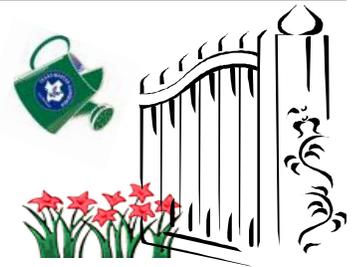




# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume IV, Issue 9

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

October, 2010

Welcome to the Ellis County Master Gardener's **E-Gardening** newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to give you a month by month agenda of what you should be doing to your landscape. We will be featuring horticulture articles that we hope you will find interesting, important dates where you can find the Master Gardeners speaking, demonstrating and passing out information relative to your garden. If you would like to receive this newsletter monthly via your email address, log onto our website [www.ECMGA.com](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

## What's Happening in September

**Now through November 14, 9am - 5:00 pm daily — Autumn at the Arboretum.** The annual fall festival featuring all-new Storybook Pumpkin Village. 66-acre garden filled with 40,000+ decorative pumpkins and gourds, more than 150,000 colorful fall plants and flowers; chrysanthemums, salvia, coleus, ornamental grasses and impatiens. For more info: 214-515-6500 or [www.dallasarboretum.org](http://www.dallasarboretum.org).

**Saturday, September 25, 9 to noon** ...The **Downtown Farmer's Market is hosting a Kids Day!** The 100 block of E. Franklin St. will be closed. There will be a bounce house, a small water slide, a petting zoo, pony rides, a balloon twister, a face painter and the Lions Club concessions trailer will be on that street.

### Garden Inspirations

**8:00 am, Saturday's - "Classes" at the Waxahachie Farmer's Market.....\$10.00 each** (last booth, south side of courthouse; left side of street)

September 25 "Organic Gardening by Marilyn Simmons  
October 2 "2011 VIP sign up and info meeting

For more info, contact Marilyn Simmons at 214-497-3918, [marilyn@gardeninspirations-tx.com](mailto:marilyn@gardeninspirations-tx.com)

**Saturday, September 25—10:00am and 1:00pm - Fall Wildflower Walks @ Cedar Ridge Preserve.** Jim Varnum hosts both walks. Adult and children appropriate. Each walk lasts about 2 hours. For more info, call 214-543-2055 or [jevvarnum@aol.com](mailto:jevvarnum@aol.com).

**Saturday, October 2 - Ellis Co. Master Gardener's Annual Iris Giveaway!**

**Thursdays, October 7 - October 28 - 6:00-8:00—"Ag 101" -Designed for New or Small Acreage Landowners—**Join Mark Arnold, County Extension Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources. An experienced instructor, Mark will be covering topics such as soils and soil fertility, soil testing, pasture management, basic livestock productions and pond management. Cost \$21.00.

**Garden Inspirations** - contact Marilyn Simmons for more info and directions: 214-497-3918 or [marilyn@gardeninspirations-tx.com](mailto:marilyn@gardeninspirations-tx.com). All sessions are free!

**Monday, October 18, 7:00 pm, - Gifts from the Garden.** This class was a great success last year. We will bring on the jellies, jams, roasted nuts, breads, etc. There will be products to purchase for Christmas gifts.

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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

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**Master Gardener's Annual Iris Give-Away  
(The iris is the official Waxahachie flower!)  
Saturday, October 2 - Downtown Farmer's Market**

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



### Fall Garden

Photo by Melinda Kocian

*Squashy, zucchini, peas, tomatoes, greens, beets, spinach, lettuces, broccoli, cabbage and peppers are growing in this garden.*

*Whether carrying over spring tomato plants into fall or by planting typical fall crops for the Ellis County area; nothing could be more gratifying than the bounty of homegrown vegetables. They can be canned for use throughout the winter months in recipes such as stews, soups and casseroles. The color, flavor and nutritional value of homegrown vegetables are incomparable. Using EarthKind© techniques, such as drip irrigation and good soil preparation are all excellent examples of sustainable gardening.*

### Planting and Sowing

- Plant cool-season annuals: pansies, violas, dianthus, snapdragons, ornamental kale, cabbage, poppies and Swiss chard.
- In well prepared beds, plant leeks, elephant garlic, garlic, shallots and onions (from bulbs or sets)
- Daffodils can be planted now. Some good varieties for this area are 'Unsurpassable', 'Ice Follies', 'Carlton', 'Thalia' and 'Mount Hood'.

