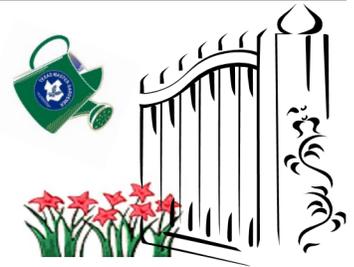




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VII, Issue Ten

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

October, 2013

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 with your landscape. We will feature horticultural articles that we hope you will find interesting, and 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! Susan Clark, Editor

What's Happening in October



**Every Saturday—March to December from 8am-1pm,
410 S. Rogers (across from City Hall in the old lumberyard building)
Visit the Master Gardeners' Booth!**

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

At the Downtown Waxahachie Farmers Market, Saturday, October 5.

NATURE: A FAMILY AFFAIR. Visit the Master Gardener area of the farmers market for crafts for the children this Saturday. The Ellis County Master Naturalists will be showing kids of all ages how to make brooms from broomweed. Pioneers tied bundles of this plant to wooden sticks to make brooms. There will be some simple toys and games, the type that pioneer and native American children would have used. Also, pressing wildflowers with a plant press will be demonstrated.

Now open, The Dallas Arboretum Rory Meyers Children's Adventure. The eight acre garden features over 150 interactive exhibits including areas to explain how energy comes from water, the sun and wind; a wetland; a Texas Skywalk; a Discovery Center that includes a 30-foot globe that shows Pangaea, the solar system, and major weather events. Visit <http://www.dallasarboretum.org/> for more info.

Saturday, October 5, 7am, Early Bird Walk & Talk at John Bunker Sands Wetland Center. Meet outside the gate and please be on time. Tour is free with \$5 admission fee. Visit <http://www.wetlandcenter.com/newhome.html> for info.

Friday, October 11 and Saturday, October 12, Ark Country Store Anniversary Sale. Special savings during these two days include a "Bargain Barn", free dog food samples, and free dog treats. FREE lunch on Saturday. Hamburgers and hot dogs on the grill from 11am to 2pm. The "Bargain Barn" will feature closeout prices on select items including tack, home decor, and more! CASH sales only, no returns on items from the Bargain Barn! Visit <http://www.arkcountrystore.com/> for more info and store hours.

Saturday, October 12, 9am-2pm, Native Plant Sale by the North Central Chapter Native Plant Society of TX. The sale features a large variety of plant species grown organically by chapter members, including ground covers, perennials, shrubs, vines, and trees. Takes place at the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens. 3220 Botanic Garden Blvd. Visit <http://www.txnativeplants.org/> for more info.

Sunday October 13, 10am-4pm, Tarrant County Master Gardeners: Open Days Garden Tour in Fort Worth. Six private gardens in Fort Worth will be open to the public to benefit the Garden Conservancy and the TCMGA. \$5 per garden or \$25/day pass. Purchase day pass tickets in advance or day of tour at all Calloway's Nursery locations in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. For info, call (888) 842-2442 or visit www.opendaysprogram.org.

Saturday, October 19, 10am, John Bunker Sand's Pond Trail Walk. This trail is great for families and those interested in native trees, flowers, and animals. Tour is free with \$5 admission fee. Visit <http://www.wetlandcenter.com/newhome.html> for info.

Saturday, October 19, 9am-12pm, Cedar Ridge Preserve—Conservation in Action

(Continued on page 3)

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION



Listen to KBEC.....

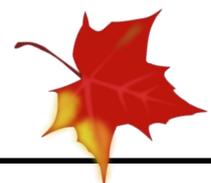
Saturday mornings at 9:00 a.m. on 1390 AM.

The Ellis County Master Gardeners have a 5-minute segment every week, offering you helpful information on what you need to be doing in your landscape, as well as "happenings" around the county. Be sure to listen in!

Melinda Kocian

Inside this issue:

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>It's Oct, What Needs to be Done?</i> | 2 |
| <i>Wildflower of the Month</i> | 3 |
| <i>Herb of the Month</i> | 4 |
| <i>A Squirrelly Problem</i> | 5 |
| <i>Some like it hot...</i> | 6 |
| <i>Landscape Gardening</i> | 7 |
| <i>Growing Your Own Gourmet Salad</i> | 9 |
| <i>Tools You Can Use</i> | 10 |
| <i>Lighthouse for Learning</i> | 11 |
| <i>ECMGA Photo Contest</i> | 11 |





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. Daffodils are more likely to return each year. Other bulbs should be considered annuals in our area with new bulbs planted each year. Some daffodil varieties for this area include Fortune, Falconet, Ice Follies, Thalia, and Carlton.
- Wait until December to plant tulips and hyacinths.

