: 15'

Planting and Sowing

- Plant the spring-flowering bulbs that you ordered in August soon after you receive them. An application of high quality bulb food at the time of planting will help promote more blooms next spring. Repeat before spring growth begins.
- Replace the summer annuals in your beds with cool-season annuals such as pansies, pinks, and snapdragons early this month to achieve best color and root establishment before winter sets in.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- Fertilize an over seeded warm-season lawn with a high-nitrogen fertilizer, but at half the recommended rate.
- Prune obviously dead or damaged branches from shade trees now. Waiting until late-winter will make them difficult to distinguish.
- Prune bougainvilleas and tropical hibiscus before bringing them indoors for the winter.
- Fertilize your winter color beds with a balanced, water-soluble plant food each time you water.

Garden Watch

- Protect peach and plum trees from bacterial stem canker and peach leaf curl with a spray application of Bordeaux mixture after all of their leaves have fallen.

- Eliminate sources of disease problems next year by removing fallen, mummified fruit from around the base of tree.
- When bringing patio plants inside for the winter, watch for common household pests such as crickets and roaches lurking in drain holes.

This and That

- Clean and oil your garden tools before putting them up for winter.
- Dig and divide spring-flowering perennials.
- Run all gasoline-powered engines dry before storing. Have equipment repaired now while repair shops are relatively idle, and shop the pre-winter close-out models for replacement equipment.

Tips of the Month

Compost is a great natural fertilizer that benefits the garden:

- Makes nutrients more easily available
- Loosen clay and compacted soils
- Increases moisture retention
- Aids in soil erosion
- Suppresses weeds



2009 Ellis County Master Gardener Gardening Calendar

The Ellis County Master Gardeners are proud to announce that our 2009 Gardening Calendars will be available next month. Each calendar month has timely gardening advice on what should be happening in the your gardens and landscape.

A big thank you to all of our sponsors who continue to make this calendar possible. Without your support of the sponsors and their support of the Master Gardeners, this calendar would not be possible.

Animal Hospital of Ovilla
ARK Country Store
Boyce Feed & Grain
Cancun/Acapulco
CNB of Texas
Cottage Garden Designs
Garden Inspirations
Gingerbread Press
Jeanette's Embroidery

Loma Linda Events
Midlothian Feed
Natural Water Works
Natural Stone Works
Garden Variety Organics
Pam Daniel, Ebby Halliday
Pampered Chef, Barbara Brasfield
Patio Scapes
Petal Pushers

Rainwater Harvesting Solutions
Stone River Landscaping
Tex-Scapes Greenery
The Dove's Nest
The Greenery
Travis Equipment
Urban Farmers
Waxahachie Daily Light
Yuko Mauldin, GMAC Real Estate

GETTING READY FOR THE WINTER

by Nancy Fenton, Ellis County Master Gardener



November is here and it's time to harvest that fall garden, plant a few more cold hardy vegetables, fertilize the yard, and start thinking about those Christmas gifts for your gardeners or want to be gardeners.

First the garden. You can still plant lettuce, radishes, English peas, spinach, turnips, carrots and beets if you get out early in the month. They are quick and cold hardy for our area. If you don't want to keep picking, just layer the garden area with compost, shredded leaves, or plant a cover crop to be turned over in the spring to feed those vegetables come spring. Feed your yard about now also. I use a well-balanced fertilizer, (13,13, 13) according to the directions. It releases slowly in the cool weather and strengthens the grass to withstand our cold weather. While you are in the fertilizing mode, hit those iris and daylilies with a well-balanced fertilizer. You will be rewarded with healthier plants and larger blooms next Spring!

All summer long, friends have remarked how green our yard looked despite the heat and drought. I even skipped the midsummer fertilizer because of the heat, but think the organic approach and the regular deep watering kept it green. My rain gauges didn't register much so I tried to get about an inch a week on the yard by setting my sprinklers up for watering two times a week. Not catching the clippings helped keep what moisture there was down where the roots could use it.

Now is a good time to replace any small trees and shrubs you lost this summer. Most potted or balled trees and shrubs can go into the ground with little shock. They'll have a chance to establish themselves before we get the dry heat next summer again. Just remember they will need water for a full year including the colder months. If we don't get the rain, we have got to provide it!

