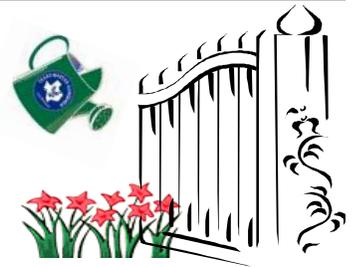




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VI, Issue 9

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

October, 2012

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



This will be my last time to do the E-Garden newsletter. 6 1/2 years ago, I created the E-Garden newsletter. That's a long time; it is time to leave it in the capable hands of my co-editor of 1 1/2 years; Susan Clark. Susan does a wonderful job; she has taught me a lot of things to make the newsletter more beautiful that I didn't know how to do.

I will continue to stay in the scheme of things in the event that Susan needs me to fill in for her if she can't do it one month for one reason or another.

I will continue to be very active within the Master Gardeners; listen to us on KBEC on Saturday mornings at 9am. My husband, James and I will be on this Saturday, October 6.

It has been a pleasure. Melinda Kocian



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

What's Happening in October

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!!!**

Note: New Information:

**The Farmer's Market will be running into mid-December!
Take advantage of wonderful fall vegetable, pumpkins, etc.!**

Now through October 20 - DFW Truck Farm will be behind the Discovery Gardens at the Texas State Fair. Admission is \$3.00. For further information please contact Donnell at duchess@gardeninspirations-tx.com

The North Texas Master Naturalist chapter designed, built and maintains a **Wildscape garden** adjacent to the Museum of Nature and Science at Dallas Fair Park.

Thursday, Oct. 4, 9am-9pm, Dogwood Canyon 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. Located at 1206 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill, south of Cedar Hill State Park Entrance. Visit <http://tx.audubon.org/dogwood.html>.

Wednesday, 9am to 2pm, October 10 - Arboretum....Japanese Maple Symposium, sponsored by Chambersville Tree Farm. \$40 or \$36 for Members. Questions can be directed to education@dallasarboretum.org or 214-515-6540.

Saturday, October 13, 9-12pm. Cedar Ridge Preserve Conservation in Action work-day. Wear sturdy boots or shoes with good ankle support and bring gloves. And bring a

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Vegetable Garden

The first vegetable gardens were created when nomadic tribes of early homo-sapiens discovered they could settle down and grow food instead of foraging. However, sometime in the 17th century the vegetable gardens were grown for practicality.

Creating your own vegetable garden in Ellis County poses its own unique opportunities and a great place to start is to view the article at the front of this calendar then contact the county extension office to get the list of recommended varieties for Ellis County. The Master Gardeners take out joy in your success, that's why we're here!



It's October....What Needs to be Done?

Planting

- Plant vines and ground covers from containers.
- Put in cool-season annuals such as pansies, Johnny-Jump-Ups, violas, dianthus, snapdragons, ornamental kale/cabbage and alyssum. Mix in some blood meal with the amended soil.
- Plant leeks (elephant garlic), garlic from cloves, and onions from sets or bulbs in soil enriched with organic matter.
- Daffodils and other spring-flowering bulbs such as Dutch iris, grape hyacinth, rain lilies, and ranunculus can be put in the ground now. Some varieties of daffodils return each year. Other bulbs should be considered as annuals in our area and new bulbs planted each year. Daffodil varieties for this area include 'Fortune', 'Falconet,' 'Ice Follies,' 'Thalia,' and 'Carlton.'
- Wait until December to plant tulips and hyacinths.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- Fertilize lawns the first week of the month if it was not done in September.
- Deadhead fall-blooming annuals and perennials. They will look better and flower longer.
- Remove annuals that have completed their life cycle. Leave seed pods of those you want to reseed next year (for example, castor bean, larkspur, four o'clocks and cosmos).
- Continue to feed tropical plants in containers and hanging baskets with a water-soluble fertilizer. Lightly prune vigorous shrubs to maintain shape and size. Leave the clippings on the ground as mulch.

Garden Watch

- Watch for signs of brown-patch fungus on St. Augustine lawns. Treat with an appropriate fungicide.
- To prevent potential insect and disease next year, remove and toss all dead vegetable plants.
- Insects can be a problem if the weather stays hot. Look for whiteflies, aphids, spider mites and scale. If treatment is necessary, contact a Master Gardener at your Texas AgriLife Extension Service or a nursery professional.