Pruning and Fertilizing

- 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 pests and diseases next year, remove and discard all dead vegetable plants in the garden.
- 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.

Earth-Kind® Fall Practices

- ◆ Fall is an excellent time to establish new plants in the landscape. Cooler temperatures and occasional rainfall create ideal growth conditions for a variety of trees, shrubs, annuals, and perennials.
- ◆ Fall fertilizer applications are very common and typically recommended to prepare plants for winter. The type and amount of fertilizer to apply should be based on the results of a soil test.
- ◆ If you would like to learn more about Earth-Kind® fall practices, click on the Resource tab at www.ecmga.com and click on Earth-Kind® Publications.

In the fall, many yards are virtually covered by leaves from deciduous trees. Disposing of these leaves can create a significant burden on landfills and municipal compost facilities. Earth-Kind® leaf management practices provide the opportunity to use this valuable natural resource to improve a landscape's health and appearance.

Using leaves as mulch is a simple and effective way to recycle this organic material and improve the landscape. Leaves can be used as mulch in vegetable gardens, flower beds and around shrubs and trees. Apply a three to six inch layer of shredded leaves around the base of trees and shrubs.



Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Lemon Beebalm—Mint Family (Lamiaceae)

Monarda citriodora Cerv. Ex Lag.

Region: 1–10 (Ellis County Is Region 4)

Size: 1–3 feet

Blooms: April through October, (Annual/Biennial)

The noticeable lemon fragrance of this plant led to its botanical and common name. Wherever it blooms, the scent of *Monarda* attracts butterflies and bees. A tea-like beverage can be brewed from the dried leaves or seed heads. The leaves also can contain oil that is the basis for citronella, an ingredient used in insect-repellent candles.

From its base, lemon beebalm usually has several square, hairy stems. Long-stalked, opposite leaves may reach a length of three inches. They are narrow, with a few teeth on the edges. Numerous white, rosy-pink or light purple flowers, freckled with dark purple spots, cluster around the stem. Several clusters in series form a spike. *Monarda* often forms large colonies, covering several acres. It is common in pastures, along roadsides, and in other grassy areas.

What's Happening (Continued from page 1)

Workday. Volunteers help remove non-native plants, restore trails, and work in the butterfly garden. Water, snacks, pruning shears, shovels, and work gloves provided. Contact: info_CRP@yahoo.com or visit www.audubondallas.org. Location: 7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas.

Monday, October 21, 8am, Wildflowers, Butterflies & Bird Walk. Members of the Indian Trail Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program will lead a combined Wildflower, Butterfly, and Bird Walk. Please bring drinking water and binoculars. 1361 Onward Rd. Free to the public. Info at <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/>

Friday, October 25, 12pm–6pm and Saturday, October 26, 9am–?, Huge Summer Auction at The Greenery. Absolute auction; no minimum bid. Serving Bar B-Q catering and snow cones. Preview Thursday & Friday. A \$500.00 gift certificate to The Greenery and \$100.00 gift certificate to The Studio given away at a surprise time. For info, visit <http://www.thegreenerytx.com/>

Saturday, October 26, 9am–11am, Dogwood Canyon—Photography Class. Bring your camera and learn basic nature photography skills. Learn how to capture birds in flight, bugs on the ground, and perfect nature scenes. Free for members; \$10 for non-members. For more info, go to: <http://dogwoodcanyon.audubon.org/events>

Monday, October 28, 7pm–8pm, Indian Trail Master Naturalists presents “Things (with six legs) that go bump in the night—Recognizing and protecting yourself from insect threats” with Michael Merchant, Professor and Extension Urban Entomologist. The program is free and follows the 6 p.m. Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. It takes place at the Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Parkway, Red Oak. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email ellis-tx@tamu.edu

Botanical Research Institute of Texas

1700 University Drive, Fort Worth
(817) 332-4441 <http://www.brit.org/>

Saturday, October 5, 10am–2pm, BRIT First Saturday. Enjoy tours, children's activities, vendors and booths, farmers market, and a special program. Celebrate a Fall Festival this month. Enjoy Bella's Story Time from 10:30-11:30. This month's story is *Pumpkin Cycle: The Story of a Garden*, by George Levenson.

