



Ellis County Master Gardener's Ellis-Gardening Newsletter



Volume I, Issue 5

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

June, 2007

Welcome to the Ellis County Master Gardener's **Ellis-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. Thank you, Melinda Kocian, editor

What's Happening in June

Saturday, June 9th - 9:00 am, - The Greenery - Landscape with Natives — Rick Zaria with Native Texas Plants and a Purdue Graduate in Horticulture, loves to talk plants. He will teach and answer questions from Mountain Laurels to four nerve daisy — he will have the scoop!

Monday, June 11, 7:00 pm.- Marilyn Simmon's house - Cut Flower Garden. (get map at the Greenery the weekend before). Marilyn Simmons, a passionate gardener has been collecting information and data for this class for about three years. She will share both bed preparation and best varieties of flowers for cutting.

June 9, 2007 — Cedar Hill State Park — Get to Know the Trees — Learn to identify the trees of the area by looking at leaves, branches and bark. Learn some of the stories behind the trees as well. 2-3 p.m.; call to confirm program (972) 291-3900 Ext. 232.

June 9, 2007 — Cedar Hill SP— Kids Wilderness Survival — Survival is the art of staying alive and even kids can do it. Parents and kids will

learn what to do if a child becomes lost in the woods or other outdoor environment. Learn what to take with you when on a hike and tips to keep from getting lost. 9:30-11:30 a.m.; reservations required; call to confirm program (972) 291-3900 Ext. 232.

June 15, 2007 — Cedar Hill State Park— Silent Birds of the Night Owls — Learn about the owls found in the park and listen to their call. 7-8 p.m.; call to confirm program (972) 291-3900 Ext. 232.

June 16, 2007 — Cedar Hill State Park— Reptiles-Our Scaly Skinned Friends — Hear about the reptiles found in the area and look and feel some live ones, too. 2-3 p.m.; call to confirm program (972) 291-3900 Ext. 232. [

June 16, 2007 — Cedar Hill State Park— Track of the Coyote — Find out about the elusive coyote as we look at the way they live, communicate and behave. 7-8 p.m.; call to confirm program (972) 291-3900 Ext. 232.

June 30, 2007 — Cedar Hill State Park — Bats - Friend or Foe? —

Join us as we learn about the bats found in the area. Find out about their behavior, communication and importance. 7-8 p.m.; call to confirm program (972) 291-3900 Ext. 232.

June 30, 2007 — Cedar Hill State Park — Penn Farm Tour — Learn what life on the farm was like from the 1850s to the 1950s on this tour. 2-3:30 p.m.; call to confirm program (972) 291-3900 Ext. 232.

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Spring and Summer Turf grass Care

by Jim Tachias, Ellis County Master Gardener



A beautiful lawn is the most important feature for a well landscaped home. A homeowner's investment in a lawn and other landscaping is as good as any home improvement in increasing the value of a residence. A green well-groomed lawn is the first thing a visitor notices as they look at your home.

SOIL PREPARATION – Remove all debris such as rocks, stones, stumps, and any construction debris. Till the soil and mix in some organic matter to the top 3 to 5 inches of the soil. Rake smooth and grade properly to provide surface drainage. Seed or lay sod or sprigs.

WARM-SEASON TURFGRASSES – Common Bermuda grass and St. Augustine grass are the most recommended grasses in our area. Bermuda grass is the most widely used. It has good heat, wear, and drought tolerance. Bermuda grass is not shade tolerant and needs a lot of sunlight. It should be planted when soil temperatures reach at least 62°. It can be planted from seed or sod.

St. Augustine grass has a broader leaf and has an outstanding shade tolerance, but will not flourish in deep shade locations. It is established by sod or sprigs and should be planted from the middle of March through September

Raleigh or Delmar varieties of St. Augustine grasses are preferred because of improved cold tolerance and resistant to SAD virus. Both are susceptible to brown patch and chinch bugs.