Odds and Ends

- Save seeds from annuals and perennial that you want to plant next year, or take cuttings.
- Seeds from hybrid plants may not produce the same plant. It is best to take cuttings of these plants.
- Chill tulip and hyacinth bulbs in the bottom of the refrigerator for 60 days before planting in December.
- Turn the compost pile and keep it moist.



Lawn & Garden Expo

Ellis County Master Gardener

Save The Date!

Saturday, March 16, 2012

Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



October - Cool Season Herbs

The warm days and cool nights of October are finally here and so is the perfect time to clean up your garden and plant some cool weather herbs. First pull up all those dead plants and even the sad looking ones that suffered through our merciless hot summer and send them to the compost heap. Harvest the oreganos, mints, lemon balm, lemon verbena and other herbaceous perennials now to enjoy this winter. Always harvest on a dry day, in the early morning while their oils are at a peak. Cut small bundles and tie with kitchen string or a rubber band. Hang in a dark, well ventilated area and allow to dry to a crisp state. Strip the leaves from their woody stems and place in glass containers in a dark cabinet or pantry. Check after a few days to be sure no moisture or mildew has formed.



If your garden is anything like mine, the Mexican Mint Marigold (*Tagetes lucida*) is blooming or

about to bloom. Its bright gold flowers are one of the last to bloom in the fall. This native plant is a wonderful addition to the Texas garden. It is an excellent substitute for French tarragon which seldom grows in our climate. The leaves are often used for teas, green salads, and with fish and poultry.

Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) should be showing signs of flowering and will continue to bloom all winter. Be sure to

take sprigs into your home and enjoy its piney aroma during the holiday season. More than a soup or stew plant this hardy herb is believed to stimulate the brain and aid memory. It is a symbol of fidelity for lovers and is often included in wedding bouquets and bridal wreaths. Likewise, as



the herb of remembrance, rosemary is frequently a part of funeral services with

branches be offered to those attending. As late as World War II the custom of burning rosemary and juniper berries in a sick room was still in practice.

My garlic chives (*Allium tuberosum*) are still producing white blossoms, which are enjoyed by the desperate bees trying to capture the last bit of nectar. This is an excellent herb to enjoy chopped in butter, sour cream, and sprinkled over salads, eggs and sauces.



Borage (*Borago officinalis*) has sprouted from seeds scattered in the spring. Its new leaves add a delicate cucumber taste to green salads. The beautiful sky blue blossoms are star shaped and make a

lovely garnish in salads, desserts and drinks.



Sage (*Salvia officinalis*) is the backbone of one of my herb beds and one of my husband, John's, favorite

herbs, since turkey and sage stuffing is his all time favorite food. Although you would expect any of the salvias to thrive in the Texas heat, mine are quite unhappy in our high humidity, high heat summers. Now that cooler weather is here I will prune them back and allow them to revive. The stems will immediately add new shoots and fill out to a thick bush. In the spring they will reward me, the butterflies and hummingbirds with glorious spikes of blue flowers.

Pineapple sage (*S. elegans*) has beautiful scarlet red flowers in the fall. It smells and tastes like pineapple and can be used to flavor desserts and beverages.



So there is no time like October to get out into the herb garden and enjoy. There is lots to be done: preparing the soil for next spring's planting, cleaning up and refreshing your perennials, and just enjoying the colors, flavors and aromas of the fall garden.



Fall Blooms for Butterflies

By Shirley Campbell
Ellis County Master Gardener

Mums are in the nurseries signaling the return of fall and cooler weather. Beyond mums, though, there are other great bloomers that save their best for last and not only extend the flowering season but also play an important role for another garden beauty -- butterflies. It is important to remember that they still have a very strong need for nectar sources in the fall. Monarchs, for example, migrate thousands of miles and need good nectar sources along the way to successfully arrive at their over-wintering site in Mexico.



Keep in mind that even non-migratory butterflies will also need nourishment. Other butterfly species that don't migrate will over-winter in various life stages. Some over-winter as eggs and the adults need that extra nutritional boost at the end of the season to lay large numbers of healthy eggs that can withstand the winter. By planting late-blooming species or even a second round of summer nectar species in our gardens, we can provide this boost for these butterflies.

