



Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume I, Issue 8

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

September, 2007

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. Go to our website: www.ECMGA.com to read it online or click "subscribe" to receive it via email. Thank you. Melinda Kocian, editor

Lighthouse for Learning

(with the Ellis County Master Gardener)

For reservations, call 972-923-4631; ask for Melissa Cobb

Monday, Sept. 24, 6-7:30 pm - Soil Preparation: The first thing one must learn the proper way to prep your beds to grow the plants of your choice. Instructor: Nancy Fenton, cost: \$10.00

Mondays, Sept. 24 thru October 15, 6-8:00 pm (4 classes) - "Ag 101" - **Designed for New or Small Acreage Landowners, Session A:** Join this experienced instructor as you cover topics; soils and soil fertility, soil testing, pasture management, basic livestock productions and pond management. Instructor: Mark Arnold, County Extension Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources, cost \$20.00.

Thursday, Sept. 27, 6:30-7:30 pm - Butterfly Gardening: Come learn what plants will bring butterflies to your flower beds, learn when to plant and what to plant to keep these beauties in your yard. Instructor: Betty Reuscher, cost: \$10.00

Thursday, Oct. 4, 6:30-7:30 pm - The Lazy Gardener: Learn how to have beautiful gardens around your home with minimum care. Includes a variety of plant ideas to make growing and maintaining different types of gardens with little effort, water and expertise. Bring photos or drawings of your yard and problem areas and find the pathway to that beautiful landscape you have always wanted. Instructor: DeAnn Bell, cost \$10.00.

Monday, October 15, 6-7:30 pm - Rainwater Harvesting: Learn the basics of rainwater harvesting, collection systems and materials needed for landscaping and gardening with rainwater. Instructor: Pam Daniel, cost \$10.00.

Monday, Oct. 15, 6-7:30 pm - Care and Propagation of Houseplants: Learn the care and propagation of your houseplants so you can have more for yourself and friends. Instructor: Diane Hopkins, cost \$10.00.

Monday, Oct. 18, 6:07:30 pm - Native Plants: Learn what plants are native and how easy these plants adapt to your garden. Instructor: Bill Abbott, cost \$10.00.

Monday, Oct. 22, 6-7:30 pm - Xeriscaping: Come learn how to plant a beautiful bed with low use of water and still have a beautiful yard.....not just cactus or Yucca's. Instructor: James Bell, Urban Farmers, cost \$10.00.

Mondays, Oct. 22, 6-8:00 pm (4 classes) - "Ag 101" - **Designed for New or Small Acreage Landowners, Session B:** Ag 101 is also offered later in October and early November. Students may choose either session A or session B. Instructor: Mark Arnold, County Extension Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources, cost \$20.00.

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!

Come Visit....

The Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market

The Waxahachie Downtown Association, in conjunction with an information booth manned by Master Gardeners, runs a Farmer's Market every Saturday morning from 8:00 until 1:00 p.m. now through October 20th.

The Farmer's Market is a wonderful place to pick up fresh flowers, home-grown fruits and vegetables from our local farmers, and cold fruit smoothies and much, much more. Also, the Master Gardeners are on hand to answer your horticulture questions,.

Plus.....it's a wonderful place to meet friends and neighbors, around the historic square. It's a hubbub of activity every Saturday. So **COME ON DOWN!**

Inside this issue:

September's Happenings	2
What Needs to be done?	3
Bad News Plants	3
Water Garden-Keeping it Cool	4
Coral Honeysuckle	4
One Tough Plant	5
Photo Contest-last Call!!!	5
Roses in the Fall	6
Texas Urban Landscape Guide	7
Rose Hips	8
Gardening for Wildlife	8
EarthKind News	9
Recipes	10
Things to do in September	11

What's Happening in September

Tuesday, Sept. 11, 7:00 pm - The Greenery, Instructor: Gailon Hardin will bring information on Native plants. She is past president of the Native Plant Society of Texas-North Central Chapter, Tarrant County Master Gardener, Master Naturalist, Master Composter, Plant Propagation Specialist and developed a native plant landscape on her one-acre property that requires watering no more than every 30 days. Gailon contributed over 1,000 hours to her community each year; in her spare time!

Saturday, September 8, 9:00 am - The Greenery, **Birding Class**: Jean Hefferman, an avid birder, will be bringing actual preserved birds from the University of Dallas. This will be a very informative and stimulating class for all birders.

Saturday, Sept. 8, 9-12 noon - **Dallas Arboretum's 2nd Annual Bulb Event**, \$30 or \$27 for members. Order pre-chilled, Arboretum approved bulbs for a November delivery date right to your home! For more info or to make reservations call 214-515-6540 or email www.dallasarboretum.org.

September 15 - Waxahachie Downtown Square, **Cotton Festival**: This year's Cotton Festival will be held sponsored by the Farmer's Market. The 4-H will bring a cotton gin. They will show how to pick the cotton and how to run it through the gin. There will also be spinning and weaving demonstrations. Bring your family out and help celebrate Ellis County's cotton heritage. It will be a great learning opportunity for children or grandchildren.