WATERING – Water newly planted areas regularly to keep the surface moist. As the seed or sod begins to grow, reduce the frequency and increase the amount of water to develop a deep root system. For established lawns, soak to a depth of 4 to 6 inches. For soils high in clay an inch of water or ½ inch of water for sandy soil will usually wet the soil to the desired depth. Early morning is the best time to water. Water only when needed which is just before the grass begins to wilt. The grass will take on a full purplish cast and the leaf blades will begin to roll or fold. You will also be able to see tracks when someone walks across the lawn as evidence that the grass needs watering.

FERTILIZING – Get a soil test available from Texas A&M. Contact your county agent at 973-823-5175 for a packet on how to do the test. Fertilize new lawns once a month lightly, following test recommendations for the first several months or use a 4-1-2 or a 3-1-2 ratio fertilizer with slow release nitrogen. For established lawns you should put down a fertilizer in the spring, early summer, and early fall. Again, use the soil test recommendation or a 4-1-2 or 3-1-2 ratio with slow release nitrogen. Always follow instructions on the bag for recommended amount per 1000 feet.

MOWING – Do not mow new grass until it is 2 to 3 inches high. Grass should be mowed frequently to prevent removing more than 40 to 50 percent of the growth at any one mowing. Mowing heights of established lawns are as follows;

Common Bermuda	1 to 1.5 inches
Hybrid Bermuda	0.5 to 0.75 inches
St. Augustine grass in sun	2.0 to 2.5 inches
St. Augustine in shade	2.5 to 3.5 inches

Lawns can be scalped in the spring to control winter weeds, help control thatch, and promote earlier spring green up. Scalping can be done right before spring green up but after the danger of a late freeze.

For additional information on turf grass contact the Ellis County Office of the Texas Cooperative Extension Service at 972-825-5175.

FINDING THOSE PLANTS

By Maureen Nitkowski, Master Gardener



Several folks who read this Ellis County Master Gardener column and want to use some of the recommended plants have asked for a list of sources for these plants. It would be great to be able to say that all plants are available at all times in a location near you but that would be the best of all possible worlds. Instead, I would suggest an informed shopping list and a dose of gardeners' patience.

First of all know the plant that you want. Usually the common name is sufficient if you have a good description as well. Some useful information to have is: annual/perennial, evergreen, growth habit, flower/fruit production, and time of bloom.

Keep your plant list with you in your wallet or purse. You might find that plant while shopping, visiting, or vacationing.

In addition to the nurseries check out the plant departments in the large retail stores. Occasionally, there are some good plant choices in these departments. However, the nurseries almost always provide knowledgeable staff to help you and might be willing to order plants for you.

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Please bear in mind that the largest selection of plants will be found during the spring and fall. It is extremely difficult for plant dealers to maintain a large, high quality inventory while the summer heat is with us. Likewise it is hard to establish new plants in your garden at that time.

Other sources for plants are catalogs which are specific to our region. In addition, botanic gardens offer plant sales during the year and Ellis County Master Gardeners will be offering plants for sale at the Ovilla Park on June 2, 2007 from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. In the meantime continue planning and get those garden beds ready for the plants which will come.

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

It's June - What Needs to be Done?

Planting and Sowing

- Plant crape myrtles in bloom to be certain you have the desired color. Be sure the mature height and spread of your variety will fit your selected site. Hand-water for the rest of the summer, as they can dry out quickly.
- Start seed for fall tomatoes early to mid-month.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- Re-blooming salvias (*S. greggii*, *S. Farinacea*) and fall-blooming perennials (Mexican mint marigold, mums, *Salvia leucantha*) should be pruned back periodically. Remove only the spent flowers and a few inches of stem below. This type of pruning should be completed prior to September 1, since flower buds begin forming about that time.
- Continue to fertilize your roses every 4 to 6 weeks. Apply a high-nitrogen fertilizer immediately after a flush of bloom.

This and That

- June is the time to select daylily varieties as they reach their peak of bloom.
- Dig and divide any crowded spring bulbs. Once the foliage has turned brown, spade them up and thin out the stand. Crowded bulbs produce fewer and smaller

blooms. They usually need thinning every 3 to 4 years.

- During the summer, it pays to conserve the moisture around plants. This is best done by mulching. Mulches are usually applied 2 to 6 inches deep, depending on the material used.
- Water lawn and garden thoroughly, but not too frequently. As a general rule, soak to a depth of 8 inches. Finish watering by early afternoon, to lessen the chance of disease.