While many flowers produce nectar -- called the drink of the Greek gods -- some do a better job than others at attracting butterflies. Orange, red, purple, yellow, and pink flowers readily attract nectar-seeking butterflies, especially short-tube flowers in a cluster -- like verbena or phlox -- where it is an easy job to reach the nectar. Gardeners delight in large-size blooms but big is not always better when it comes to butterflies.

Equally important when planting for butterflies is the number of plants available. Butterflies prefer a healthy group of one type of flower where they can linger over a meal rather than going from one solitary plant to another scattered throughout the garden.

Fortunately, there are many choices of fall blooms that will meet the needs of butterflies.

Butterflies love the eupatoriums and if you put several in your garden, you can have blooms from summer to fall. The late-flowering boneset or white mist flower (*Eupatorium havanense*) is a prolific fall bloomer that puts on a show for four weeks or more and fairly buzzes with activity as butterflies, bees, wasps, and a myriad of other tiny, nectar-seeding insects readily visit the white fuzzy flowers. Numerous ageratum-like flower clusters cover the shrub with clouds of white.



For the smaller butterflies, another excellent autumn nectar source is a perennial commonly called frostweed (*Verbesina virginica*). Frostweed blooms from August to November with white terminal clusters. While it is not the showiest flower in the world, the butterflies love it and flock to its sweet-smelling blooms. Choose a sunny to semi-shaded spot for frostweed but be forewarned that it can be invasive as it quickly spreads by runners and seeds.

Butterflies love the autumn blooming salvias and these bloom until the first hard freeze. Species include *Salvia coccinea*, Mexican bush sage (*S. leucantha*), *S. x Indigo Spires*, Black and Blue (*S. guarantica*), and Autumn sage (*S. greggii*). Only butterflies with long proboscis -- like swallowtails and fritillaries -- can use these tubular-shaped flowers where the nectar is deep inside the bloom.

Planted in full sun, Dark Night bluebeard (*Caryopteris x clandonensis*) is a deciduous shrub with rewarding fall clusters of gorgeous, deep blue, nectar-rich flowers set off by silvery green foliage. Once established, Dark Night is drought tolerant and is visited by numerous bees and butterflies.

A big cluster of tiny flowers atop the succulent leaves of sedums (*Sedum spectabile*) lures butterflies to sit for a spell. Easy to grow, sedums prefer infertile, gravelly soil in a sunny spot with good drainage and are drought tolerant, once established. Many species are available.



Asters (*Asters.spp*) with shades of pink and purple, daisy-like blooms are a welcome color in the fall landscape and a wonderful plant for butterflies.

The butterflies, along with hummingbirds, adore Mexican oregano (*Poliomintha longiflora*) as long as it is blooming, which in Texas is usually to the end of October.

No matter which fall bloomers you chose for your garden, won't you agree that the sight of a crowd of monarchs hungrily nectaring on a big stand of frostweed brings joy to the heart.

"Happiness if like a butterfly, the more you chase it, the more it will elude you; but if you turn your attention to other things, it comes and softly sits on your shoulder." *Nathaniel Hawthorn*

Vegetable Gardening

By Susan Norvell
Ellis County Master Gardener



Sweet for Sweet Potatoes

One vegetable that I find most North Texas vegetable gardeners don't often grow is the sweet potato. Not a fan of white potatoes and a lover of the sweets, several years ago I decided to give them a try. I'd like to share my experiences with you and perhaps inspire you to give them a try too!

But first a little sweet potato history – Columbus discovered sweet potatoes on one of his voyages to the West Indies. Later explorers found sweet potatoes growing in much of Central and South America. Historians feel that sweet potatoes arrived in the United States as a result of trading between the settlers and West Indians. Today there is some confusion as to what is a sweet potato and what is a yam. There is a true yam but it's of African origin and is not related to the sweet potato and is almost never sold in American markets. The confusion started when early slaves mistook the sweet potato for a yam because the two crops were grown and used in a similar manner. It wasn't long before sweet potatoes were commonly referred to as yams, especially in the South.