Saturday, October 6, 2007 - Fall Festival, Petal Pushers, Cedar Hill, TX.

10:30 - Chris Wiesinger, one of the owners of the Southern Bulb Company will be speaking on heirloom bulbs.

1:00 - Rosa Finsley (previous owner of Kings Creek) will be speaking on wildflowers.

*Antique bulbs and wild flower seeds will be available for sale.

The State Fair of Texas Contests

The Texas Department of Agriculture would like you to participate in the following contests to be held in conjunction with the State Fair of Texas.

EVERYTHING'S BIGGER IN TEXAS

The Texas Department of Agriculture would like to invite Texas Farmers Markets, Pick-Your-Own Farms and Master Gardener organizations to compete in a vegetable growing competition to be judged at the 2007 State Fair of Texas!

Eligible Categories:	Tomato	Pumpkin
	Watermelon	Pepper (Jalapeno and Bell)
	Cabbage	Miscellaneous (example: Squash)

HOMEMADE ICE CREAM FREEZE-OFF

A contest will be held by the Texas Department of Agriculture and Sponsored by Southwest Dairy Farmers and Blue Bell Creameries. The content will be held on **Sunday, October 7, 2007** at the Food and Fiber Pavilion at the State Fair of Texas from 12-2 pm.

Entries must be received by **October 1, 2007**.

Categories are:	Plain – Chocolate and Vanilla
	Fruit – Any single Texas fruit
	Novelty – Mixed ingredients and original ideas (ex: Banana Nut, Jalapeño)

Contest will be held on October 13. Entry forms and photo for each entry must be received by October 5. Additional details and entry forms are available at the Ellis County Extension Office, 701 S. I-35E, Suite 3, Waxahachie, 972-825-5175.

Grand Opening! Friday and Saturday, September 14 & 15

Thank you Ark Country Store
For sponsoring
The Ellis County Master Gardener's program
Saturday mornings at 9:00 a.
m.
On KBEC 1390

Ark Country Store

209 S. Hwy 77

Waxahachie, Texas

8-6 and Saturday

Demonstrations • Prizes • Food



Interested in Becoming An Ellis County Master Gardener?

For further information, Call the Texas Cooperative Extension Office - 972-825-5175,
or log onto our website: www.ECMGA.com, **or** stop by:
701 S. I-35E, Suite 3
Waxahachie, TX 75165

It's September - What Needs to be Done?



Datura (Native)

Datura wrightii 'Angel's Trumpet'

Perennial flowering shrub blooms all summer with large white or purple night-opening flowers. Easily grown from seed, dies to the ground in winter, but returns each spring.

Drought tolerant, but seeds are poisonous.

Size: Ht 3-5' Spread 5-6'

Spacing: 4-6'

Planting and Sowing

- There is still time to sow wildflower seeds. Consider bluebonnet, Indian paintbrush, coneflower, gaillardia, black-eyed Susan, evening primrose and many others. Soils should be weed- and grass-free and lightly cultivated prior to planting.
- Plant fall perennials (mums, fall asters, copper canyon daisies) now.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- Rejuvenate heat-stressed geraniums and begonias for the fall season by lightly pruning, fertilizing and watering.
- Remove weak, unproductive growth and old seed heads from crape myrtles and roses to stimulate new growth for fall beauty.

This and That

- Prepare the beds for spring-flowering bulbs as soon as possible. It's important to cultivate the soil and add generous amounts of organic matter to improve water drainage. Bulbs will rot without proper drainage.
- Divide spring flowering perennials such as iris, Shasta daisy, gaillardia, rudbeckia, cannas, daylilies, violets, liriope and ajuga.
- If you intend to "force" blooms from your Christmas cactus in October, be sure to keep them on the dry side this month.

Garden Watch

- Continue a disease spray schedule on roses as black-spot and mildew can be extremely damaging in September and October.

Tip of the Month

Dr. Doug Welch, an Extension horticulturist and proponent of Xeriscape landscaping, says a well-designed Xeriscape landscape should look like it belongs in any popular home and gardening magazine – in other words, a creative, beautiful solution to reducing the yard's need for supplemental irrigation water.

An added benefit of Xeriscape landscapes is less maintenance. A well-designed landscape can decrease maintenance by as much as 50 percent through reduced mowing; once-a-year mulching; elimination of weak, unadapted plants; and more efficient watering techniques.

Bad News Plants

By Maureen Nitkowski, Ellis County Master Gardener

Gardeners spend a good deal of time removing invading weeds and controlling rapidly growing plants in the yard. This can be frustrating for most of us, but we usually reach a compromise by deciding how many weeds or how much growth is acceptable before we need to intervene. There are two plants, however, whose presence on our property is never tolerated because they are potent allergens to most people. These plants are ragweed and poison ivy.