### Pruning and Fertilizing

- Turn the compost pile, add a cup or two of regular lawn fertilizer and keep moist.
- Remove annuals that have completed their life cycle. Leave seed pods of those you want to reseed for next year such as Castor bean, larkspur, coneflower and cosmos.

### Garden Watch

- To prevent potential insect and disease next year, remove and toss all dead vegetable plants in the garden.

### This and That

- Chill tulip and hyacinth bulbs in the refrigerator until mid- to late-December before planting. The lower part of the refrigerator is best. Do not leave bulbs in airtight plastic bags and avoid storing them with fruit.
- There is still time to divide and reset such perennials as phlox, violets, hollyhocks, irises, daylilies and Shasta daisies.

### Tips for October

When possible, use hardscapes and pavers that are eco-friendly and permeable to allow rainwater to infiltrate and storm water to be filtered to reduce pollutants.

A Useful Link for your plant questions:

### TexasA&M Plant Disease Handbook

<http://165.91.154.132/TEXLAB/Index.htm>



### Interested in becoming a 2011 Expo Sponsor Or Expo Exhibitor?

Contact James Kocian at  
[expo.ecmga@yahoo.com](mailto:expo.ecmga@yahoo.com)

**Reserve the date: March 26, 2011!**

## Vegetable Gardening

By Pat Dockins  
Ellis County Master Gardener



### Vegetable Gardening In October

Love reading articles by the renowned vegetable specialist, H. S. Stevens. His articles are so practical and informative. One I read recently gave tips on getting the optimum results from your fall vegetable garden. I'll give you the short version of that article.

**Feed their needs:** Slow-release fertilizers are *not* best for fall feeding; make light applications of high-nitrogen products such as 21-0-0 (ammonium sulfate) or a 3-1-2 formula lawn fertilizer that is *not* in slow-release form.

**Keep watering:** It is still critical to maintain an even supply of soil moisture. Most vegetables need about an inch of water each week.

**Pick, pick, pick:** Harvest all produce as soon as it's ready to eat. The more you pick, the more the plants will produce.

**Watch out for bugs:** Don't let aphids, squash bugs, caterpillars or cucumber beetles get the upper hand. Check your plants often. If you are uncertain about the safest, most effective control for the insect you've identified, consult your county Extension office or a professional at your local garden center.

**Give prompt first aid:** Healthy, well-fed plants are less susceptible to fungal diseases than those that are weak and undernourished. When any of the below symptoms appear, treat plants promptly with an approved fungicide. Check the label to be certain that the type of plant you're treating is listed on it, and follow all label directions.

**Late blight:** Lesions produced on the leaves are at first irregular, rather large, greenish-black, and appear water-soaked. The areas enlarge rapidly and become brown. Under humid conditions they develop a white moldy growth near the margins of the diseased areas on lower surfaces of the leaves. The disease can also spread to the fruit.

**Rust** on green beans is characterized by light, indistinct yellow spots on the upper sides of the leaves and raised, ruptured, reddish-brown lesions on the lower surfaces. A severe infestation can defoliate plants. To avoid spreading the disease, never harvest beans when the foliage is wet.

**Powdery mildew:** A common problem on vine crops, is even more prevalent in fall gardens. It's caused by a fungus that grows on the upper leaf surface, giving it a white, powdery appearance. The disease is most prevalent on cucumbers, squash and cantaloupe.

**Downy mildew:** Can affect cucumbers, squash, broccoli, cabbage and greens. This disease thrives under cool, moist conditions and causes small yellow spots to appear on the upper surfaces of the leaves. A grayish, downy growth develops on the undersides of leaves.

**Preventing frost damage:** Pay close attention to weather forecasts and don't take chances. Remember cold air is heavier than warm air and will settle into low-lying areas. Dry plants can suffer more damage than those with ample supply of moisture. When frost or a light freeze is forecast, be sure your garden's soil is thoroughly moist. Be ready to cover tender plants. You can use commercial type of covers or old sheets, quilts or blankets. Never use only plastic; it will conduct the cold and will damage any leaves it touches. Remove the protective coverings as soon as possible in the morning. Heat buildup from direct sunshine can do serious damage.