When you get all the outside work done, it's time to turn to thinking about the Christmas list. I love to spend some of the dreary days looking at the gardening magazines and if you have a gardener on your list, now is the time to think about ordering. They take about 6 weeks to get the magazines rolling, just in time for the holidays. Some of my gardening friends' favorites are as follows:

1. TEXAS GARDENER Bimonthly-www.TEXASGARDENER.COM (254 848 9393)
2. NEIL SPERRY'S GARDENS Bimonthly-www.neilsperry.com (800 752 4769)
3. GARDENING HOW-TO Bimonthly- (612 988 7405)
4. BIRDS & BLOOM- Bimonthly - (800 344 6913)
5. BIRDS & BLOOM EXTRA Bimonthly (800 344 6913)

Start looking now for those great gifts and planning for Spring. It's never too early to do a little dreaming.



Get Your Plants, Shrubs and Grass Ready for Winter

Submitted by Melinda Kocian, Ellis County Master Gardener

Beautiful green landscapes in the spring start with preparations in the fall. Excess leaves, mulching, mowing, watering and fertilizing all need to be considered when you start to prepare your landscape for the winter months. Getting your landscape ready for winter will help with spring growth and color.

Watering

Even though your lawn is dormant during winter months, remember the grass is living and needs moisture for survival. Make sure you continue to water if it doesn't rain for more than two weeks. Watering your lawn before a hard freeze helps reduce freeze injury to the grass.

The trick to lawn care is to find a balancing point where you give your lawn the water it needs, but do without wasting precious water resources. An often-heard rule of thumb is to give a lawn an inch of water per week; but the type of grass you're growing and your micro-climate conditions also have an influence. According to experts with Texas AgriLife Extension, the best way to know when to water is to observe your lawn. For an established lawn, look for signs of wilting or discoloration, then apply one inch of water. Apply the water as quickly as you can but avoid wasteful run-off. By watering your lawn only when needed, and by watering thoroughly, you'll encourage the development of a deep-rooted lawn that is water efficient and drought tolerant. The best time to water your lawn is in the early morning when temperatures are still cool. By doing so, you will lose less water to evaporation. Early morning watering also allows your lawn to dry by mid-day, thus helping prevent lawn diseases that thrive on wet foliage.

Fertilizing

Fall fertilization is the first step towards next year's healthy lawn. This also is the time to apply pre-emergent chemicals to control unwanted weeds and grasses. Turf must be fertilized on a regular basis to keep it healthy. You can "spoon feed" your lawn by applying one-half pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet each month through November. This would be two and one-half pounds

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per thousand square feet of a 20% nitrogen product. If you are using a slow-release nitrogen fertilizer, you can put out five pounds of a 20% nitrogen fertilizer every other month on 1,000 square feet of turf.

Proper Mowing

Mowing your lawn regularly and at the correct height is important. Cutting off no more than the top one-third of the grass blade at any one time is important for maintaining a healthy lawn. As a general rule, mow St. Augustine as high as your mower will allow, which is usually about 3 inches. Mow it once a week, cutting off one inch each time. Bermuda is generally cut lower, anywhere from a half-inch to 1.5-inches high. Make sure your mower blade is sharp. A sharp blade leaves a lawn green and healthy, while a dull blade can damage your grass. Another great mowing tip is to grass-cycle: leaving your grass clippings on the lawn instead of bagging them and throwing them away. Grass clippings are 75 to 85 percent water. When left on the ground, grass clippings will quickly decompose and create beneficial compost for your lawn. By allowing the clippings to naturally return to your lawn's soil, you often can reduce the need for fertilizer applications by up to 25%. Grass-cycling creates an ecologically balanced environment and saves you time and money.

Leaves

Leaves are an excellent source of nutrients. They contain between 50 and 80 percent of the nutrients a plant extracts from the soil. Small amounts of leaves on your lawn can be mowed and returned to the soil providing valuable organic matter and nutrients. Large amounts of leaves can be raked and used in compost piles for use the following year. Shredded leaves can be used as mulch around trees and shrubs. Visit Aggie Horticulture to read more about the "Don't Bag it, Leave It".