In my opinion, you need a minimum of three things to grow sweet potatoes – space, loose, well drained soil, and patience. Let's discuss the soil requirements and planting/space requirements first. According to the "experts" sandy loam is the best soil type for sweet potatoes with a pH between 5.5 and 6.5; certainly not what we have here in North Texas. Sweet potatoes don't require high levels of organic matter in the soil so if you have been growing vegetables in your garden for a

while, the organic matter should be sufficient without adding more. Loose, well drained soil is an absolute must for growing sweet potatoes. If your soil is rock hard, 6 inches from the surface (not uncommon here in North Texas) you are going to need to till it to a depth of at least 12 inches. Planting in raised beds or furrows about 12-15 inches high is recommended. I consider that ideal. My garden is slightly raised but I don't plant my slips in furrows but directly into the ground and I've grown decent sweet potatoes. Average amounts of fertilizer are required – more is not better here.

Sweet potatoes are planted from slips not eyes as with white potatoes. When first getting started you will need to order your slips and plant them immediately upon their arrival or put them in a glass of water. The slip is actually the sprouting portion of the potato in your pantry but don't use these as they have most likely been treated to retard sprouting. Plant the slips when all danger of any frosty weather is past and the soil temperature, 2 inches below the surface, is 60°F degrees. These conditions generally occur in May in this area. **Tip:** Write down the date that you planted your slips. Plant your slips about 12 inches apart. Keep the young plants well watered at first but as they begin to grow they are actually reasonably drought tolerant. Use average amounts of fertilizer. Harvest when the soil is dry and easy to dig. I recommend hand digging or using a shovel as a spading fork will damage the potatoes.

Now on to one of the other requirements I mentioned earlier: sweet potatoes require a lot of space as the vines grow quickly and

very vigorously. You should probably allow more space than you would think you would need. My first year, I was amazed at how big the vines got. If you only have a small garden, this may not be the vegetable for you.

And finally I mentioned patience – both a blessing and a curse. Depending on the variety you choose, it will take 90 to 110 days from the time you plant your slips until your potatoes are ready to dig. Write down the date you planted your potatoes and the variety's days to harvest. If you are a lazy gardener or want to take a mid-summer vacation, then the wait isn't a problem. If you like to see "action" in your garden, this may not be the crop for you. At the appropriate date, cut back the vines of a test plant and dig up the potatoes. If you are satisfied with the size, cut back all the vines and harvest your potatoes. After digging, don't wash the dirt off but lay them out to dry in a protected area (away from the family dog) for 3 or 4 hours. After they have dried store them in newspaper lined containers in a well ventilated area for about 2 weeks to "cure" them. Once cured, they will keep for about 3 months.



Light House for Learning

(With the Ellis County Master Gardeners)

or reservations, call Melissa Cobb at (972) 923-4631

Register online at http://www.wisd.org/default.aspx?name=CO_LighthouseforLearning

Monday, September 24, 6:00—7:30 Basics of Plant Propagation. Learn how to start plants from seeds, from cuttings, or from simple plant division. Learn how to propagate your favorite rose bushes. Learn how to have more of the plants that you love for your garden and landscape at a fraction of the cost of purchasing them in a nursery. **Instructors:** Robert Shugart & Susan Norvell, Cost: \$12.00

Monday, October 1, 6:00—7:30 Herbs, From the Garden to the Kitchen. Which herbs do best in North Texas? What are some new varieties and how can I use them? How do I start an herb garden? What is the best way to preserve my fresh herbs to enjoy their flavors all winter? If you are interested in growing and using herbs, join us for an evening of aromas, flavors, and unique ways to enjoy herbs. You will learn to make herbal blends, compound butters, party dips, and more. Sample some yummy treats, such as lavender flavored strawberry jam, rose petal vinegar, and dilly jelly. You may even go home with some harvested herbs from the instructor's garden. **Instructor:** Arlene Hamilton, Cost: \$12.00

Monday, October 15, 6:00—7:30 Backyard Composting. Wondering what to do with all those leaves and grass clippings? Don't bag them! Fall is the perfect time to start a backyard compost pile and have rich organic matter for your garden and landscape next spring. Come learn how to get started. **Instructor:** Ginger Cole, Cost: \$12.00

Monday, October 22, 6:00—7:30 Turf Grasses for Ellis County. Do you have questions about your grass and how to care for it year round? This class will cover the following topics: turf grass selections for Ellis Co., preparing the soil for planting, spring and summer lawn care, proper watering in dry times, disease control and weed control in lawns. There will be a question and answer session and handouts will be given on each topic. **Instructor:** Jim Tachias, Cost: \$12.00