**Keep it clean:** As soon as your plants have stopped producing, remove them entirely from the garden. Destructive insects winter over in plant debris, lying in wait for you to set the table for them again next spring.

**FYI:** According to Drs. Jerry Parsons, Roland Roberts and Larry Stein, Texas Agricultural Extension Horticultural Specialists, it's not too late to plant from seed: Carrots, collards, garlic (cloves), Kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard greens, parsley, radishes, spinach, or turnips.

You can still plant from transplants: Brussels sprouts, Kale, and spinach.



## Watch for Armyworms in Pastures and Lawn

By Glen C. Moore

Extension Agent – IPM, Texas AgiLIFE Extension

Scattered outbreaks of fall armyworm have infested Bermuda grass pastures, wheat and lawns in north central Texas. The fall armyworm is often most abundant during August through early November in our area. When present in large numbers, caterpillars can consume a pasture, crop or lawn in a short period of time.

**Eggs.** Eggs are laid in masses of up to 50 eggs on the grass leaves and are difficult to find. The eggs are covered with the grey scales from the moths body, giving the egg mass a fuzzy appearance. Eggs hatch in 2-3 days.

**Caterpillar.** Fall armyworms are green, brown or black. A distinct white line between the eyes forms an inverted Y pattern on the face. There are four black spots aligned in a square on the top of the 8th segment near the back end of the caterpillar. Armyworms are very small at first, cause little plant damage and as a result infestations often go unnoticed. Larvae feed for 2-3 weeks and full grown larvae reach about 1 to 1.5 inches long. Armyworms consume 80% of their total food intake during the last few days of development. Given their immense appetite, great numbers, and marching ability, armyworms can damage entire fields or pastures in a few days. Once the armyworm completes feeding, it tunnels into the soil about an inch and enters the pupal stage.

**Pupa.** The full grown armyworm tunnels into the soil and transforms to the pupae, an inactive, non-feeding stage. In 7-10 days, the moth emerges from the pupa and repeats the life cycle.

**Moth.** The fall armyworm moth has a wingspan of about 1 inch. The front pair of wings are dark gray with an irregular pattern of light and dark areas. Moths are active at night and common around lights at night. A single female can deposit up to 2000 eggs. Development from egg to adult requires about 4 weeks during the summer and is longer during cool weather. There are several generations a year. Development ends with cold weather in November.

### Management.

It is important to detect fall armyworm infestations early before they cause economic damage. Fall armyworm larvae feed primarily during the night and during cloudy weather. During the day, look for armyworms under loose soil and fallen leaves on the ground. The presence of chewed leaves can indicate the presence of armyworms. Small larvae chew the green layer from the leaves and leave a clearing or window pane effect and consume only a small amount of foliage. Consequently, infestations may go unnoticed unless the field is closely inspected. Once larvae are greater than 3/4 inch, the quantity of leaves they eat increases dramatically. During the final 2-3 days of feeding, armyworms consume 80% of the total foliage consumed during their entire development. For this reason, extensive feeding damage can occur in a few days. The density of armyworms sufficient to justify insecticide treatment will depend on the stage of crop growth and value of the crop. Seedling plants can tolerate fewer armyworms than established plants. Infestations of 2-3 armyworms per square foot may justify treatment. Hot, dry weather and natural enemies limit armyworm populations.

### Labeled Insecticides for Armyworm Control in Pastures and Hayfields.

Always read and follow all label instructions on pesticide use and restrictions.

- **Malathion<sub>57%</sub>** and Malathion ULV. Zero days to harvest or grazing.
- **Mustang Max** (9.6% zeta-cypermethrin). Applications may be made up to 0 days for forage and hay, 7 days for straw and seed screenings. Labeled for a large number of insect pests, including armyworms, grasshoppers
- **Tombstone (cyfluthrin)** Applications may be made up to 0 days for grazing and 7 days for haying.
- **Warrior** A 7 day waiting period should be observed before grazing.
- **Tracer.** Do not allow cattle to graze until spray has dried. Do not harvest hay or fodder for 3 days after treatment. There is no preharvest interval for forage. Treat when eggs hatch or when larvae are small. Use higher rates for larger larvae.
- **Sevin 4F, Sevin XLR, Sevin 80S, Generic Carbaryl.** When applied to pastures, there is a 14 day waiting period before grazing/harvest.
- **Dimilin 2L.** Wait one day until harvest. Label does not list a restriction on grazing. To be effective, Dimilin must be applied before larvae reach inch or longer. Will not control larger larvae. Provides residual control for up to 2-3 weeks, as long as forage is not removed from field. Dimilin acts as an insect growth regulator.