Ragweed (Ambrosia) is an annual known also as wild tansy or hogweed. It grows in over grazed pastures and along roadsides and fences where it can be 1 to 6 feet tall. The small greenish male flowers are abundant at the end of the stems and produce huge quantities of pollen. The leaves are deeply cut and sometimes fern like. It is best to remove ragweed as soon as you recognize it and before seed production in the fall. It is ragweed which aggravates asthma and hay fever rather than the often-blamed golden rod which blooms at the same time.

Poison Ivy (Rhusradicans) is a woody perennial which grows as a small shrub in open areas or a vine on trees, fences and buildings. Its leaves are grouped in threes and can be notched or smooth; white berries hold the seeds which are often dispersed by birds. All parts of the plant contain an oil which is a skin irritant; this oil remains effective even after the plant has been cut down and dried. Poison ivy should only be handled while wearing gloves and should never be burned since the smoke carries the oil to the lungs, eyes and skin. To kill the plant herbicides are applied to the leaves or to the stump after cutting near ground level. Plants can also be pulled out by hand. In either case dispose of the plant material by burying it, and be sure to wash gloves and exposed clothing separately from other laundry.

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.



2008 Master Gardener Calendar

Planning is underway for our 2nd annual Ellis County Master Gardener calendar. If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please contact Melinda Kocian at 972-814-1124.

Don't miss out, sponsorship is limited. The 2007 calendar was a huge success in 2007 and the 2008 issue will be even better!

Keeping Your Water Garden Cool

Submitted by Diane Hopkins, Ellis County Master Gardener



Water gardens are often perceived as cool oases. It's a fact that cool water in a pond is more than aesthetically pleasing. A pond's water must be cool for the fish and plants to thrive. High water temperatures are unhealthy for a water garden, and can be even deadly. Fortunately, hot water problems generally don't occur overnight. Emergency steps can reverse water heating troubles. And some simple techniques can help your pond water stay cool.

Water doesn't need to reach the boiling point or even feel hot for it to cause stress or even real harm to your pond life. If the water temperature gets above 80 degrees Fahrenheit it is already too hot for most fish and plants.

- If warm water is already a problem in your pond, using these quick emergency measures can save your plants and fish before it's too late. If possible, create an instant shade over your pond.
- Add cooler water. If you must change more than 20 percent of the water and are using a municipal water supply you will need to use a de-chlorinator; a product that removes the chlorine added by municipal water supplies.
- Boost the circulation of the water. Make sure your pump is up to the job; even the smallest of ponds can handle a 3,000 gallon/hour pump. If your pump is rated less than this, consider installing one that meets this standard.

If your pond has overheated even once in a typical summer season, you should consider making some permanent improvements that will lower the heat, make it more beautiful and easier to maintain.

- Add aquatic plants to your pond. Attractive water lilies can shade a large area of your pond; it's recommended to have at least 40 percent of your water garden's surface covered in vegetation.
- Keep the pond clean. In most climates an annual cleaning is required to maintain a pond's ecological vitality.
- Increase the depth of your pond. Your pond should have a good-sized space that is at least two feet deep. As the water circulates through the pond this helps keep the entire ecosystem cool and balanced.

In the end, knowing how to regulate the water temperature in your water garden will benefit both the aquatic life in the garden and provide a soothing oasis for your enjoyment.

Coral Honeysuckle—A Very Fine Vine

by Betty Reuscher, Ellis County Master Gardener



One of the most versatile plants for North Texas is Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*). This very adaptable native vine is suitable for climbing a porch support or a trellis in the garden. At home in a variety of soils, coral honeysuckle will grow in sun or partial shade. Because it doesn't have tendrils, which attach to climbing surfaces, it may need extra support or tiebacks to help growth.



Springtime brings the best show of long tubular crimson blooms, which form sporadically until late fall. Plant coral honeysuckle where you can view it because the blooms attract hummingbirds and butterflies. Birds love the fruits that follow. Maximum spread is typically 12 feet. If space does not permit the spread of a full vine, it may be sheared into a mounding shrub form.

Coral honeysuckle is a vigorous grower and will quickly cover an arbor when grown in full sun. However, this vine does not spread out of control quite as easily as Japanese honeysuckle. Propagation is by softwood cuttings that root easily or layering stem sections where they touch the ground.

Even though it harbors no serious pest or disease problems, aphids' juices may coat the leaves with sticky honeydew. High-pressure water sprays will dislodge aphids. Occasionally scale insects may infest stems and branches. Spray with horticultural oil in the spring.

I have had good luck using coral honeysuckle to cover an unsightly electrical box. Occasionally I have to redirect the vine branches to maintain coverage, but the plant is very forgiving and easy to train. It demands little maintenance, so I have more time for other garden chores

It is a golden maxim to cultivate the garden for the nose, and the eyes will take care of themselves. ~ Robert Louis Stevenson



ONE TOUGH PLANT

Submitted by Maureen Nitkowski, Ellis County Master Gardener



Several years ago Ellis County was in the third year of a drought cycle. By August the landscape had gone beyond parched to the point that dried vegetation was bleached from even its brown color. In the midst of this gray plant desert purple spikes that resembled thistle appeared in bloom. This plant is a Texas native called Eryngo (*Eryngium leaven worthii*).