Mulches

In addition to watering and fertilizing, nearly all plants grow better when they have a layer of mulch spread over their roots. Mulch will help protect the root system on cold winter days. Mulch also helps conserve water, prevents soil crusting, suppresses weeds and moderates fluctuations in soil temperature. Moreover, organic mulch provides valuable humus to soil as it is slowly broken down to beneficial microbes. Generally, a 2- to 3-inch layer of mulch placed over the root zone of a plant will provide a noticeable difference in the plant's health. New plants that have mulch applied will establish better and faster. Established plants will show less stress and better growth. Just be sure to pull mulch an inch or two away from the stems of shrubs or from the trunks of trees. If mulch is piled up against trunks or stems, it can trap too much moisture and promote decay along the bark.

There are many types of mulches to choose from. One type: pine straw, comes from several different species of pine trees that drop their leaves (needles or straw) naturally throughout the year. Once the straw drops to the ground, it is baled, without ever cutting down a single tree. Since it is produced naturally, pine straw sometimes is referred to as the "guilt-free" mulch. Each species' of pine straw will have its own unique characteristics, such as needle length, wax content and needle flexibility. The Loblolly species of pine straw, for instance, has a needle length ranging from about six to nine inches, making it easy to apply and shape. Also, the needle size is optimum for allowing the soil to breathe well while allowing excellent water infiltration.

Pine straw bales are usually available in either round or square bales of varying weights and sizes. They are easy to carry and easy to store. Besides being produced naturally, pine straw mulch provides numerous garden and landscape health and beauty advantages. Some of the qualities of pine straw are: Longevity; it doesn't float or wash away and breaks down more slowly, so it doesn't need to be reapplied as frequently. Lightweight: it is easier to handle and lighter per cubic foot than other mulches. One large bale can cover as much area as 30 cubic feet of most mulches!

Soil Health

It doesn't compact and allows for water infiltration. Simple: it is easy to apply; just unroll the bales and scatter by hand. Pest free: it doesn't attract termites. Plant health: it adds organic material and nutrients to soil and reduces weeds. Visually appealing: the uniform color and fine texture of pine straw brings out the color, contrast, and texture of your landscape. Erosion control: you can use it where grass won't grow to hold soil. Great for bird nest: used frequently for bird nests and bird houses. Recycling leaves, mulching, mowing, watering and fertilizing are important practices to consider when preparing your landscape for the coming winter months. All of these qualities not only improve the health of your garden and landscape, but they subsequently improve its overall beauty as well. Most important, your landscape will emerge green and healthy in the spring. Your County AgriLife Extension Service office also can provide excellent tips for your landscape.

This information was provided by Texas Cooperative Extension. For more information, visit Aggie Horticulture to read Landscape Water Conservation

Featured Texas Wildflower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Texas Wildflowers



Blackfoot Daisy, *Melampodium leucanthum*

Size: 1 foot
Blooms: March - November
Perennial, Sunflower Family

Blackfoot daisy is one of the most drought-tolerant plants in Texas. It blooms from spring through summer, on gravelly or rocky solid, in cracks of rocks, and on slopes and ledges. In flower, it looks like a little white bouquet along the roadside. Each branch of the woody stems ends in a single, one-inch flower head, centered with a yellow disk. The seven to thirteen petals are notched at the tips. Look just under each petal to see a small bract, shaped like a foot. These bracts turn black at maturity; thus the common name. The linear leaves of Blackfoot daisies are opposite, narrow and may be slightly lobed. Short, rough hairs coat the leaves and stems.

Controlling Winter Weeds in the Lawn

By Diane Hopkins, Ellis County Master Gardener

Last winter was a good example of heavy rainfall and mild temperatures causing winter weeds. Pre-emptive measures to control and eliminate weeds in the late summer could make all the difference when winter arrives. Many homeowners don't think about weed control until the weather starts to cool, but by then it's too late.

Mid-September is the time to think about applying pre-emergent herbicides to the lawn for winter weed control. The herbicide needs to be applied before the weed seeds begin to germinate. The pre-emergent material won't control weeds if it is applied too late.