Monday, October 29, 6:00—7:30 Tough Texas Plants. In North Texas, we have weather conditions that force us to choose plants that have extra fortitude. We either have too much rain, or no rain at all; and no one can forget about our extreme temperatures and lack of rain last summer. Come see a PowerPoint presentation on selected ornamental plants that have been designated "Flameproof" and have made the "North Texas Winners Circle" in the trial gardens at the Dallas Arboretum. **Instructor:** Maureen Nitkowski, Cost: \$12.00

Monday, December 3, 6:00-7:30, Vermi-Composting. Worm your way into composting by using worms to eat your food scraps! Vermicomposting, or worm composting, is an easy way to recycle your kitchen waste and produce rich compost to use in your garden and house plants. Worms can recycle, or eat, half of their weight per day in food scraps. This class will teach you the basics of vermicomposting. During the class, you will assemble your own worm bin, complete with worms, to take home so you can get started right away. There is a \$12.00 fee payable to the instructor at the beginning of class for supplies. **Instructor:** Susan Clark, Cost: \$12.00 + \$12.00 supply fee.

ECMGA Amateur Photo Contest



The Ellis County Master Gardener Association announces its annual photo contest is under way beginning September 1, 2012.

Last date for submissions is March 1, 2013.

Grab your cameras and get out in your yard, garden, and Ellis County and take your best shot! **You can submit up to five photos**, so you may want to submit photos from different seasons, as well as, your personal favorite. Vegetables and summer garden pictures are great, but don't forget to include beautiful fall and winter photos, too. Please **do not include** people in your photos.

For contest details and submission of entries, go to **Photo Contest** at www.ecmga.com. There is **no cost to enter** the contest, and photographers can enter up to **five photographs per category**. Prizes will be awarded to first, second, and third place in each of two categories: "single specimen" and "in the garden". Each winner will receive a gift certificate from one of the following businesses: Roland's Nursery or The Greenery in Waxahachie or EarthTones Greenery in Midlothian.

October 2012—Time to Plant Trees

By Ginger Cole, Ellis County Master Gardener



Fall is a great time to get outside and enjoy the great weather and your yard. It's also a great time to assess what is working in your landscape and what is not. Sometimes it takes a while for the long-term damage of a drought, in particular our drought of 2011, to show up. Trees fall into the category of showing their drought damage over time. It is heart wrenching to have to remove a dead tree, but sometimes it becomes necessary. Weather you are planting a new landscape or doing damage control on existing landscape, fall is a great time to plant a new tree. For long-term success and enjoyment, take some time to select the right tree for the right space.

Texas A & M has some really cool tools available online for your use. I always learn something new when I volunteer to write an article for our Master Gardener's Newsletter. This is no exception. When I went back to revisit the online Tree Planting Guide, by Texas A&M Forest Service, I was really impressed with some of the features I had missed or had been recently added. I would highly recommend you take the time to visit their online resources at <http://texastreeplanting.tamu.edu/index.html>.

Express Tree Selector, the quickest way to find the best tree(s) for your yard. I used this a couple of years ago and found the tree of my dreams. Who would have "thunk" it? I went on line and selected Ellis County as my location. I wanted a large tree. It gave me four recommended large trees for Ellis County: Bur Oak; Cedar Elm; Chinquapin Oak and Italian Stone Pine. Since I have my own further personal criteria of including something edible in my landscape I knew the Italian Stone Pine was the tree for me. Stone Pines are the trees from which pine nuts are harvested.

I set about on my quest for some Italian Stone Pines during the spring of 2011 (soon to be a record drought year). After a diligent phone search of nurseries in Ellis, Dallas and Tarrant Counties I found two Italian Stone Pines were available at a nursery in Arlington. They were on sale for half price because they had been hanging around and were past their prime. I paid for them over the phone and drove to pick up my prized new Italian Stone Pines. When I arrived and saw my new prizes, I had to laugh at myself. I already had two of these trees at home in pots flanking my front door. I had purchased them as living Christmas trees a couple of years ago. If you think you would like to add some Italian Stone Pines to your landscape, start looking for them now. They will be cleverly disguised in local nurseries as living Christmas trees with the Latin name *Pinus Pinea*. It seems that in their juvenile state they look like little Christmas trees and are sold as such. As they mature they get their adult more traditional looking pine needles. As they grow the lower limbs will drop off and they will take on their "umbrella" appearance. Think umbrella shaped pine trees; the quintessential pine tree of the Amalfi Coast.