Eryngo does have has fuzzy purple sides. A suggested use in the garden would be to group a few plants together (away from walkways and play areas!) among other plants. It is a good cut flower if taken at full color and used in a dry arrangement. Of course it is a great plant for the driest, hottest spot in your yard.

prickly leaves like thistle but it is a member of the parsley family. It grows 1 ½ to 2 feet tall and flowers, 2 to 3 inches across opening from spiny bracts. It is found in meadows and along road-

I do admire Eryngo for blooming at the hottest time of the year. Recently I discovered one of its cousins in a plant catalogue from the Pacific Northwest. It might be a pricier plant than our Texas native but it sure isn't tougher.

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

Call for Entries for Ellis County Master Gardener Photography Contest

The Ellis County Master Gardeners challenge photographers from all levels of experience to capture their ideal horticultural image in the inaugural Master Gardener photography contest sponsored by the Ellis County Master Gardeners and The Waxahachie Daily Light.

The deadline for entries is September 30, 2007. Winners will be announced on October 15, 2007. Winners will be recognized on the contest's website www.ECMGA.com, in their E-Gardening newsletter, and in the Waxahachie Daily Light newspaper. Images are to be submitted in a digital format as per guidelines found on the contest's website.

The three categories for 2007 are:

- Single specimen: i.e., a single tulip, field of bluebonnets, etc.
- In The Garden: i.e., water gardens, butterfly gardens, rooftop gardens, full backyards, flower boxes, fairy gardens, container gardens, etc.
- Garden Bounty: i.e., herbs, fruits, veggies, bundle of tomatoes, peas fresh on the vine, a spectacular gourd, etc.

Images will be judged by a panel of judges based on technical quality (sharpness & correct exposure), composition, creativity and originality. No identifiable people in the photographs, please.

The official rules and entry form are available online at <http://www.ECMGA.com>. For more information on the Ellis County Master Gardeners, visit their website at www.ECMGA.com.




The Ellis County Master Gardeners invite photographers from all levels of expertise to enter our first ever Photo Contest.

Photo Contest

CATEGORIES:
Single specimen
In the Garden
Garden Bounty

Contest runs
May 1 – September 30, 2007

For a complete copy of the rules and application form, please log on to: www.ECMGA.com







Presented by:
Ellis County Master Gardeners and
The Waxahachie Daily Light




ROSES IN THE FALL

by Jerry Parsons, Ph.D.

Horticulture Specialist, Texas Agricultural Extension Service in San Antonio

"A rose by any other name is just as sweet". But would it create the same joy and excitement? People like roses. And would-be rose growers purchase thousands of bushes annually, anticipating the beauty they are famous for producing.

In Texas, where everything is bigger and better, rose growing is no exception. Rose blooms may last longer in cooler climates, but cooler climates do not afford the potential for 2 spectacular bloom seasons as Texas does each year. Most of us expect our roses to bloom well in the spring, but we overlook the best possible rose season--fall.

Hot weather greatly reduce the life-span and beauty of rose blooms. During the spring rose-bloom season, Texas weather is making the transition from winter to summer. Unfortunately, the transition period may only last several days. Texas temperatures rapidly change from frosty to scorching.

In comparison, fall is ideal for rose blooms. Usually, our extremely hot weather ends in September and cooler temperatures, especially at night, signal that the "second spring" of South Central Texas has begun. These cooler temperatures stimulate rose bush growth and intensify the color of the rose blooms. Many people do not prepare their roses for this second spring, so they miss the most spectacular, longest-lasting bloom period.

September is the time to act. Roses should be pruned or groomed during the first 2 weeks in September--no later than September 20. Fall pruning is lighter than in the spring. Cut about 1/4 - 1/3 of the bush.

When pruning miniatures, other than cleaning them out, simply cut off all the blooms. When pruning standard size roses, remove all the blooms and bloom pods. When removing the recommended 1/4 of the bush, cut all canes back to the pencil-sized wood, if the variety permits; and remove any crossing canes which might rub and damage adjoining ones. Also remove any dead or diseased wood. The general shape of a rose bush should be open-centered or vase-like, with canes evenly distributed around the outside. To prolong the bloom period, you may want to prune only 1/2 of your rose bush at a time, then wait a week to complete the process. The half that was pruned first will bloom first, about 45 days after pruning occurred. Remember to complete all fall pruning no later than September 20.

The peak rose bloom season should begin in mid-October. Remove and dispose of all diseased leaves with black spots on the foliage. Black spot and powdery mildew fungus must be prevented rather than cured. Black spot and powdery mildew are fungus diseases. Prevention is easily accomplished by using Funginex fungicide on a 7-10 day spray schedule. Orthene insecticide may be added for control of thrips (thrips cause blooms to stay closed or be misshapen). By September, the spray interval should be shortened to every 7 days since disease is more prevalent. Spraying should continue until the first hard freeze occurs. After fall pruning has been completed, give the bushes a "shot in the arm" with the addition of fertilizer. Feeding with a water-soluble fertilizer should occur every 2 weeks. Follow instructions

by mixing 1 tablespoon of water soluble fertilizer per gallon of water. Pour a gallon of solution around each plant. Don't feed with either liquid or dry fertilizers after October 15th so that growth can slow and harden for the winter cold.