Garden Watch

- Continue to spray susceptible roses for black-spot every 7 to 10 days.
- Check for insects and diseases. Destroy badly infested plants. Spider mites can be especially troublesome at this time. Select a chemical or organic control, or use insecticidal soap.

Monthly Tip

The feeding root system of a tree or shrub is located within the top 12 inches of the soil and at the "dripline" of the plant. Apply water and fertilizer just inside and a little beyond the dripline, not at the trunk.

Featured Plant for June



Butterfly Bush

Buddleja davidii 'Butterfly Bush'

Deciduous flowering shrub has arching open branching growth. Fragrant flowers bloom throughout summer. Drought tolerant and attracts butterflies and hummingbirds. Prune back every year for best blooms and shape.

Exposure: Sun

Size: Ht 5-6' Spread 4-6'

Spacing: 3-4'

What a man needs in gardening is a cast-iron back, With a hinge in it.

~Charles Dudley Warner, My Summer in a Garden, 1872

Garden Heirlooms

By Diane Hopkins, Master Gardener



A memory garden can transport you back in time to a wonderful childhood experience or a loving relationship you shared with a friend or relative. I recall such a time as a child, my sisters and I would race to an old tree at the corner of my grandmother's garden. Years before she had planted 'Hens and Chicks' around its base and we girls loved to check the new plants that sprung up in our absence. I recall that memory every time I see a pot of those clustering rosettes.

My grandmother loved to pass along plants from her gardens. Those chicks were just one of many plants she gave to friends and relatives when she visited in their homes. In turn, they would pass along a start of one of their favorite plants.

Trading plants, seeds, or cuttings with family and friends close to you is an economical way to gather healthy specimens suitable to your climate. When you pass along a plant remember to include written instructions for growing the plant. When you're given a plant ask how and where the plant will flourish? Is it suited for sun or shade and how much water does it require?

Some desirable sun-loving, pass-along plants are: cuttings of antique roses, crinum lilies, daylilies, Flame Acanthus, iris, larkspur, rock rose, four o'clock, and Russian sage. A few you might share for those shady areas are: cast-iron plant, wood violets, hostas, maiden fern, and Purple Heart.

As you continue exchanging plants and watching your garden grow you'll be amazed by the relationships you have formed and memories you have to cherish.

Lawn Watering Schedule

By Jackie Wilhite, Ellis County Master Gardener



Question: How often should I water my lawn?

Answer: Water your lawn only when the grass needs it. When you do water, wet the soil to a depth of 6 inches. Do not water again until the grass shows symptoms of drought stress—a dull bluish color, rolled or folded leaves, and persistent footprints. This usually occurs in 5 to 10 days, depending on the weather.

Follow these steps to determine how long to water in order to apply the right amount.

- 1) Set out 5 or 6 open-top cans randomly around the lawn.
- 2) Turn on your sprinkler or irrigation system for 30 minutes
- 3) Measure the depth of water in each individual can, and record the depths
- 4) Calculate the average depth of water from all of the cans.

Example: You placed five cans in your yard. The depths of water in the cans were 0.5 inches, 0.4 inches, 0.6 inches, 0.4 inches and 0.6 inches=0.5 inches in 30 minutes

- 5) Use a garden spade or a soil probe to find out how deeply the soil was wet during the 30 minutes when you know how much water was applied in 30 minutes and how deeply that volume of water wet the soil, determine how

long you must water to wet the soil to a depth of 6 inches.

Example: If your sprinkler sprayed 0.5 inches of water in 30 minutes and wet your soil to a depth of 3 inches you need to apply 1 inch of water to wet the soil to 6 inches. To do this you must water for 1 hour.

Run off from watering a lawn can waste a significant amount of water, which is costly and a poor use of a limited resources. Do not apply water faster than the soil can absorb it:

To prevent run off:

- 1) Check lawn while watering. If water begins running into the street or gutters, note how long it took before run-off occurred. This is the maximum amount of time you should water at one time.
- 2) Stop watering and allow the soil surface to dry (30 minutes to 1 hour)
- 3) Begin watering again and continue for the amount of time you have determined.
- 4) Continue this cycle until the appropriate amount of water

has been applied to wet the soil to a depth of 6 inches
Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

Gardening is a matter of your enthusiasm holding up until your back gets used to it.