Saturday, October 19, 10am–12:30pm, Salsa with the Expert. Learn the secret to making your own fabulous, fresh, organic salsas. Doug Renfro from Renfro Foods will teach us how to make classic red, fruit, and verde salsas to take home in decorative containers. Tasting during class IS allowed! Members: \$55/Non-members \$50.

Brumley Gardens, Bishop Arts Location

700 West Davis, Dallas, (214) 942-0794
<http://www.brumleygardens.com/home/>

Thursdays are Senior Citizen Day! Receive 25% off your purchase! *May not be combined with any other offer.

Saturday, October 5, 9am–6pm, Pink Day at Brumley Gardens benefiting the Breast Cancer Research Center. Food, drinks, giveaways, and great deals all day! Ten percent of the days sales will go to help breast cancer research. Make a donation and receive 10% off your purchase.

Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



Herb of the Month – Jewelweed

The hills of western Pennsylvania were beautiful last week with a strong hint of fall in the air. (I had ice on my windshield one morning!) While there, the article on the Herb of the Month was frequently on my mind. After four years, I'm beginning to run out of common herbs.

One warm afternoon I headed off toward the orchard to see how the apple crop was doing. On the way, near a creek I spotted a large plot of jewelweed, so here is a bit of information on a very useful plant that does not grow in Texas; although it might be found in the far northern reaches of eastern Texas near the Oklahoma and Arkansas borders.

Jewelweed, Spotted Touch-Me-Not (*Impatiens capensis*) is an annual plant native to northeastern North America. It grows wild along ditches and creeks in wooded areas. The flowers are orange and the stems are translucent and succulent with a milky substance that is used to treat dermatitis from poison ivy, poison oak, and stinging nettle.

A poultice with the fresh herb can be applied directly to the rash or others make an infused tea and rub the frozen tea cube on the rash. My friend Tina Marie Wilcox of the Ozark Folk Center in Mt. View, Arkansas makes a tinc-



ture of jewelweed and apple cider vinegar, which she carries with her while foraging in the Ozark woods around the center.

As a child, we loved to play with the flowers. The seed pods hang from the flowers and have projectile seeds which explode out of the pods when lightly touched, which is where the name 'touch-me-not' comes from. A search of the web shows many sites selling lotions, soaps, and seeds, thus a very useful plant.



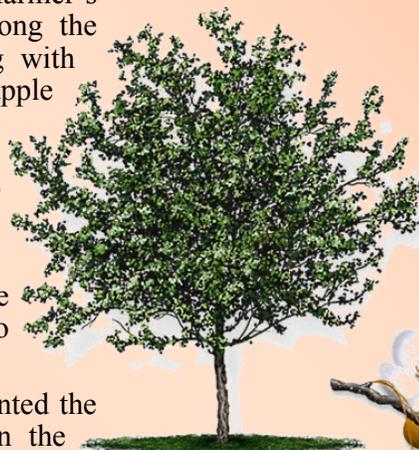
Apples were the big story of the week in Johnstown. The farmer's market and farm stands along the roadways were overflowing with this year's crop, along with apple cider, apple butter, and candied apples. The local newspaper, the Tribune-Democrat ran this bit of harvest trivia:

- * The crab apple tree is the only apple native to North America.
- * The pilgrims planted the first apple trees in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.
- * There are 7,500 apple varieties grown worldwide with 2,500 of those in the U.S.
- * Apples ripen six to ten times faster at room temperature, rather than in the refrigerator.
- * Leave the peel on; it contains two-

thirds of the fiber and lots of antioxidants.

- * Red Delicious is the most widely grown apple in the United States.
- * Apples are the second most valuable fruit crop in the U.S., topped only by oranges.
- * Newton Pippin was the first apple exported from America. The year was 1768 and some were sent to Benjamin Franklin in London.
- * Some apple trees will grow to more than 40 feet high and live more than 100 years.

There are apples and many more fresh fruits and vegetables available at the Waxahachie Downtown Farmers Market every Saturday. Come visit and enjoy the bounty of an October harvest.



Crabapple
Malus angustifolia



Copyright © Robert O'Brien

From Insects in the City: A Squirrely Problem

Squirrels may be cute, and I enjoy watching squirrels in the woods as much as anyone. I'm less entranced, however, by the squirrel cartel currently occupying my backyard.