Roses need water. Proper watering causes bushes to develop into larger plants, which produce a much greater volume and quality of blooms. Water can be efficiently applied with soaker hoses, drip irrigation, or specially designed automatic sprinkling devices. Keep in mind that most rose varieties are less disease-prone if their foliage remains dry. Deep watering at weekly intervals is far superior to frequent light sprinkling.

Mulches can help conserve water while moderating soil temperatures during extremely hot weather. The application of bark, pine needles, peat moss, or shredded oak leaves several inches deep to beds or individual plants is an excellent practice. The mulch can be supplemented with 2 inches of horse manure in December, which adds organic materials as well as some fertility to the soil. Once you begin to produce these beautiful fall roses it is important that they be cut properly to insure bloom longevity. Improper cutting of flowers can injure the plant and decrease its vigor. It is best to cut few, if any, flowers during the first blooming season of a plant. By removing only the flowers and not the stem, the plants will develop into larger bushes by fall, at which time some flowers may be cut. Early removal of foliage and long stems reduces the food manufacturing capacity of the plant and subsequent flower yield.

When you cut roses, be sure to use sharp tools and allow at least 2 leaves to remain between the cut and the main stem. Use sharp shears just above the topmost leaf. Roses that are cut just before the petals begin to unfold will open normally and remain in good condition longer. Late afternoon is the best time of day to cut roses. Always cut bloom stems back to pencil-sized wood, or where 5-leaflet leaves occur. Beginning in mid-November, leave old blooms and pods on the stems to force plants into dormancy. This winterizing will enable better plant survival in the winter. Plunge the stems immediately into warm water (about 100 degrees F.) and cut the stems again, just an inch or so from the base. Add flower preservatives to the water, according to label instructions, if maximum life is desired. Research has shown that flower preservatives can be helpful in prolonging the beauty of cut flowers. Such preservatives can be purchased from retail florists or from the floral departments in most supermarkets. A mixture of 7-Up soda water (but not the diet type) mixed equally with water has also been shown to be an effective preservative. It is important for the mixture to stand long enough for most of the air bubbles to dissipate.

Good, pure water is equally important as using preservatives.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Rain water or distilled water should be used when arranging flowers, since sodium and other materials in most tap water can shorten their life.

Place the flowers in a cool, draft free area until ready to use. High temperatures and direct sun quickly take their toll on cut flowers.

So, take action now to insure that you don't miss our second spring and the beauty of the roses that can adorn it. If you want more information on growing roses locally, see:

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/publications/roses/rose.html>.

Texas Urban Landscape Guide

<http://urbanlandscapeguide.tamu.edu/waterwise2.html>.

The *Texas Urban Landscape Guide* is a resource of science-based information related to the design, installation, and maintenance of WaterWise landscapes for the principal plant adaptability regions in Texas.

The type of information needed to implement WaterWise landscape practices varies considerably depending upon whether you are a homeowner looking for information to assist in designing your home landscape, a green industry professional seeking information of a specific nature for a business application, or an employee of a municipal water management agency needing specific guidelines related to urban landscape water use.

That's why we have designed the Urban Landscape Guide along three separate tracks. Much of the written information including links to other appropriate sites differs in the tracks; the Plant Selector database is common to all. Just enter the track that describes the type of information you need. Return to this index to select a different track if you don't find what you need.

What is the Urban Landscape Guide?

Beautiful landscapes and wise water management go together. Good horticultural practice includes putting the right plant in the right place, and providing only the minimum inputs such as water and fertilizer.

This Urban Landscape Guide to wise water management in the landscape is a supplement to the Best Management Practices Manual produced by the Texas Water Conservation Task Force. In that Manual, references are made to installing water wise landscapes, but that term is not defined. The Texas Water Development Board funded preparation of a written manual with a supporting Web site to help those involved in developing and implementing best management practices.

This site is also of use to consumers and property managers who want to implement wise water management practices on their property. Information here can be used by water providers, municipal governments, homeowners, nursery/landscape professionals, property managers, and water conservation districts.

This site was prepared by Texas Cooperative Extension, consultant Chris Brown, Texas Nursery & Landscape Association, and the Texas Water Development Board.

Originating in Colorado under the title, "Xeriscape™," WaterWise landscaping approaches combine seven principals of good

landscape practices to produce water efficient landscapes. These landscapes are an attractive alternative to the turfgrass lawn which does not always perform well in areas with rocky soil, high summer temperatures and long periods without rain. *Does this sound like anyplace in Texas?*

By proper planning, design, soil analysis and amendments, appropriate plant selection, efficient irrigation techniques, appropriate use of turf, mulches, and maintenance, a successful, appealing landscape can be developed without increasing peak summertime demands on our stressed water systems.