~ Author Unknown

Two Heat-Tolerant Petunias Designated Newest Texas Superstars

By Diane Hopkins, Ellis County Master Gardener



Tidal Wave Cherry and its sister plant, Tidal Wave Silver, are the newest Texas Superstar releases. Tidal Wave Cherry petunias are a bright red that can be seen from a quarter mile away. It is a great plant to use in hot color schemes where bright colors dominate. Or it can be toned down with softer flower or foliage colors. Tidal Wave Silver is white with a lavender blush that mixes well with purple foliage in cool color schemes.

Texas Superstar program is a cooperative effort between university and industry leaders to identify pest-resistant plants adapted to Texas conditions. The candidate plants are never sprayed with any pesticide and grown at several locations in rigorous Texas A&M Agriculture field trials.

Both petunias have been tested in locations across the state and have been found to be showy and withstand the heat and humidity of Texas summers. They need at least 6 hours of sun each day to flower well. In our heavier soils, chlorosis - yellowing of leaves - is a problem with some petunias but not with the new Superstars. They grow from 18 to 20 inches tall when spaced 1 foot apart in the garden. If planted at wider spacing, they will spread up to 4 feet but won't grow quite as tall.

Tidal Wave petunias are best purchased as flowering plants in containers that are 6 inches or larger. Plant in well drained soils and begin fertilizing one week after the plants have analysis such as 19-5-9 at the rate of 2-3 the fertilizer into the soil and remove any that tizer monthly throughout the growing season.

Petunias have few serious insect or disease tions. As for fungus diseases, these can be It is also important to remember that petunias touched the flower it will close up and appear open again, though the Tidal Wave flowers recover more rapidly than the grandiflora types. So, when you water, use a watering wand or drip irrigation system so plants are watered well at ground level.



been planted. Use a slow-release fertilizer with an pounds per 100 square feet of bed area. Be sure to water may have fallen on the foliage of the plants. Apply fer-

problems. Slugs and aphids are the occasional excep- largely avoided if petunias are not watered from above. don't like water on their flowers. Once water has to be wilted. It will take several days before it is fully

In addition, both new varieties also tolerate cold temperatures well. Flowering plants set out in October or early November have survived winters in north Texas as long as the soil has good drainage. Flowering will cease by winter, but will start again with the first warm days of late winter and early spring. The plants produce 18-inch mounds of cheerful color very early in the spring, a feat usually not seen until late spring or early summer in Texas gardens.

A Scented Garden

By Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener

Fragrant garden plants make gardens special. Fragrance, though often subtle, can make a difference between an ordinary garden and a memorable one. We gardeners select so many of our plants for their colorful flowers. This year let's vow to add more fragrance to our garden by selecting some of the following plants that are favorites here in Texas.

During the cool weather months, you simply have to experience a fence planted with sweet peas. Seeded or set out early in the spring, they will add fragrance to the landscape from February to May. Pinks; members of the dianthus family, are extremely fragrant with their spicy scented blossoms that fragrant the air until warm weather arrives. Plant them close to your entry so you can enjoy their fragrance as you pass by.

Looking for a vine, try Carolina Jessamine. It commands all the attention in the landscape with its impressive burst of yellow fragrant funnel-shaped flowers that make quite a show in early spring.

Texas Mountain Laurel is a native tree. This evergreen produces blossoms with a strong, grape-like fragrance reminiscent of 'Grapette' soda that we old-timers will remember. Although it is a slow grower, it is worth the wait. Blooms appear March and April. Southern Magnolia, also an evergreen, is a charmer best known for its fragrant showy flowers. Little Gem is a smaller version of the Magnolia that is better adapted to small city lots.

If a hedge is in your plans, Rosemary could be a good choice. This perennial is evergreen, you can cook with it, and as a bonus it has a wonderful fragrance and light blue blossoms. Brush against the foliage to release its wonderful scent. Rosemary likes to be kept on the dry side. If you need a hedge in a more moist location, Elaeagnus is an evergreen shrub with silvery leaves. This shrub will surprise you each fall with its sweetly fragrant, though obscure, flowers that ap-

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pear.