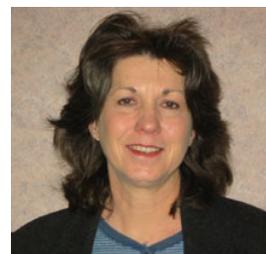
Before purchasing a pre-emergent herbicide, read the label carefully to determine that the material is for the type of grass that is to be treated. Always read the label and apply the pre-emergent as it recommends. Water lawns immediately or at least within a day or two of applying the material to avoid the sunlight breaking it down. A soaking of about a half-inch of water will be necessary.

During a mild winter with rain, it might be necessary to apply the herbicide a second time, in late December or early January.

To maintain a healthy lawn continue regular mowing, irrigation and fertilization. A dense healthy lawn is the best defense against weeds.

Do you have a question for a Master Gardener? Is there a horticulture question that you need answered? You can call the Ellis County Extension office at 972-825-5175 or email at www.ellis-tx@tamu.edu to talk to a Master Gardener.

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin. The Texas A & M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.



Indoor Plants and Flowers Can Help You Feel Good



From the color of our walls, to our clothes, to our cars, color significantly impacts our everyday lives, including our emotional responses. International color expert Leatrice Eiseman believes that certain color combinations; easily expressed in floral arrangements, can stimulate our emotions and enhance our moods. Additionally, scientific research shows that flowers and plants have a beneficial impact on state-of-mind emotions. Rutgers University behavioral studies have proven that flowers provide a simple way to improve emotional health, that the presence of flowers triggers happy emotions, heightens feelings of life satisfaction and affects social behavior in a positive manner.

November Color in The Landscape

November is a great time to evaluate the landscape. Note how the plants have survived the heat of the summer and the dry periods with little or no rainfall. This is also a good year to evaluate the colors of the landscape. The choice plants will have beautiful fall and winter interest as well as the spring and summer foliage and flowers. Among the favorites should be the crape myrtle, wax myrtle, lantana, salvia, live oak, red oak, oleander, roses, day lilies and iris. This is just a few of the many plants that are well suited for Texas landscapes. Check the list of Texas best at www.texassuperstar.com.

The use of color in the landscape needs some consideration and a little preplanning. Red, orange and yellow are considered hot colors. They give the illusion of being closer than they actually are by catching the eye first. These colors create a warm or lively atmosphere and are the best choice for accenting a particular spot. Purple, blue, green or white, on the other hand, give an illusion of being farther away. They also make small areas seem larger by giving the visual appearance of distance. Best use of plants in these colors are for a feeling of tranquility and coolness.

Choices for the winter display of color include some trees and shrubs that are covered with colorful berries or fruit. The yaupon holly and Possumhaw holly look similar in the summer but are very different in the winter. The female of both species provide berries in the winter. The Possumhaw is deciduous while the yaupon is evergreen. The dwarf yaupon holly will not have berries since this variety is always male. These are great accent plants, as well as they provide berries for the birds in the winter.

Contact your local Ellis County Extension Office at 972-923-5175 for volunteer Master Gardener assistance.

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It's Time to Clean Out Nesting Boxes

by Jean Wammack, Ellis County Master Gardener

We have been promoting nest boxes for the songbirds. Now is the time of year to check your boxes. Clean them out; rub a bar of dry Ivory soap inside the box to discourage wasp from building. If a wasp should build inside the box, the birds will depart even leaving eggs in the nest. If a squirrel or wood pecker has enlarged the entrance hole, place a new front on the box lining up the 1-inch hole right over the old hole. We are trying to be better stewards by placing a predator guard under the nesting box on a steel pole. You may purchase them or make the guards from stovepipe or PVC. The guards will prevent snakes, raccoons and squirrels from reaching the eggs or baby birds.



Can you be successful attracting song birds? If you live on acreage, you may be able to attract song birds, wrens, titmouse, chickadees and bluebirds by adding nesting boxes. My special interest is the eastern bluebird; a shy member of the thrush family. Nesting pairs will readily accept man-made boxes. Buy or make a box that opens from the side of front so it is easily monitored and cleaned. Boxes should be placed in an open field on a steel post about 5 feet above the ground and facing a tree within 50 feet. The tree will provide a perch for the young birds as they begin to fly. Boxes should be placed well away from buildings and deep shade. It is helpful if water is in the area. If possible, ad a bird bath. The bluebird's diet is insects, especially grasshoppers! They add berries to their diet in the winter. Pokeberry, grapes, French Mulberry, hackberry, Texas persimmon, sumac, pyracanthas and viburnum supply food for the bluebird.