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**Monday, November 15, 7:00 pm - Winter Garden.** This class addresses attracting birds to our yards with a great variety of evergreens and berried shrubs. Planning our landscapes to have winter beauty.

**Monday, December 20, 7:00 pm - Christmas Open House** with care tips for holiday plants.

**Saturday, Nov, 13 - Cedar Ridge Preserve -Save the Date!!!** 2 fall birding field trips!

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**Light House for Learning**

(With the Ellis County Master Gardeners)

For reservations, Call Melissa Cobb, 972-923-4631

**Monday, September 27 - 6:00-7:30—Fall Bulbs & Iris Rhizomes—**Join Monica Nyenhuis to learn about the new varieties that will tolerate our soils and climate, as well as how to divide and plant them. Plus you may take home a rhizome to plant in your garden. Cost: \$11.00.

**Monday, October 4 - 6:00-7:30—Planning for Next Year's Planting—**Join Ginger Cole and start thinking about a vegetable garden in the back yard next spring. Learn about site selection, soil preparation, amendments and planning for success. Cost: \$11.00,

**Monday, October 11 - 6:00-7:30—Hobby Greenhouse Management—**Join Jim and Pat Dockins to learn from installing to maintaining a healthy environment where plants will survive, from saving tropicals to jump starting next summer's garden with seed propagation. Cost: \$11.00.

**Monday, October 18 - 6:00-7:30—Gardening for the Birds—**From Jean Wammack learn which birds call Ellis Co. home and which ones migrate through. Plant a garden to attract songbirds and beneficial insect eaters to your backyard plus three essentials: food, water and safe housing. Cost: \$11.00.

**Thursday, October 21 - 6:00-7:30—Holiday Gifts from the Herb Garden—**Join Arlene Hamilton and learn how to make gifts such as jellies/jams, culinary wreaths, sugars, salts and more from the fresh herbs you have been growing. Impress friends and family. Cost: \$11.00.

**Monday, October 25 - 6:00-7:30—Rainwater Harvesting—**Sue Pille will show you how you can have pure, no chemicals and free rainwater from an old concept with a new value, at a time of water shortages and droughts. Learn how to capture, divert, store and distribute rainwater for use later. Cost: \$11.00.

**Monday, November 1 - 6:00-7:30—Backyard Composting—**Join Lee Gabor to learn what to do with all those leaves and grass clippings. Fall is the perfect time to start a backyard compost pile. You'll produce rich organic matter for your garden and landscape next spring. Cost: \$11.00.

(Continued from page 4) -

Armyworms continued.....

- **Intrepid 2F.** Do not harvest hay within 7 days of application. There is no pre-harvest interval for forage. Begin applications when first signs of feeding damage appear. Use higher rates for heavier infestations. Intrepid is an insect growth regulator.
- **Lannate.** Bermudagrass only. Do not apply within 7 days of feeding forage or allowing livestock to graze. Do not apply within 3 days of cutting for hay. Lannate is a highly toxic POISON and all label precautions must be carefully followed. A restricted use pesticide.

**Labeled Insecticides for Armyworm Control in Wheat and Small Grains include:**

Baythroid, carbaryl, Lannate, Lorsban, Mustang Max, methyl parathion, Proxis and Tracer. Refer to label for restrictions on grazing and harvesting treated crops. **Always read and follow pesticide label directions.**

**Insecticides for Armyworm Control in Lawns:**

Insecticide labeled in lawns and turf include halofenozide (Mach® 2), bifenthrin (Talstar®), cyfluthrin (Tempo®, Bayer Advanced®), carbaryl (Sevin®) permethrin (multiple brands) and spinosad (Conserve® and others).