Used in our area as an annual, Nicotiana or flowering tobacco likes afternoon shade. Consider planting it around the porch or patio where you can enjoy its fragrance as you sit in the afternoon shade. The large tubular white flowers of Angel's trumpet, Datura, come out each evening for only one day. Enjoy its magnificent fragrance as you watch for the lunar moth (as large as a hummingbird) to come out at night to visit the blossom.

We immediately think of roses for their fragrance. You know, "Stop and smell the roses." Texas A&M in their Texas SuperStar program has developed "Marie Daly", an easy-care shrub rose with few thorns and lots of very fragrant double pink blooms. The outstanding fragrance of heirloom roses is indisputable. Heirloom roses such as Lady Banks and Baroness Rothschild are vigorous and relatively carefree.

A must for every gardener's summer garden would have to include the salvias (there are over 700 species). Salvia greggii, or autumn sage, has wonderful foliage whose fragrance becomes obvious when you simply brush by the plant. Flowers and foliage of Pineapple Sage invigorate the air with a pineapple scent in the fall months. The flowers are edible.

During the cooler months of fall, look for two cousins that fragrance the garden, anise scented Copper Canyon Daisy and Mexican Mint Marigold (Texas tarragon). Both have bright yellow blossoms that complement fall asters. A vine on a trellis should include Autumn Clematis, a vine that blooms in late summer with a knock-your-socks-off fragrance coming from creamy-white flowers.

The list could go on and on, but the most important thing is to include some fragrance in your landscape. Breeding has removed the scent from many species. You may have to sniff around to find the right plant to perfume your garden.

Comfrey

By Melinda Kocian, Ellis County Master Gardener



Comfrey is a rank-growing herb with large "donkey-ear" leaves that remind one of green sandpaper; the leaves are covered with fine hairs. They are easily grown in any good garden soil and are tolerant of shade. Remove the flower stalks of those grown for their foliage and propagate by division or root-cuttings. Once established it is difficult to eradicate. Root pieces left in the ground will produce new plants. Comfrey is hardy throughout Texas. It can be slightly invasive, but makes a beautiful blue flower that can be used in arrangements.



The Indians refer to this plant as 'boneknit'. It is believed to mend broken bones, relieve sore muscles and stop bleeding, by using it in the form of a compress. It is now used in face creams, which is said to clear certain skin problems, such as acne and brown spots.

What I love about it is how it relieves the itching of poison ivy. Cut a leaf from the plant; with a knife make a slit down the vein on the back, spread it open and apply the liquid to the infected area. Do this several times a day for 2-3 days and your poison ivy will begin to dry up and the itching will stop. It's also good for rashes, scratches, and bruises; any sort of abrasions. Comfrey roots and leaves contain allantoin, a cell proliferant that speeds up the natural replacement of body cells. This means that it will promote the swift healing of damaged or injured tissue. Use only as a poultice; don't take comfrey internally.

It's also good as a fertilizer. Add to your compost pile or use as a mulch in your beds; it is a good source of potassium. The leaves break down quickly.



Gardening is about enjoying the smell of things growing in the soil, getting dirty without feeling guilty, and generally taking the time to soak up a little peace and serenity.
-Lindley Karstens, noproblemgarden.com

TOMATOES 'TIL FROST

If you want home-grown tomatoes all fall and your spring planting normally wears out too soon, consider planting more tomatoes in July. Plant them deeply, keep them well-watered and mulched, and provide some shade till the new plants are established enough to withstand our intense Texas sun. Tomatoes love the heat and will grow more rapidly than your spring crop.

If you can't find nursery transplants now, start some from seed in pots of sterile seed-start mix. Some gardeners have good luck with cuttings from existing plants, rooting them in a glass of water for transplanting.

Late tomato plantings will likely have plenty of tomatoes in various stages of maturity when a frost does come this fall. Just pull up the whole plant and place in your garage to pick as they ripen. Or you can pick all the immature tomatoes and place them in a newspaper-lined and covered box in a cool place. Check these tomatoes daily. Though you will lose some, it is possible you will be eating fresh sliced tomatoes for Christmas dinner.