For Sale - Wildflower seeds and seedling trees

The Ellis-Prairie Soil and Water Conversation District is offering its annual wildflower seed and seedling tree program.

With the wildflower seeds, two mixes and bluebonnets are available in 1-pound packages.

"These 1-pound packages make excellent Christmas gifts," a spokesman said. With the seedling tree program, several evergreen and hardwood species are available for conservation plantings.

For more information, contact the district office 1822 FM 66, Suite 102, Waxahachie, or call 972-937-2600, ext. 3.



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a Fall Tree Appreciation Walk to help you appreciate their beauty and grandeur of these giant plants. And since the walk is in November, you will see leaves in their fall color. Jim will also tell you why the leaves turn color and point out birds, animals, butterflies along the way. All ages are welcome. .

Tuesday, November 4 et al 7:30 - 9:30 a.m. "Take a Hike", Fall Migrant Bird Census continues. * Dates: **Tuesdays & Thursdays November 4, 6, 11, 13, 18, 20, 25 and Saturday, Nov. 15** - Join Dr. Marcy Brown Marsden for a second round of bird censusing this year. The first round was this spring and timed to detect Black-capped Vireos at the preserve. This fall, we will continue to look for rare species, but also work toward understanding what species use the preserve as a migratory stop-over, and which stick around for the winter. RSVP: Please contact Marcy at biomarcy@winwaed.com or 214-492-9409 the day before you plan to participate in case of rain or other postponement.

Saturday, November 15 9:00 - noon - Conservation in Action Workday

Description: Come and join in the fun as we work in the butterfly garden and on the trails, and perform other chores. Water and snacks will be provided. Wear sturdy boots or shoes with good ankle support, bug and sun protection, and bring gloves if you have them though we will also have some available. Bring a friend! Information and to tell us you are coming - even if it is for just part of the morning: volunteers@audubondallas.org or 972-709-7784

Saturday, November 1st - Christmas Workshop, PART 1. Join us and have a merry time! You'll learn to make simple crafts, enjoy great lectures and find yourself in the Christmas spirit...there will also be a Christmas store. Presented by Garden Inspirations, Donelle Simmons, 214-566-6862. For more info go to www.gardeninspirations-tx.com or email duchess@gardeninspirations-tx.com. \$95.00 including a box lunch.

Tuesday, November 11, 7:00 p.m., Green Thumb Organic Club, meeting at The Greenery - Public welcome. Program is "Wildlife in Your Backyard", presented by Judy Fender

Sunday, December 7th - Christmas Workshop, PART 2. Make a Holiday Wreath, soy candle class, Christmas stockings and gift wrap, Holiday Baking ideas, Table ideas centerpieces, outdoor ideas, "Christmas all around". \$95.00 including a Christmas Brunch. Part 2 will be \$85.00 if you sign up for Part 1 and 2 at the same time. See contact info above.

Featured Flowers of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Hyacinth Bean

Lablab purpureus

H yacinth bean is a beautiful, easy to grow ornamental vine. After the danger of frost has passed and the soil has warmed, the large seeds, which resemble an Oreo cookie (dark sides with a white middle), can be stuck in the soil and watered. Then all that's left is to stand back and watch 'em grow.

Lablab quickly creates a lush screen of dark green leaves up to eight to twelve feet tall, and before long, beautiful pea-like purple flowers appear. But wait, that's not end of the story; really, it's the purple seed pods that follow the blooms that steal the show. The plant serves double-duty as an edible and ornamental. The leaves can be eaten raw or cooked, and the beans are edible if cooked properly. However the raw beans are poisonous, so take care when children or unattended and curious pets are present in your garden.

Type of plant: Annuals, Vines and Climbers
Bloom color: Purple
Bloom time of year: Mid Summer, Late Summer/Early Fall, Mid Fall
Sun requirements: Full Sun
Cold hardiness: Not Applicable
Spacing: 9-12 in.