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



## Landscape Gardening

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

### Poison Ivy In The Home Landscape

by Cynthia W. Mueller, Master Gardener  
Galveston County, Texas

By far the most troublesome plant encountered by homeowners in the Texas landscape is the poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) in its various forms. Although all parts of the plant are toxic and capable of causing skin irritation, not everyone experiences problems. Sensitive individuals, however, must exercise extreme caution if they live in an environment where poison ivy may be present. Encounters such as running over leaves with the lawnmower, or being touched by pets who may have run through the plants, are enough to cause a reaction and make it necessary to be able to correctly identify and eradicate this pest.



Washing in strong soap and water, or scrubbing off affected areas with rubbing alcohol may remove much of the sap from the hands, but care must be exercised to avoid spreading the affected areas. There is now a proprietary ointment on the market which may break down the active ingredient in poison ivy (known as 'toxicodendrol' or 'urushinol') if applied within the first hour before blistering and irritation begin.

Poison ivy may differ in appearance according to geographical region and sub-race. In the Hill Country and in West Texas, it may resemble a small shrub, but along riverbanks in Central and East Texas the plant may grow to become a large-trunked vine capable of climbing to the top of the average tree or telephone pole. The leaflets may be smooth or slightly hairy, with edges being lobed, toothed or smooth. Robert Vines, in his book *Trees, Shrubs and Vines of the Southwest*, describes a type with five leaflets instead of the usual three, which is found in Harris County. But in general it is easiest to remember the old bit of folk wisdom, "Leaflets three, let it be."

Very young plants of poison ivy and box elder (*Acer negundo*) look very similar. To pull these up, use pliers. While holding the pliers, put a strong plastic bag such as a bread bag over the arm and hand, and uproot the plant. Then peel the bag off over your hand. The offending plant will be securely inside the sack, ready to throw away, and there will be no offending sap on the pliers.

Large vines on trees should be cut off both at ground level and again a few inches upwards, to ensure that a complete cut has been made. The base of the cut may be painted with Roundup, brush killer labeled for poison ivy, or another of the glyphosates. Watch for re-growth, and spray again with brush controller as new leaves appear. Take care that contact is not made with poison ivy roots while digging nearby. They are just as potent as the leaves and stems. It may take up to a year or more before the roots stop re-sprouting, sometime as much as 15 feet from the base of the vine.

The small fruits of poison ivy are known to provide food for at least 75 species of birds, especially wild turkey, bob-white quail, ruffed and sharp-tailed grouse, and ring-necked pheasants and mockingbirds.

### **Garden Checklist for October**

- Careful covering of tender plants on nights when light frost threatens, early in the season, is a way to stretch out the season for a few more days or weeks. Good candidates for protection include late season crinum blooms, brugmansia and datura shrubs, Lantana trifolia with its lavender, verbena-like flowers in clusters, "Halloween-blooming" *Gladiolus dalenii* and many others. Especially tender herbs such as basil should be cut for use as pesto sauce ingredients or pizza toppings as soon as possible at this time.
- Fall is often one of the best times to enjoy rose blooms in Texas. Lightly prune hybrid teas, floribundas and modern garden roses and fertilize them in early fall for an abundant display until hard frost.
- 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.
- October through November is also an excellent time to purchase bulbs while you still have a good selection in the garden center.
- 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.

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## Natural Vegetable Gardening

By Rick Daniel, Ellis County Master Gardener Vegetable Gardening Specialist



Most of you have heard of “Organic Gardening”. The AgriLIFE Extension Service refers to it as “EarthKind™ Gardening”. To avoid conflict or confusion, we are going to refer to this practice as, “Natural Vegetable Gardening”. To understand the similarities and differences, here are the descriptions of these terms:

**“Organic Gardening”** The science and art of gardening by incorporating the entire landscape design and environment to improve and maximize the garden soil’s health, structure, texture, as well as maximize the production and health of developing plants without using synthetic commercial fertilizers, pesticides, or fungicides.

**“EarthKind™ Gardening”** uses research-proven techniques to provide maximum garden enjoyment while preserving and protecting the environment. The objective of EarthKind™ gardening is to combine the best of organic and traditional gardening principles to create a horticultural system based on real world effectiveness and environmental responsibility. This is accomplished by promoting water conservation, reduction of fertilizer and pesticide use, and reduction of landscape waste entering landfills.

**“Natural Gardening”** - these gardeners are similar in the basic philosophy of the Organic Gardener, but not as strict in their choice of soil amendments. They will use a safe natural product that has good organic matter in it, even if it contains a minimum amount of preservatives, colorings, etc.