A few weeks ago, after returning home from an out of town trip, I noticed something wasn't quite right with the cedar elm tree in my backyard. An entire

branch of the tree appeared to be dead. Inspection close to the trunk revealed that the bark had been peeled off, chewed off actually, girdling the entire branch.

I had noticed more squirrels than usual this summer, and have directed more than one oath at squirrels for bark-chewing in the past. On this same tree for the past several winters, I had noticed rather severe disfigurement from squirrel gnawing.

This was especially galling to me because the cedar elm under attack was one I had planted myself, and which was finally becoming a useful shade tree. This was the first time squirrel hanky panky had resulted in actual death of part of a tree.

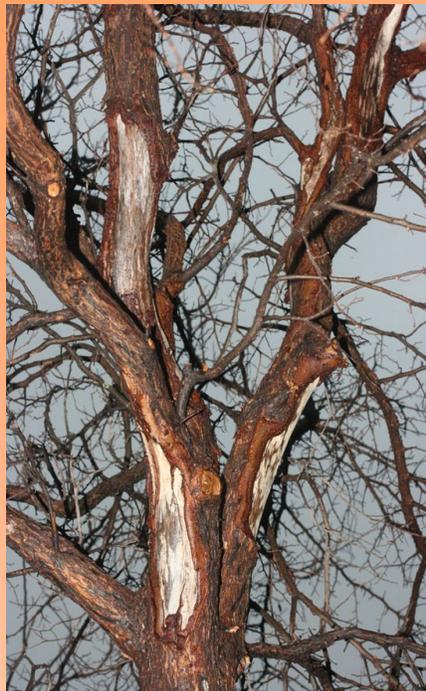
It's enough to drive one to firearms.

I've been curious about squirrel damage to trees for many years, having collected pictures of odd damage that seemed due to squirrels. I have occasionally seen unusual scars and fresh damage most certainly due to squirrels. Some of this damage appears almost artistic, with narrow channels chewed in the bark, almost circling branches and trunks, and damage to the same trees that has taken place for years.



Fox squirrels are the most common and aggressive squirrel species in Texas.

Since my recent damage, a client stopped by our office with a picture of numerous dead branches in his tree and with a sample branch showing the same bark stripping that I observed at my home. I've also had several calls this summer about tips of branches mysteriously dropping off trees. In all cases, the cuts are smooth and at about a 45 degree angle...more squirrel mischief.



View of squirrel damage to large branches on our cedar elm tree in the winter, when damage is most obvious

If tree damage wasn't enough, squirrels can cause significant structural damage to homes. Squirrels have at

least three times now attempted (unsuccessfully) to chew and scratch their way into my attic. Once inside, squirrels (or any rodent) can contaminate and damage insulation and chew on wiring, much like they chewed on my tree bark. And as a potential fire hazard, squirrels are far from cute.

So why am I, an entomologist, ranting about squirrels? I am certainly no expert on squirrels, but there is a new resource on squirrel management in the form of a webinar conducted last week by Dr. Steven Vantassel, wildlife specialist with the University of Nebraska.

This webinar is available online for viewing at <https://learn.extension.org/events/1180>. Dr. Vantassel addresses the biology and behavior of several species of tree squirrels, as well as techniques for squirrel-proofing your home (and bird feeders), hazing and trapping nuisance squirrels.

For my part, I'm going to use some of the techniques I've learned in the webinar instead of the firearm idea. I think that's a lot safer for everyone concerned, except maybe the squirrels.

Posted on August 23, 2013 by Michael Merchant, PhD., BCE, urban entomology specialist.

(<http://citybugs.tamu.edu/2013/08/23/a-squirrely-problem/>)

Some like it hot...

By: Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener



Some like it hot—the weather, that is—and ornamental peppers fall in that category. These annuals provide fiery color to the horticultural palette, not your palate; the new peppers are HOT! HOT! even to a Tex-Mex-jalapeno adjusted tongue. Rely on them to fire up containers and flower borders with reds, oranges, and yellows.

Black Pearl



Ornamental peppers and colored foliage plants are the most neglected and underused plants by Texas gardeners, yet they are some of the most useful and easy-to-grow. Nurseries will be rolling out their fall plants and ornamental peppers should be among them.

The trend started several years ago with the pepper, 'Black Pearl', whose leaves are inky enough to be called black and whose round, deep-purple, shiny fruits mature to holiday red. An All American Selections Winner, it's a wonderful cut flower growing up to 18" tall x 18" wide. It likes full sun but will tolerate light shade.