Faassen's Catmint 'Walker's Low'

Nepeta x faassenii

This catmint was recently honored by the Perennial Plant Association as Perennial of the Year for 2007. Its name hints it is a dwarf variety, but it is only slightly more compact than other catmints; however, it is much less floppy than many other catmints. Catmints are drought-tolerant, and, as members of the mint family, they do tend to creep if not kept in check.

The spikes of blue-violet flowers hover above the silvery gray foliage beckon to passing bees, which can't seem to resist the blooms. The foliage is fragrant and can be used for potpourri, unless you have cats about. Like the bees to the flowers, most cats can't resist the intoxicating scent of catmint.

There are some medicinal effects that humans can derive from the leaves which have been used to treat colic, dyspepsia, and the common cold, among other ailments. Many of the supposed treatments have been dismissed although its astringency and antioxidant effects are documented.

Type of plant: Herbs, Perennials
Bloom color: Blue-Violet
Bloom time of year: Late Spring/Early Summer, Mid Summer, Late Summer/
Early Fall, Mid Fall
Sun requirements: Full Sun, Sun to Partial Shade
Cold hardiness: Zone 3a to Zone 8b
Height: 18-24 in., 24-36 in.
Spacing: 24-36 in.

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

By Rosemary Morgeson, Ellis County Master Gardener



- With fall steadily approaching us, it's a great time to work some organic matter into your compost bins. From the kitchen: coffee and tea grounds, eggshells, vegetable and fruit trimmings are great! From the landscape: leaves, grass clippings, brush trimmings, old plant material and weeds! Never use fatty foods, bones, dog or cat fecal or litter box matter!
- Each day, or every other day, you will be taking some type of material out to the compost pile! Most of the everyday material comes from the kitchen and are high nitrogen materials... At least once a week turn your compost pile and water.
- Are you wondering how long before the compost is ready? Hot and fast composting is done by building and actively mixing a pile to produce disease-killing temperatures and can yield finished compost in three to four months. Cool and easy composting is adding materials gradually to a bin or pile and allowing them to compost slowly.
- Compost contributes nutrients and beneficial life to the soil, improves soil structure and better moisture retention, this means less watering!
- Are you looking for plants that add winter color and food for the birds in your landscape? Try hollies, nandinas, pyracanthas and mahonias.
- Bulbs to get planted now for spring blooms are daffodils, and grape hyacinths!
- Remember if you are planting tulips they must be chilled prior to planting for about 45 days at 45 degrees, plant them towards the end of December.
- Clean up your perennial gardens by removing dead stubble of seed heads and stem stalks; toss them into your compost bins. Prune out dead or damaged branches early this month while you can distinguish them for living limbs.
- If you are planning to over-winter your tender plants, the garage can be a good location. A sunny window or just inside your garage door are good spots for the big ones. When the days are warm, open your garage doors for midday sun on your plants

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and water them when the soil is somewhat dry.

- Did you know that fall is the best time to plant trees and shrubs? The cooler nights prevent the roots from stress and get established before the heat of the approaching summer. Plant fruit and pecan trees as soon as they are available in the nurseries. Contact the Master Gardeners for a list of hardy trees for our area.
- Transplant established trees, shrubs and also native plants into your landscape anytime after the first hard freeze. It's best to keep the soil intact around their root systems during the digging.
- If you need to do some reshaping of shrubs, it is better to wait till late January or February.
- Remember that it is still important to water your landscape during the upcoming winter months. Watering should be done morning or mid-afternoon. Evening watering can cause brown patch in your St. Augustine, which will turn your grass yellow and then brown.
- Now is a great time to replace your summer annuals with pansies, pinks, snapdragons, ornamental cabbage, kale and hardy cyclamen while the weather is cooling off. Fertilize your winter color beds with a balanced, water-soluble plant food with each watering.
- Wanting to save those beautiful summer blooming tropicals? Prune bougainvilleas and tropical hibiscus before bringing them indoors for the winter. Also check them out for crickets and roaches hiding in the water trays. Give them good sunlight and keep them well watered.
- Get a jump on spring by having your garden tools sharpened and oiled. Run all the gasoline-powered tools dry before storing for the winter. Shop the nurseries for close outs on tools and pots!

Do you have gardening questions? Contact the Ellis County Master Gardeners at 972-825-5175 or check us out on the web at www.ecmga.com.