First, let’s consider why to utilize Natural Vegetable Gardening techniques. Most of you have heard about sustainability and are trying to decide how we can contribute our fair share to sustaining our planet and not over utilizing our natural resources. Did you know that if every person on this planet consumed at the same rate as the people here in the United States, that it would require 5.2 planets to provide for our current population. While the rest of the world is trying to catch up to us, we need to be working towards consuming far less as unfortunately we do not have 5.2 planets to sustain our existing and ever expanding population.

If you’ve considered becoming a “Natural” gardener, the vegetable garden is the one place that makes the most sense. The chemicals we ingest in our bodies on a daily basis should be of concern to ALL of us. The amount of carbon emissions required to ship foods around the world should also be of concern. When you purchase food at the grocery market, you have no idea where it came from, how it was raised and if it is safe to ingest in your body. I could go on and on, but most of you know there is a valid reason to be concerned, so let’s get on with the information about how to raise your own vegetables, naturally.

A Natural Gardening approach incorporates low analysis fertilizers, low-nitrogen natural organic fertilizers, fertilizing based on soil needs and fertilizers loaded with trace minerals. It also works within nature’s laws and systems, treats soil and actual problems, improves soil and plants for natural resistance, utilizes beneficial insects and uses teas and homemade mixtures over chemicals.

First and foremost with any natural gardening program is soil preparation. Here in Ellis County, our primary soil is black “gumbo” clay. Black clay clumps together and needs to be amended before using as garden soil. The best amendments are compost and expanded shale as well as other organic materials like leaves. Besides, for physical amendments, we also need chemical amendments, which can be determined best with a soil test. Once you know what needs to be added, you need to know the natural resources for those chemicals. Organic chemical amendments may include animal manures, blood meal, bone meal, cottonseed meal, fish emulsion, kelp spray, green sand, lava sand, and molasses.

Once your garden is growing, you will need an ongoing fertilizer program, as well as a good pest control program. In addition to the chemical amendments mentioned above, foliar fertilizer feeding is a primary component of any natural program. I use Garret Juice, and/or Lady Bug “John’s Recipe” every couple of weeks. The best foliar fertilizer is compost tea made with your own home grown compost.

One advantage of Natural Gardening is utilizing beneficial insects over insecticides to control pests. Planting good companion plants, such as Nasturtiums, Marigolds and Morning Glory’s, attracts beneficial insects such as lady bugs, green lace wings and others to assist in controlling pests. Additional pest control can utilize natural agents such as BT, Neem Oil, Plant Wash and solutions containing vinegar or citrus juice.

Hopefully, you are already on your way to becoming a “Natural Gardener” and this article has peaked your interest in this subject. Like any subject, if you want to know it well, you need to research and study. My favorite books are “Texas Organic Vegetable Gardening” by Howard Garrett and Malcolm Beck, and “Texas Gardening the Natural Way’ the Complete Handbook by Howard Garrett. I also recommend that you come by the Waxahachie Farmers Market on a Saturday morning and visit with either the Ellis County Master Gardener’s booth, or a booth of one of our local growers, or stop by our local Organic products provider.

As a final thought, you may decide that one approach is best for you and you may focus on that approach, but you need to be flexible. My goal is to be as organic as possible. However, if my garden is being attacked by a pest that can destroy my hard work and my current food crop, I may have to alter my approach to utilize the best means to attack that current pest. I would still rather consume a product that I know utilized the least amount of chemicals, rather than purchase the same product from somewhere where the approach might be to use every chemical possible to realize the greatest production.



## *It's October - What Else Needs to be Done?*

By Nancy Fenton, Ellis County Master Gardener

### Pruning Trees

If you already have mature trees, there are still ways you can help them stay healthy and intact. Careful pruning is the 1<sup>st</sup> step and a very important one. You can do some of it yourself by cutting off suckers you can easily reach; those small branches that sprout up on trunks, large branches or roots close to the surface. They sap energy and moisture needed in our hot dry summers. That "easily reach part" is very important not only to the health of the tree, but also to your health! A great many homeowners are like me—a bit gray and

less flexible than they were even 10 years ago. Use a pole saw, a limb saw, or a small saw, but **KEEP YOUR FEET ON THE GROUND!!**

Good responsible companies will do a Class 1 trimming, taking out suckers (also called water spouts) and branches that cross plus any broken or dead ones. The crossing branches may not be a problem at the moment, but as the season goes on and the tree grows, crossing branches begin to rub and open sores to let all sorts of infections and bugs feast on your tree. Professional companies always carry insurance and don't mind showing it to you. If they are really customer-oriented, they'll ask if you want the limbs ground for mulch and larger pieces cut fireplace length for winter burning. My tree company does both, and I use the mulch to conserve moisture in the summer and the logs to burn in our little stove come the colder months.