I planted all four of my Italian Stone Pines in the spring of 2011. Not only did they survive the drought they thrived. With initial watering when they were planted and minimal water during their first year they are now healthy, putting on adult foliage they have more than doubled in size. Thank you TAMU tree selector for recommending a tree that takes Texas heat, drought and survives salty alkaline water, white rock and clay soil.

In addition to the Express Tree Selector, TAMU has a Custom Tree Selector, which customizes your search to find the best tree(s) for your yard. This is a pretty cool tool, but the REALLY cool things are the Tree Planting Tools: Planting Around Your House; How Big Will Your Tree Grow (very useful if you want to put the right size plant in a space and not have to prune it continually); Planning For Your Available Free Space; Avoiding Problems With Your Tree; Planting Near Utility Lines (my personal favorite and think it should be against the law to put the wrong plant under a power line); How To Select A Tree At A Nursery (YES! It is important to pick the right plant at the get go. Who wants to figure out in 5 years this is not the plant you wanted); The Best Way To Plant Your Tree; Pruning Your Young Tree; Pruning A Large Limb.

Over two centuries of Texas A&M Forest Service forester's tree planting knowledge was used to help decide which trees will grow best in your yard. If you are planning on adding a new tree to your landscape, you will be doing yourself a favor by taking the time to consider the reliable "tree picker" advice online at your fingertips. If you do not have Internet access, contact the Ellis County Master Gardeners through the Agrilife Extension Office at (972) 825-5175. We'll be happy to assist you in making research based decisions that will work for you.



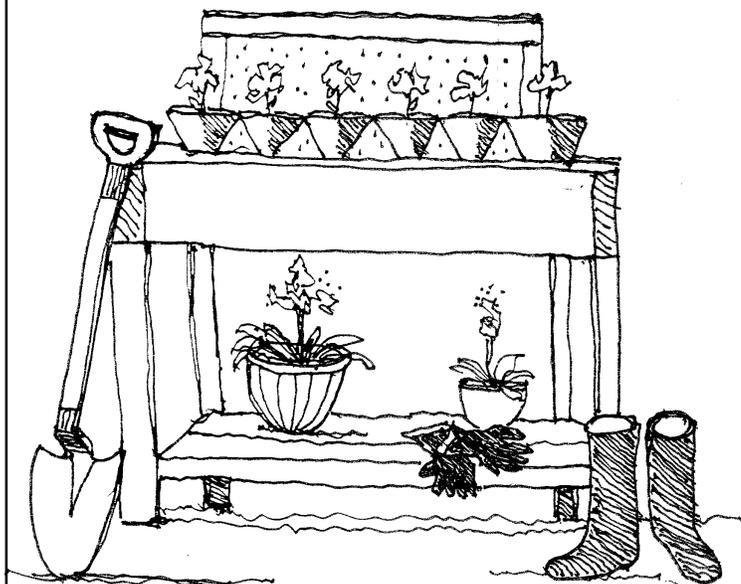
Book Selection of the Month



TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

LAWN, GARDEN AND LANDSCAPE MANUAL

Prepared by the Ellis County, Texas
Master Gardener Association



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
701 S I-35E, Suite 3, Waxahachie, TX 75165
972-825-5175

The 2nd printing of the Landscape Manual is complete, and we have 100 new copies! You will see a couple of changes. The Master Gardener logo on the cover is in color, and the new Texas A&M AgriLife Extension logo has been inserted onto the cover. The inside of the manual is the same as before, except for some minor updates to some diagnostic and test forms from A&M. The price of the manual is now \$10 and available at the Extension Office and the Farmer's Market..

This 196 page manual was prepared by the Ellis County Master Gardener Association. An earlier version of the manual was used as a guide and updated and expanded. Many of the articles are specific to Ellis County but most are relevant to all of Texas.

Betty Reuscher designed the cover and all the chapter headers. Many articles were written by Ellis County Master Gardeners. Others were downloaded from the TAMU website in pdf form, changed to Word documents and inserted into the manual. A committee decided which articles to use.