Grape Tomatoes

By Melinda Kocian, Ellis County Master Gardener

Just a few years ago, grape tomatoes were considered a specialty item. Now they are much more readily in the grocery stores, as well as restaurants.

Most grocery stores have decreased cherry tomatoes on the shelves, only to increase grape tomatoes because of their flavor and usage as snack. .

Grape tomatoes are much smaller than cherry tomatoes; consequently are great for adding to salads, because they are much easier to get on a salad fork. Many claim that grape tomatoes have more flavor than any of the smaller sized tomatoes. Grape tomatoes are a much harder crop to grow because of their size; it takes more time to pick them than other varieties. They grow in clusters but should be picked individually.

They should also be picked when the fruit colors up to a pink or light red. If picked before there is enough pink, they won't be sweet enough. On the other hand, if they're picked when they are is too red, they tomatoes won't hold up very long, but will last one to two weeks if picked at just the right pink color stage.

They are a very difficult crop to grow; fertilizing at just the right time and in the correct amount is the key. They are also very sensitive to cold.

We planted the Jelly Bean Hybrid this year; we'll see how it does!

Speaking of Tomatoes.....

Now that we are starting to get fruit maturing on our tomato plants, something we have all been anxiously awaiting for months, we need to start considering what we are going to do with all our bounty. If you've planted more than you can possibly eat or give to family and friends, here are a few suggestions for you extra: soups, freezing them for later use in soups, sauces and stews, canning salsas, etc. I like to quarter them, put them on a wax paper covered cookie sheet and place in the freezer. Once they are frozen, place them in plastic freezer bags to be brought out when ever you need them for a recipe. If frozen individually, you can get out of the bag just what you need for your recipe.

Basil. I love basil to go along with most of my tomato recipes. I harvest the leaves, wash them thoroughly, pat dry, and placing them on a long sheet of plastic wrap, forming them into a long cigar-shaped log. Roll the plastic over and over into a log, making sure to tuck the ends under, then freeze. Several "cigars" can be put into one zip-lock bag.

Another way of preserving your basil: wash thoroughly and pat dry as above, but this time place a sheet of paper toweling in the microwave, place basil leaves loosely on top, place another piece of paper towel over the basil leaves. Then microwave for a minute. Remove from the microwave, let them cool completely. Now all you have to do is crumble them up with you fingers and place them in a canning jar with a tight-fitting lid and you now have fresh, dried basil!

Melinda's Cream of Tomato Soup

1 ½ cups chicken broth	¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup coarsely chopped onion	Few dashes coarsely ground pepper
4 medium tomatoes, peeler/quartered	1 cup milk
2 tablespoons butter	Fresh basil, thinly slivered, to taste
2 tablespoons flour	Worcestershire sauce

Combine chicken broth, onion and tomatoes in a saucepan. Bring mixture to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 10-15 minutes. Carefully pour hot mixture into a blender, cover and blend on a medium setting for 30-60 seconds or until smooth.

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In the same saucepan, melt the butter. Stir in the flour, salt, and pepper and cook until the flour starts bubbling and is slightly brown and (you don't a pasty taste). Add the milk all at once. Whisk to blend out any lumps, stir constantly until mixture is thickened and bubbly,. Stir in the blended tomato mixture. Cook and stir until the soup is heated through. Season to taste with additional salt and pepper. Add basis, adjusting seasonings to desired taste. Add basil at the very last, too much cooking will make it taste bitter. Yield: 3-4 servings. Preparation time: approximately 30 minutes.

Jubilant June

By Carolyn Foster, Ellis County Master Gardener



Gardening Smart: Some gardening news and tidbits that will keep your plants growing healthy and strong. But first if you love playing in the soil or have questions about your garden or landscape, I invite you to check out the Ellis County Master Gardeners. You can call 972 825-5175 or visit our website @ www.ECMGA.com.

As we bid a sad farewell to our bountiful, beautiful wildflowers our attention turns to our gardens. Our perennials should be bursting from the soil nicely and annuals growing and spreading with lots of blooms. I'm still transplanting the over-age of perennials to share with the Master Gardener's Greenhouse project. You can too, just call the office about donations.