'Explosive Embers' is one of the best of the ornamental peppers with purple foliage and multi-colored fruit. It continues to grow as it fruits. It has done so well at the Dallas Arbore-

Explosive Embers



tum that it has made the North Texas Winner's Circle. Grown in the sun it reaches a height of 10 to 14 inches.

'Garda Tricolor' ornamental peppers resemble tiny Dr. Seuss Christmas lights. Touted as a rising star at the arboretum, it's an absolutely beautiful annual that has all of the following qualities: flourishes in 100 percent full, burning, infernal Texas summer sun, is drought-tolerant enough to earn Water Wise designation, is deer and rabbit proof, 100 degree weather makes it more colorful, is beautiful from late spring until the first frost, is even edible, works equally well in containers or planted *en masse*, and is easy to grow from seed or 4-inch pots. Mature size is 24" x 24".

Mix it with

'Profussion' zinnias or purple fountain grass.

'Chilly Chill', only 12" x 12", is a smaller ornamental pepper. Grow in full sun. Its peppers are sweet!

Jimmy Turner at the Dallas Arboretum has had great success with these ornamental peppers in his trial gardens and uses them in the garden's displays. He likes them in hanging baskets and in whiskey barrels. They look great massed alone, or try mix-

ing them with crotons or sweet potato vines. One of his favorite combos in a pot is with 'Black Seeded Simpson' lettuce growing around them—ornamental and edible.

When pumpkins become available in autumn, Mr. Turner offers another decorative use. "Set a large pumpkin in a container and plant peppers around it. The pumpkin costs less than a mum and usually lasts longer." He says, "Marigolds are still one of my favorite fall flowers: cheap, easy to grow, and bloom until first frost." 'Zenith' and 'Sunburst'

Chilly Chill



are his bullet-proof marigold choices to complement the ornamental peppers.

There's one more I want to be sure to mention as it is a Texas native.

'Chile Pequin' is a Central Texas native whose red peppers are very hot. The plant reseeds and often is a perennial in mild winters, and birds love the fruit. It grows to 24" x 24" in sun or part shade.

Gardens are not always about flowers. Join the new trend—use ornamental peppers with their colorful foliage. Add some "kick" to your yard!



Landscape Gardening

From: Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener

Ellis County Master Gardeners have a website at www.ecmga.com. Check this website for information on gardening in Ellis County, sign up for a monthly newsletter, or access other websites including the Texas A&M Horticulture website. Questions for Master Gardeners will be answered with a return email or telephone call, if you leave a message at (972) 825-5175.

Spring Flowering Bulbs for Texas Gardens

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

Bulbs can add color and fragrance and increase each year if well placed and selected. Narcissus are among the oldest and best adapted perennials. For most of Texas, the cluster and smaller flowering types tend to naturalize (return each year) and slowly increase in numbers.

Among the oldest and most reliable is 'Grand Primo'. It is probably the most vigorous narcissus of all. Clusters of creamy white flowers with pale yellow centers appear in late January and into February.

'Grand Primo' has been thriving across the South for at least 200 years. A double flowering form is known as 'Erlicheer' and does equally well. Blooming just a few weeks later is an elegant, small yellow flowering narcissus named 'Campnelle'. The graceful flowers and reed-like foliage are about half the size of a traditional daffodil.

To lengthen the season plant 'Golden

Dawn', another cluster flowering yellow narcissus as well as 'Sir Winston Churchill' that sometimes blooms as late as early April.

Snowflakes (*Leucojum aestivum*) are another great bulb for naturalizing over most of Texas. The white flowers have a green dot on each petal and bloom in late January and early February. Foliage appears a few weeks after planting and is also an attractive addition to the garden. Their bloom season usually lasts at least a month.

All these bulbs can take full sun but also thrive in partial shade, even under deciduous trees like pecans that lose their leaves in winter. Select a well-drained site and set the bulbs about twice the depth of the height of the bulb. Water to settle the soil but little or no irrigation

should be needed to grow these bulbs successfully.

As the foliage matures after the bloom season, it is best to not remove it until it begins to yellow. During their dormant period these bulbs need no irrigation and actually enjoy being hot and dry during our long summer season.