The seven principles of WaterWise landscaping are described herein, along with summary programmatic and ordinance approaches which can assist utilities engaged in implementing best management practices for water conservation.

A key element in planning the WaterWise landscape is the selection of environmentally-appropriate plants. Our Plant Selector database is "regionalized," so that the order in which plants are presented to you varies with your locality. The landscape plants in the database have each been rated by a team of "plant experts" knowledgeable about the best plants for their regions.

We hope this online resource helps you better plan **YOUR** WaterWise landscape!

never had any other desire so strong, and so like to covetousness, as that one which I have had always, that I might be master at last of a small house and a large Garden.

~ Abraham Cowley, The Garden, 1666



Rose Hips

By Melinda Kocian, Ellis County Master Gardener

Who says the garden is only beautiful when flowers are in bloom? Interesting barks, vibrant berries, dried seedpods and evergreen foliage all add a sparkle to the grays and browns that dominate the landscape during winter.

One of the more interesting sights to emerge as fall transitions into winter are rose hips, the colorful fruit that many varieties of shrub roses produce in the fall.

If you cut a rose hip open you will see the tiny rose seeds stored inside. This is the way the wild roses reproduce and distribute themselves. You can also cross pollinate certain roses in your garden and grow their offspring from seeds found in the resulting rose hips. To learn more about this process visit the American Rose Society's web page, www.ars.org and read their article, Growing Roses from Seeds.

To have rose hips in your garden in winter it is important to stop deadheading spent flowers on repeat blooming varieties around August. The petals will fall away and the hips will soon begin to develop. Before you know it you will have enough beautiful rose hips for both you and the birds to enjoy!

Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife

By Sandra Jones, PhD



The term Wildscape is a deliberate adaptation of "landscape." By definition this means altering and maintaining the habitat we create. Simply "letting" an area go wild will not create an effective wildscape.

As urban centers continue to sprawl into wildlife habitats, it increases the strain on wildlife by reducing the resources they need for survival. This habitat loss occurs throughout Texas. State Parks and Wildlife Management Areas can help, but with more than 90% of Texas privately owned, action from private landowners is necessary for effective habitat restoration. The Texas Wildscape program provides information and recognition to people who provide wildlife habitat at their homes, schools and work places.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department encourages landowners to restore pockets of habitat - native trees, plants, cover and water - for birds, butterflies, reptiles and even small mammals. These habitats must still abide by local and county ordinances, but even small changes in our landscaping can result in significant improvement in wildlife habitat.

Properties applying for certification must ensure that at least 50% of the plants used in their landscaping are native to Texas. Not only will native plants be better for the wildlife; they will generally require less maintenance on your part.

Water is vital. Ponds are great, but not always practical. Shallow pools, birdbaths, planter trays and water

troughs work well. Drippers and misters are effective ways to produce fresh moving water.

Use as many native plants that produce seeds, nuts, berries and nectar as possible. Plants of varying size and season will have the greatest effect.

Rock walls, brick piles and stacked wood make excellent cover and homes for insects, reptiles and small mammals. Generally, it is best to keep such cover several yards from the house.

Supplemental food and nest resources only enhance a good Wildscape. Bird feeders, feed trays and nest boxes will attract more birds and wildlife to your home. Variety will help diversify the types of wildlife you see.

Maintaining a feeder will not disrupt a bird's migratory pattern. A well maintained reliable feeder makes those that stay more comfortable.

Composting will provide natural sources of soil nutrients to your developing Wildscape.

Native plants will use less water. Irrigate in early mornings or evenings to reduce evaporation loss.

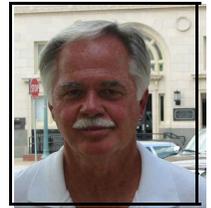
Make sure your Wildscape complies with local and neighborhood regulations.

For more information contact: Texas Parks and Wildlife at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wildscapes



EarthKind™ News

by James Kocian, Ellis County Master Gardener



'BELINDA'S DREAM' --THE FIRST ROSE TO BE NAMED A TEXAS SUPERSTAR™

A near perfect landscape rose, Belinda's Dream, is the first rose to be named a Texas Superstar and also receive the prestigious EarthKind designation from Texas A&M University.

"Belinda's Dream is a gorgeous shrub rose with large, take-your-breath-away, pink blossoms," said Dr. Steve George, Texas Cooperative Extension horticulturist at Dallas. "The beautifully formed buds are tight and shaped like a tea rose, with a stunning rose pink color. The buds open to very double cupped blossoms and a wonderful fragrance."

Belinda's Dream is easy to grow and has successive flushes of bloom which extend from spring to frost. It forms an upright shrub 4 feet tall and 3 feet wide. George said the rose is an outstanding performer in almost any soil type, even highly alkaline clays, and possesses excellent wind, heat and drought tolerance for a rose.

"To the delight of rose lovers everywhere, its attractive, bluish-green foliage is so disease tolerant that fungicide sprays are seldom required," added George.