Deadheading will insure continuous blooming and so will regular feeding. There are both organic and chemical types of fertilizers. The organics include fish emulsion, manure, blood and bone meal and my personal favorite, sludge, which is worked into the soil. Organics are a bit more expensive than the chemical fertilizers but also tend to last longer and add more micro organisms in the soil. Be aware, however, that some organics don't contain all the elements necessary for total plant growth needs.

There are dry (granular) and liquid chemical fertilizers. Some act quickly- and others are timed-released. Timed released will feed two to six months depending on the brand. Some are released each time you water and others are released when the soil temperature reaches a certain level. All chemical fertilizers have a percentage of nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium; by law, listed on the package in that order. Nitrogen works with the leaves and stems, while phosphorous and potash helps flowers' fruit and root growth. Liquid fertilizers are best applied to damp soil and water well after dry fertilization applications.

Don't apply when temperatures are high, plants are in need of water, or the wind is high so as to avoid drifts.

For best results, consistent growth and abundant flowers, our plants need a constant supply of moisture. A deep soaking is much better than frequent light watering. Deep soaking help plants develop deep, strong root systems. Frequent light watering results in shallow root systems and encourage diseases and weed growth. When you water, water well and let the soil dry slightly between watering. Drought tolerant plants require less watering. The general rule of thumb for watering is "DEEPLY and INFREQUENTLY".

Let's talk about diseases. To cut down fungus diseases, avoid wetting the foliage of plants when watering. Try to water early so that plants can dry before nightfall.

BOTRYTIS BLIGHT: (Gray Mold) over-winters on infected plant parts, attacks weak and dying foliage, especially old dying flowers. It's a grayish-brown, often fuzzy growth on buds/flowers/leaves. Flowers come apart easily when touched. Pick off and destroy faded and infected blooms; spray with fungicides.

DAMPING OFF: A fungus most often a problem in damp soil. Stems of young seedlings rot at ground level and fall over or fail to emerge (pre-emergent damping off). Do not over water seedlings, try misting instead.

FUNGAL DISEASES: (Powdery mildew & rust). Spread by wind and splashing water; over-winters on plant debris. Powdery mildew is shown by white powdery masses of spores on leaves, shoots and buds; distorted shoots or stunted foliage. Rust is shown by yellow and green mottling on upper leaf surface opposite pustules of powdery, rust-colored spores on the lower surface. Remove and destroy all infected plant parts and debris and apply fungicide.

VIRUS DISEASES: (Including Mosaic & Aster Yellows) Spread by propagation of infected plants, by aphids and some leafhoppers. Mottling or mosaic patterns are on leaves; growth is stunted or distorted. Dispose of affected plants. Prevention is the best control.

There are others; call us at 972-825-5175 or email us: www.ECMGA.com, with the symptoms and we can help you identify the culprit.

Keep your garden growing strong with the proper cultural care and you'll have a minimum of problems. "**KEEP GARDEN, POTS and TOOLS CLEAN**".

Let's talk about insects. Insect population is influenced a lot by temperature, humidity and precipitation. Seedlings and transplants are so inviting to slugs, snails, sow bugs and cut worms. But there are also aphids, beetles, mites, thrips and whiteflies, just to name a

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few. They can be controlled by chemical, organic or cultural techniques. Most pests are insects but not all insects are pest. There are beneficial insects that are our friends, so make sure you learn to recognize them. Call 972 825-5175 for our Beneficial Insect pamphlet.

The first step is proper identification. Then we want to learn about the life cycle, seasonal cycle, habits and their host plants.

APHIDS: Soft bodied, green, brown or reddish insects the suck plant juices. Cluster on shoots, bud or undersides of leaves. Foliage and blooms are stunted or deformed. Sticky honeydew attracts ants. Lady beetles feed on aphids or use insecticidal chemicals or soap or systemic insect controls. **MITES:** Minute pests that suck juices from underside of foliage. Stippled leaves appear dry, turn brown, red, yellow or gray; then curl and drop off. Webs may be visible on the leaves. Clean up trash to destroy breeding places. Treat with insecticide three times at 4 to 5 day intervals. **THRIPS:** Tiny, brownish, yellow winged insects. Flecked or silver-white streaking and stippling appear on foliage and flowers. Dispose of spent blooms and apply insecticide or Sevin to control. **WHITEFLIES:** Nymphs are scale-like, flat, oval, pale green, brown, or black depending on species. Pure white adults are easy to see. Leaves become mottled, turn yellow and die.