Now is also a good time to plant tulips and hyacinths, but these need to have an artificial cold period in or-

der to bloom in most of Texas. This chill requirement can be met by placing the bulbs in the lower part of your refrigerator for six to eight weeks. After they have been chilled plant them directly into pots or in the garden.

These are annuals for us with few exceptions. Clusiana tulips (*Tulipa clusiana*) are small white and pink striped species tulips that sometimes naturalize in semi-arid parts of the state.

Bulbs look best when used in elongated masses of at least a dozen of a single kind. Cool season annuals work well with them. Consider transplants of pansies, violas, sweet alyssum, snapdragons, and stock.

There is still time to add some poppies or larkspur as well. The best way to start these is from seed that should be planted immediately. Thin the stand to single plants three to six inches apart and transplant or share the rest. Some effort planting bulbs and cool season plants now will result in an abundance of color in late winter and spring.

Garden Checklist for October 2013

- ☞ Carefully harvest material for dried arrangements at this time. Choose cockscomb, bachelor's buttons (gompfrena), 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

(Continued on page 8)

Clusiana (*Tulipa clusiana*)



Snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*)



Landscape Gardening (Continued from page 7)

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.

- ❧ 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, cotton seed meal or rotted manure 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 degrees F. Buds will drop if you allow night temperatures to go above 70 degrees F. or if you allow the plant to become exces-

sively dry. They should also be kept in total darkness from 5:00 pm until 8:00 am for about 30 days to initiate flower buds.

- ❧ If you have saved seeds from 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 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, irises, day lilies, and shasta daisies.

Save The Date!
Saturday, March 29, 2014



- ❧ 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.

- ❧ Plant seeds of sweet peas in south and east Texas during October/November. Select a site where there is at least a half-day of sun and protection from north winds.

Growing Your Own Gourmet Salad at Home-Mesclun
With Susan Knapp
Ellis County Master Gardener



A week or so ago I attended a class taught by Val Nolen in Cedar Hill on Cool Season Veggies. It was a great class and we talked about growing all kinds of cool season vegetables, but the one that intrigues me the most, right now, is Mesclun Mix. Mesclun is a French word meaning a combination of tender salads, but for our purposes it is a mixture of a variety of different young salad greens that are grown together. They are harvested when they are babies, two to four weeks old.

Mesclun can be grown outdoors in the ground or containers as well as indoors in containers under grow lights. In less than thirty days you may be harvesting your first salad.

Mesclun Mix is available in a variety of mixes, including lettuces, arugula, endives, mustards, purslane, chicory, cresses, parsleys, fennels, escarole and tender wild greens and many more. Mesclun Mixes make very pretty plants because of the variety of leaves and different colors. The seed mixes are available at your local garden store or online.

Rich soil is very important to the end product. Val says it best, "if it's not in your soil, it won't be in your food either." For containers use a good organic potting mix that includes compost. In the ground, enrich the soil with compost prior to planting.

Adding some expanded shale is a good way to ensure drainage. Apply a slow release fertilizer and reapply every three to four weeks according to package direc-

tions. Mesclun needs about four to six hours of sunlight daily, but will often take some shade.

WHEN AND HOW TO SOW

October is a good time to begin planting Mesclun. The greens in Mesclun are generally cool season plants

Mesclun lettuces are shallow rooted and



seem to do better in small square or round areas rather than rows.

When you're ready to plant,

shake the seed packet well to distribute the different types of seeds within the packet and sow the seed densely, about 1/4 to 1/2 inches apart over moist soil.

Gently pat the seeds in. Follow this with a dusting of planting mix or loose mulch, and water in very gently to avoid disturbing the seeds. Placing a row cover over the newly planted bed will help to

conserve moisture and assist with germination. Be sure to check your planting daily and remove the cover when you see the green seedlings appear in

order for your plants to get adequate light and air.

It is essential to keep the new seeds consistently moist as they grow. Slugs, snails and pillbugs can be a problem, but there are good, safe remedies such as Sluggo or Sluggo Plus that should help. Follow container directions.

HARVEST

When the lettuce is two to four inches tall, harvest the leaves by using sharp kitchen shears and shear off a patch of leaves, the amount needed to fill a salad bowl. Cut back to

about an inch or two above the soil and in a day or so water well and lightly feed. You'll probably be rewarded with another growth. In fact, done properly, you may get two to three harvests from one planting.

TO THE TABLE

Very gently wash and dry the just-picked young leaves and chill in a plastic vegetable bag in the refrigerator.