Chapters include Landscape Principles, Earth-kind®, Turf, Trees and Shrubs, Annuals, Perennials and Ornamental Grasses, Vegetables and Herb Gardening, Container Gardening, Diagnostic Testing and Pest Management and Pesticide Safety.

The manual is an excellent gift for friends and family. If you have not seen it yet, look for it the next time you visit the Extension Office.

Garden Checklist for October

By Gail Haynes,
Ellis County Master Gardener



- ◆ Carefully harvest material for dried arrangements at this time. Choose cockscomb, flowering Artemisia, already mature okra pods, flowering oregano stalks and others to enhance fall and winter bouquets.
- ◆ October through November is an excellent time to purchase bulbs while you still have a good selection in the garden center. They may be planted at any time with the exception of tulips and hyacinths.
- ◆ Chill tulip and hyacinth bulbs in the refrigerator until mid or late December before planting. The lower part of the refrigerator is best. Do not leave bulbs in airtight plastic bags during refrigerated storage.
- ◆ Plant bulbs in well prepared beds so the base of the bulb is at a depth that is three times the diameter of the bulb. In sandy soil, set slightly deeper and in clay soils less deeply.

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

- ◆ Start collecting leaves for the compost pile. Be sure to have extra soil available so that each 6 inch layer of leaves may be covered with several inches of soil. Always wet the layer of leaves thoroughly before adding the soil. Add about one pound of a complete lawn or garden fertilizer to each layer of leaves to provide the necessary nitrogen for decomposition.
- ◆ In addition to bulbs, check your nursery or garden center for started plants of snapdragons, pinks, sweet Williams, poppies, and calendulas. They will usually provide a riot of spring color.
- ◆ Keep Christmas cactus in a sunny spot where night temperatures can be kept below 65 degrees F. Buds will drop if you allow night temperatures to go above 70 degrees F. or if you allow the plant to become excessively dry. They should also be kept in total darkness from 5:00 pm until 8:00 am for about 30 days in October to initiate flower buds.
- ◆ If you have saved seeds of your favorite plants, allow them to become air dry, then place them in an airtight container and store in the refrigerator. Be sure to label each packet carefully. Remember, seed from hybrid plants will seldom resemble the parent plant.
- ◆ Prepare beds for a planting of pansies when they become available at the garden centers. They need a well-drained soil and exposure to at least a half-day of sun. It is best to use started plants, as seeds are difficult to handle.
- ◆ If you are planning to save caladium tubers for another year, dig them in late October, and allow to dry in a well ventilated but shady area. After 7 to 10 days, remove leaves and dirt, then pack in dry peat moss, vermiculite, or similar material for storage. Pack tubers so they do not touch each other. Dust with all-purpose fungicide as you pack. Place container in an area where temperature won't drop below 50 degrees F.
- ◆ If twig girdlers have worked over your trees so that many twigs and branches are dropping, make sure these are collected and destroyed, as the eggs are deposited in that portion of the branch that drops to the ground.
- ◆ There is still time to divide and reset such perennials as phlox, violets, hollyhocks, irises, day lilies, and Shasta daisies.
- ◆ October is a good time to reduce the insect and disease potential in next year's garden. Clean up the garden, removing all annuals that have completed their life cycle. Remove the tops of all herbaceous perennials that have finished flowering, or as soon as frost has killed the leaves.
- ◆ Holly plants with a heavy set of fruit often suffer a fertilizer deficiency. An application of complete fertilizer late this month can be helpful and provide a head start next spring.
- ◆ Don't allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture. Hollies will frequently drop their fruit under drought conditions.
- ◆ Prune out dead and diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning until midwinter. Pruning now may stimulate tender growth prior to frost.

Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Turk's Cap - Mallow Family (Malvaceae)

Malvaviscus arboreus Cav.

Region: 2-7 (Ellis County is Region 4)

Size: 2-4 Feet

Blooms: June - October, Perennial

Turk's cap may be erect or sprawling and is usually widely branched. The shallow-lobed leaves are two to four inches long, about as broad, and are rather velvety underneath. Each bright red flower has five petals, one to two inches long, that remain spirally closed as in a rosebud. From the center of the flower, the stamens form a conspicuous, pollen-producing column that extends an inch or two beyond the petals. While it is still flowering, the plant bears red, berry-like fruits, edible but bland. Turk's cap often forms large colonies on the margins of woods near rivers and streams. It attracts butterflies in great numbers. In native landscaping, it is a useful, dramatic plant for shady or partially shady locations. The Texas variety (*M. arboreus Drummondii*) is so distinctive that many authors consider it a separate species.