Chemical kill on contact or systemic and kill insects as the suck juices from leaves. Cover all plant surfaces. Inspect your garden often to monitor insect numbers and activity. Always read and re-read chemical labels, follow mixing and application instructions and triple rinse your equipment. **REMEMBER, MORE IS NOT BETTER.** Always choose those with **LOW TOXICITY** for humans and warm-blooded animals.

Mechanical methods also provide some control: Paper collars around the stems of plants prevent cutworm damage; sticky barriers on trunks deter crawling insects, aluminum foil on the soil under plants repel aphids, hand picking insects and egg masses is quick and sure, rolled up newspaper traps earwigs, slugs and pill bugs can be trapped under boards or the pan filled with stale beer; a 2- quart with a 10% solution of molasses and water will attract and trap grasshopper and some beetles, some can be washed off with a 1- or 2- % solution of Ivory liquid, some swear by a solution containing onions, garlic and pepper mixtures.

Let's talk about biological control. Biological control uses parasites, predators or pathogens (bacteria, viruses and fungi) to keep pest insect populations low. Check you local nursery for products they carry.

BACILLUS THURINGIENSIS: (Bt) a bacterial insecticide controls the larvae of moths and butterflies. The spores are harmless to warm blooded animals and beneficial insects. **BACILLUS POPILLIAE:** Milky disease bacteria controls grubs in some areas. **NOSEMA LOCUSTAE** is a spore (Protozoan) used to control grasshoppers. It is sprayed on the plants and when ingested by grasshoppers germinate, causing death. Slow control. **TRICHOGREMMA:** Wasp attack the eggs of more than 200 pest including cut worms, armyworms, fruit worms, moths and butterfly eggs. Wasps should be released when trouble is first noted and a follow up treatment may be needed. **GREEN LACEWINGS:** The larvae (aphid lions) prey on aphids, spider mites, leafhoppers, thrips, moth eggs and small larvae. Adults feed on honeydew, nectar and pollen. They must have an ample supply of food or they will leave. **PRAYING MANTIS:** The mantis is a voracious predator and is cannibalistic immediately after hatching. Mantis' usually wait for the food to come to them rather than hunt for it. They prefer grasshoppers, crickets, bees, wasp and flies. **LADY BEETLES:** Aphids are the food of choice, but will eat mealy bugs, spider mites, soft bodied pests and eggs. They will leave is food is not available. In hot dry weather they enter a non-active state and feeding and reproduction cease thus provide little control.

Companion planting is growing in popularity. Some examples are inter-planting tomatoes with basil to deter tomato hornworms and roses with chives or marigolds to repel aphids.

This month watch for bagworms on junipers; spray with Bt or hand pick once attached to twigs, prune webworms while webs are still small, leaf rollers on cannas, redbuds, sweet gum and vincas. Treat with a systemic insecticide; spider mites cause fine tan mottling on marigolds, beans, tomatoes and junipers. Treat with miticide or insecticide.

Time to fertilize landscape trees, shrubs, vines, ground covers and lawn with high nitrogen, slow release products; flowers and veggies with high nitrogen or all nitrogen granular plant food, container plants each time you water if you didn't use a slow release, iron deficient plants in alkaline soils with iron/sulfur additive (yellow leaves with dark green veins on new growth).

Plant turf early in month to establish roots before heat of mid-summer. Start on fall tomatoes and set out last week of month. Remove flowers from coleus, caladiums, basil, santolina, lamb's ear and mums to keep plants vegetative.

To learn how YOU can become a Master Gardener, call the 972 825-5175. We are very active in the community and have a place just for YOU.

Don't wear perfume in the garden — unless you want to be pollinated by bees.

~ Anne Raver