These tender young leaves don't have the same staying power as a head of lettuce, so

you want use them within a day or two.

Finally, don't overpower your Mesclun salad with heavy dressings. A vinaigrette using a good olive oil and vinegar are hard to beat. I'll bet you'll find the flavor of your own home-grown salad better than anything you can buy. Enjoy!

Tools You Can Use
With Cerelda De Heus
Ellis County Master Gardener



Garden Tote

There are many garden totes on the market; metal, plastic, canvas, woven baskets, etc.

This is a new one that any gardener on your Christmas list would like. It is tip-proof, made out of heavy duty canvas, stands upright and open, and is sectioned for organizing and finding your tools and what-not. The tote comes with a reinforced bottom and handles. It can also be monogrammed to please your favorite gardener or for yourself.



Available online from Lands End http://www.landsend.com/products/canvas-garden-tote/id_259071

Gardening Gloves

Everyone has their own favorite gardening



gloves and these are mine. They grip whatever I'm holding so I don't have to overextend my arthritic joints. The seamless cushioning prevents blistering and reduces my hand fatigue significantly when working outside. Mine have lasted much longer than regular 'gardening' gloves. I've used both of these in and around the house: Mad Grip

Pro Palm Knuckler Glove or Mad Grip Palm Women's Gardening Gloves



Available at most gardening centers and online from Amazon

Ergonomic Gardening Tools

Using the right tool makes your gardening a more productive and enjoyable experience. Retailers have moved away from a one-size fits all mentality and have

many choices available. New tools on the market that are ergonomic in design reduces physical stress while maximizing your energy and physical comfort. These tools make better use of our bodies and the many repetitive motions of gardening, so we can enjoy our gardening for longer periods.

Available at most gardening centers and online from Amazon.



Lawn & Garden EXPO



Ellis County Master Gardener

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(With the Ellis County Master Gardeners)

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

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



Monday, October 7, 6:00–7:30 Herbs, From the Garden to the Kitchen If you are interested in growing and using herbs, please join us for an evening of aromas, flavors, and unique ways to enjoy herbs. Learn to make herbal blends, compound butters, party dips, and more. The instructor will bring plants to share and maybe a tasty sample. Instructor: Arlene Hamilton Cost: \$12.00

Thursday, October 10, 6:00–7:30 Best Trees for North Texas Marilyn will share her favorite trees, teach you when to plant, and help you with location, size of tree at maturity, planting tips, trees for fall color, and trees for spring flowers. This workshop is especially designed and directed to the residents of Ellis County and the North Central Texas growing area. Instructor: Marilyn Simmons Cost: \$12.00

Monday, October 21, 6:00-7:30 Firewise Landscaping If you live near a rural area, or an area with a history of fire, you know that wildfires are a part of nature. There are things you can do to increase the chances of your structures surviving a nearby fire in the absence of firefighters. Leave class with a list of resources and materials that will help you evaluate your surroundings and take responsibility for reducing the available fuel for fire around your home. Instructor: Lee Dann Cost: \$12.00

Monday, October 28, 6:00–7:30 Adding Bulbs to Your Garden This class will deal with the various types of flowering bulbs that are available, how to make the best selections for your garden and location, when to plant them, and how to maintain them. Fall is the best time to plant your bulbs to bloom in spring! Instructor: Monica Nyenhuis. Cost: \$12.00

Monday, November 4, 6:00–7:30 pm Drip Irrigation–The Basics Drip irrigation is the most efficient way to water gardens and trees and it is the system that makes the most sense in terms of conserving and limiting water use. In this hands-on class you will learn the types of equipment used in drip systems, how to design a drip system, and how to install and maintain the system. Instructor: Jim Goss. Cost: \$12.00

Tuesdays, October 8-29 four classes 6:00-8:00 “Ag 101”–Beginning Farmer/Rancher Join this experienced instructor as you cover the following topics: soils and soil fertility, soil testing, pasture management, basic livestock productions, and pond management. This class will be held at the Ellis County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office at 701 S. I-35E, Suite 3. Instructor: Mark Arnold, County Ext. Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources Cost: \$22.00



ECMGA Amateur Photo Contest

The Ellis County Master Gardener Association's annual photo contest is underway beginning September 1, 2013. **The last date for submissions is March 1, 2014.**

Time to 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 a complete list of contest details, go to www.ecmga.com and click on the **Photo Contest** link on the front page. 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.



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