It grows in climate zones 5-9 and is winter hardy sun with good air movement over the leaves. The hose irrigation system should be used, especially

"If the spring is wet, the shrub can partially defoliate due to black spot, but don't worry because it will

Introduced in 1992, this truly Texas rose is a developed by Dr. Robert Basye, a Texas A&M University of 50 years.

"Belinda's Dream is his crowning achievement," Dr Basye's friends in Caldwell, Texas."

The Texas Superstar effort is one of Texas A&M University's most innovative and successful horticultural research and Extension programs.



throughout Texas; it should be planted in day-long full rose appreciates well drained soils, and a drip or soaker in areas with salty water.

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cross between 'Tiffany' and 'Jersey Beauty'. It was diversity mathematics professor and amateur rose breeder

said George. "It was named for the daughter of one of

University's most innovative and successful horticultural

"This cooperative program combines the expertise of university and industry leaders in the identification of superior landscape plants for Texas and their subsequent introduction in the marketplace," said George.

The easy-grow plants recommended by these experts are hardy, heat-tolerant and disease and insect-tolerant, providing beauty with minimal care and minimal reliance on chemical pest control. Only the best-adapted, highest-performing and most pest-resistant plant materials are designated Texas Superstars, and should include the Texas Superstar pot label.

To identify such plants, the Agriculture Program at Texas A&M has created the largest system of horticultural field trials of any university in the country. After years of extensive field research, during which the plants are never sprayed with any pesticide, only a few plants are good enough to be designated Texas Superstars™.

Belinda's Dream is designated as EarthKind. George explained that Extension's EarthKind designation is given only to thoroughly tested plant materials which help create beautiful, productive landscapes that require minimum maintenance while providing maximum environmental protection.

For more information on Belinda's Dream or to find the nearest official Texas Superstar retailer, go to www.TexasSuperstar.com.

I think that if ever a mortal heard the voice of God it would be in a garden at the cool of the day. ~ F. Frankfort Moore, A Garden of Peace

Okra



I would imagine you have got okra coming out the kazoo about now! Here are several ideas of what to do with your bounty:

One method is to freeze them for later. Place a sheet of wax paper on a large cookie sheet, space the okra so none are touching, and put them in the freezer. Once they are frozen, seal them in a Ziploc freezer bag for later use in your recipes like gumbo or soup, etc.

Another method is to fix breaded Okra; to cook for supper or to freeze. If you have a lot, make more breading.

20 (or more) okra pods	½ teaspoon salt
1 cup buttermilk	¼ teaspoon black pepper
¾ cup flour	½ teaspoon onion salt
¼ cup cornmeal	Onion, cut into ¼" sliver
1 teaspoon baking powder	

Cut okra into ½-inch long pieces. soak in buttermilk; let it set up for a while. Combine the dry ingredients together into a shallow pan. Lift okra out of buttermilk and place in dry mixture, tossing until okra is well coated. Deep fry or pan fry at about 375°F. When the okra is almost brown, add onion. Cook until all is golden brown.

NOTE: Once your okra is breaded, if you want to freeze it uncooked, repeat the directions for freezing above. It won't stick together and you can take out just the amount you need for your meal.

Herbs

Now that your herbs are growing well; maybe even trying to bloom and seed out, why not harvest them so you can use them in the winter.

Basil

I use a lot of fresh basil; you can dry it (and I do) but what I do most with my basil is freeze it. There are several ways:

- (1) make basil "cigars". Gather your leaves, wash them and pat them dry. Put a long sheet of plastic wrap on the kitchen counter, put your basil leaves 3-4 inches from the long side, bunching them together to make a cigar shaped mound. Fold 3-4 inches of each end onto the top of the "cigar", then start rolling it up. Make as many of these cigars as you have leaves for. Then they can be put into a freezer-type zip-lock plastic bag and put in the freezer. Anytime you need fresh basil, (right before it is time to use it) remove from freezer, open one end, break off what you need, and quickly return the frozen cigar to the freezer. Add the basil to your recipe; it's just like fresh!
- (2) make pesto! I make a blender full, put one meal's worth into small zip-lock bags until all is used, then put them all into a larger zip-lock bag and freeze; pulling out one at a time. Just set it on the counter and in a few minutes it has thawed and is ready to toss with your pasta!
- (3) fill ice cube trays with pesto and freeze. Once they are completely froze, pop them out and put into a freezer bag for later use.

Basil or any of your other herbs can also be dried in the microwave. Again, wash the herbs and pat dry. Place one sheet of paper toweling in the microwave, place herbs in a single layer on the towel, cover with another towel and microwave for approximately one minute. Remove from microwave allowing them to cook completely. If they feel dry and "crunchy" they are done! Crumble them up, put in a Mason-type jar, label and store them in your cupboard! Cupboard! I sound like my grandmother! Store them in your pantry. There, that sounds more modern!

Happy freezing!

Melinda Kocian, Ellis County Master Gardener

Things To Do In September

By Deborah Potter, Ellis County Master Gardener



Wow! Summer's almost gone; kids are in school, vacations just a pleasant memory...now we can turn our attention to a few other things...just a few, while we bide our time for that first seductive breath of Fall air!