What Else Needs to be Done?



By *Preston Blum*
Ellis County Master Gardener

With cooler temperatures, it's time to get outside and "get our hands dirty". But what should we do this in early October?

- It's an ideal time to dig and divide spring-blooming perennials including violets, hardy gladiolas, Shasta daisies, day-lilies, ferns, hostas, coneflowers, ornamental grasses, and mondograss.
- Trees and shrubs planted now will establish well before next summer. Nurseries have plentiful supplies of full-sized vigorous plants; often at discounted prices.
- Elbon cereal rye can be sown into vegetable garden beds known to be infested with nematodes. In January, turn it under as you till your garden soil.
- If you intend to over-seed your lawn with ryegrass, now is the best time. You should use a "perennial" rye. Now is also a good time to remove all seed, leaf, and stem stubble from perennial beds. You may need to cut plants back partially at first, then completely back as first frost nears.
- Patio tropicals that need to spend the winter inside your home can be trimmed to help them fit inside. Maintain their natural form the best you can.
- Turf grasses may be fertilized now with a high nitrogen slow release quality fertilizer.
- Mid-October is a good time to transplant winter and spring color including pansies, pinks, snapdragons, flowering cabbage and kale. You should also apply a complete and balanced water-soluble plant food.
- Brown patch is likely in St. Augustine this month. Rounded areas 15-30 inches in diameter will turn yellow, then brown. Blades will pull loose easily from runners and you'll be able to see the decayed bases of the blades. Apply turf fungicide if you see these symptoms.
- Begin a compost pile with shredded tree leaves collected from the lawn. Please do not burn or send these leaves to the dump.
- By the end of October is the time to apply a specialty azalea/gardenia/camellia food to those acid loving plants.
- You can still plant leeks (elephant garlic), garlic from cloves, and onions from sets in soil enriched with organic material.
- Control insect pests and mites on patio plants before bringing them indoors for the winter.
- Deadhead fall-blooming annuals and perennials. They will look better and flower longer.
- Remove all dead branches and limbs from your shrubs and trees, but leave major pruning until winter.

For more information visit our website at ellismg@ag.tamu.edu or call the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office at 972/825-5175.

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friend! Located at 7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas. For info, call Jim Varnum at (214)543-2055 or email jevar-num@aol.com or visit www.audubondallas.org.

Rain date, Saturday 13: Progressive Fall Garden Tea Tour - benefitting the **Green Garden Club** (on behalf of Garden Inspirations). Five beautiful perennial gardens in Waxahachie, Ovilla and Ennis. Three local Chefs, including Chef Kevin Stewart. Tickets are limited....Sign up today! Please visit <http://greengardenclub.org/> for more information, the menu and to register.

Friday/Saturday, October 12-13 - EarthTones Greenery, Annual Anniversary Sale. For further information call 972-723-0702.

October 14-20 - To mark the 4th Annual Native Plant Week, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center of the University of Texas at Austin, the National Wildlife Federation, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, San Antonio Botanical Garden, KLRU-TV and the City of Austin and its Grow Green program join the Native Plant Society of Texas to encourage the public to learn more about our amazing Texas native plants. Take part by attending one of the many walks and talks around the state. Visit <http://txnativeplantweek.wordpress.com/> and click on **Regional Events** to see a list of events in your neighborhood.

Saturday/Sunday, 9am October 26 and 27 - The Greenery, Fall Auction

Saturday, October 27 - EarthTones Greenery, Fall Auction

November 19 - EarthTones Greenery - Christmas trees will be arriving.

Monday, October 22, 7pm. - Indian Trails Master Naturalists presents "The Beneficial Bat". Rebecca Schumacher, a Certified Texas Master Naturalists will speak and answer questions. **There will be NO live bats at this presentation.** Free and open to the public, the business meeting begins at 6pm and the program begins at 7pm.. The location is in the banquet hall of the First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie.



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