When trees don't get pruned on a regular basis, the worst case is that a rather large branch drops through your roof or on your car! 2<sup>nd</sup> worse is that falling limbs take out electricity or close bridges and roads. We may not like it, but our local utilities and county have to pick up the slack when safety becomes an issue. Let's face the reality, tree trimming can be a costly procedure and if we don't do it ourselves, someone has to.

The county and the utilities don't cut the limbs over your roof, but they do protect the lines that power our homes as well as the roads we drive on. They have a lot of territory to cover and it is an economic reality that they'll move through as quickly as they can. Please know they really do make every effort to let the homeowner/landowner know of any work that needs to be done. Each one of us could pick up the cost of having it done the way we want it done, as long as the safety issues were addressed. All it takes is a plan and a phone call to the utility or the county. Hey, it saves them time and money so they would be delighted to see the homeowner/landowner take care of it.

I know from personal experience that the utility companies are very co-operative in setting an appointment to come when I could be there as well as cleaning their saws carefully and taking only as much as needed from mature, "good" trees. I say "good trees" for a great many of our trees on our county roads are the fast growing ones that spring up overnight and sprawl over fences, gates, and roads. Most of the trees around our homes are the slow growing, beautiful ones like Live Oak, Maple, Burr Oak, and Pecan. The Hackberry, Poplar and Cedar are fast growing and short lived. Even though they may look awful when the county workers are forced to cut them back, they'll cover the road again in 2 years if not "whacked" back again. Any landowner, of course, has the option to trim back any trees on their property. Frankly, our county commissioners would appreciate it! They only do it to keep us safe on our public roads. The pictures taken on our public county roads may look bad right after the trees are trimmed in the spring, but drive back by in the summer months and you will see lush growth everywhere.

Lets think about giving our trees the best chance to come out green and luscious next spring. This is the time to check the base of our trees and make sure the root flare is exposed. I'm talking about the area at the base that bulges out. When planted too deeply, our trees struggle to get their roots up into the top 6 to 8 inches of the soil. This is a good thought to hold onto as you plant those new trees. Fall is the perfect time to plant or move trees. It is much better than the spring when they have to face the heat of the summer. Fall planted trees have the advantage of months of slow root growth before they are called on to bear the heat. It is important to water even in the cold months for at least the first year of the trees' life. I mulch heavily so what is down there stays available to the roots.

Attractive trees add a great deal to our homes value and curb appeal plus they can reduce the need for extra heating and cooling in our homes. Remember how cool the shade feels on a hot summer day! Now is the time to invest in them and get them planted. Just remember to put them 20 feet or more from the house or sewer lines. They don't have to be huge, expense trees; smaller, inexpensive ones actually do as well or better if planted wisely and in the right location.

The giant trees go into shock proportionately to their size; the smaller the tree, the smaller the shock. Just remember to dig the hole much wider than the pot size. If you hire it done, stay with the guys and insist on having a wide, but not deep hole. The top of the soil of the pot should be a bit higher than the surrounding ground; looking as if it is sitting a bit high. Fill in around with the original soil from the hole, water and mulch with about 3-inches of coarse mulch. Please make sure that any roots that have grown in circles in the pot are loosened. They need to grow out to support the tree.

Weekly watering will help get it off to a good start and next spring you can enjoy looking at a strong healthy new tree. Hold off on pruning it up for another year and then begin to shape it as fits your yard.

(Continued from page 6)

- 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.
- 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. Planted now in south and east Texas, they will usually provide a riot of spring color; wait until late winter or early spring to plant in north Texas.
- Keep Christmas cactus in a sunny spot where night temperatures can be kept below 65° F. Buds will drop if you allow night temperatures to go above 70° 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 planting 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° F.



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