You'll want to:

- Rejuvenate those heat stressed geraniums and begonias with a little light pruning, fertilization and watering,
- The caladiums require plenty of water this time of year so they'll continue to be full and lush until fall; fertilize and water generously.
- Trees or shrubs?... no major pruning...Yeh! Until mid-winter as this could generate new growth prior to fall....Bad!, so just remove dead or diseased wood.
- Divide those spring flowering perennials: irises, cannas, day lilies, daisies, liriopse, ajuga, etc.
- Spray roses for black spot and mildew with a good fungicide; September and October can be problematic for roses. Continue to spray every 7 to 14 days,.
- Prepare your beds for spring flowering bulbs as soon as possible; cultivate that soil and be generous with organic matter. This is our number one ally in improving the drainage in our soils.

I'm thinking that September just might become your favorite month and not just because it's football season again.

I don't know about you, but I sure didn't get much done this year when it came to gardening. The first half of the year was too wet, then when July ended it was too hot! September's here and it may be just right to try Fall gardening.

Where to start? Perusing seed packets or small containers in local nurseries won't achieve your goal of a successful fall garden planted smartly for economical production and full utilization of that spot you've picked out. Who are you going to call? That's easy; the Ellis County Master Gardeners at the Texas Cooperative Extension, 972-875-5175. They will explain soil amending, sun and water requirements, vegetable or flower choices that are excellent for this time of year and dates for planting in our zones. Did you know we are in Texas Gardening Zone 3 for planting schedules? We are in US Hardiness Zone 8 for ascertaining types of vegetation suitable for our minimum temperatures. We haven't had the time to discuss average planting dates, and frost-susceptible dates, shade tolerance, and fall tomato schedules.

I'm going to go sit down with the free "Landscaping in Ellis County" publication available from the Texas Cooperative Extension Office or on Saturday mornings at the Downtown Farmer's Market, running through October 20th.

Have you considered herb gardening in the fall? It sure takes the heat out of it, and I'm not talking habañeros. The ability to be used in flower beds, borders, rock gardens, or container plantings will prove the ornamental value of herbs. Some herbs are annuals, others are perennial, this will determine placement with annual color beds or vegetable gardens. Perennial herbs should be

located where they won't conflict with next year's soil preparation. Caring for the herb garden is similar to vegetable or flower gardens; a sunny, well-drained location, and a slow-release fertilizer at the rate of 2 pounds per 100 square feet. Water as necessary during dry periods, about one inch of water per week, if not supplied by natural rainfall. Mulching will help conserve soil moisture and reduce weed growth as well.

Many of the herbs we grow today are from the Mediterranean region of the world and our weather can suit them perfectly given good drainage. Herbs really do best in a raised beds. Our heavy clay soil even with soil amendments can be tough on them and you; plus raised bed gardening is easier on the back.

Some commonly used herbs adapted for this area are basil, chamomile, lemon balm, marjoram, oregano, mints, rosemary, chives, coriander, dill, parsley, sage, and thyme.

September....leaves. ...pain in the posterior! Money for refuse bags, dragging them to the curb for pick-up. Kind of takes the edge off the "favorite month of the year" thing, doesn't it? However, it can be a "slap to the forehead" moment also.

Composting. The Don't Bag It, Compost It Plan is an ecologically sound program designed to significantly reduce the volume of landscape and kitchen waste entering community landfills. Just think of it; using what you have by turning it into what you need. Waste into wonderful! This plan is available at the Texas Cooperative Extension office on I-35. You can also call a master gardener at the office, 972-875-5175 and they will mail you a copy.

20-50% of the solid waste sent to landfills is made of tree leaves, grass clippings, other landscape debris (avoid composting diseased or insect infested plants, weeds) and kitchen waste. Caution here; **NO** meat, dairy products, cooking oil or grease.

Bagging for curbside collection is a costly practice requiring you and your community to spend taxes/service fees needlessly. It literally wastes our limited landfill space. We all lose out on the environmentally sound resource of natural nutrients. Compost is the rich, dark, crumbly material that results from the breakdown of the leaves, clippings, organic kitchen waste; it is nature's own nutrient-rich slow-release fertilizer.

Compost bins can be made from wire fencing, lumber, used pallets or cement blocks. Whatever materials you use, it is important to design the bin to allow for good air movement and easy accessibility to turn the pile and remove the finished compost. I compost directly on the ground; cheaper. I have the yardspace for the compost to "roam" every time it is turned. Bins have the benefit to maintain a 3 to 5 square feet of space. If you use a bin, choose materials and a design to suit yourself and your needs for neatness, appearance, economy, performance and access.

Composting is built by layers; yard and kitchen waste, some top soil (for microbes), fertilizer (if necessary), water, and time. Please contact a master gardener for this or any other of numerous publications at the extension office. We're waiting to hear from you. 972-875-5175 or website www.ECMGA.com.