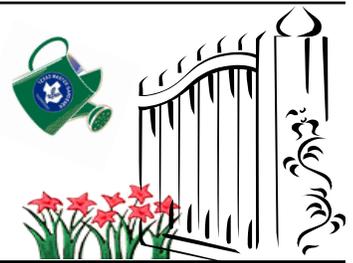




# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume IX, Issue Eight

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

August, 2016

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](http://www.ECMGA.com) and click on subscribe. Best of all; it's FREE! Susan Clark, Editor

## What's Happening in August?

Every Saturday from April to October 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!

**Aug 20th**—This week's theme at the market is cheesy treats! Come by for samples, get some grocery shopping done, take home treats for the family, and know that all the market sellers appreciate you!! The Master Gardeners have a Pop-Up Horticulture event today. Look for the white tent and stop by to meet MG Mattie Thompson. Mattie will talk about succulents along with what needs to be done during August to keep your gardens healthy.

**Aug 27th**—The market chefs are serving up some refreshing treats with seasonal melons. Samples will be available, and they always share the recipes! The market has beautiful and practical gift items like scented goat milk soap, jewelry, plants, fun home and outdoor decor, fun clothing plus lots of produce, and canned and baked goods.

**Coming in September!** Next month, Master Gardeners will host our second **Grill Fest** of the 2016 market season. Be sure to mark your calendars for September 17th. We'll be grilling up veggies as well as fruit from our local farmers and MGs between 8am and 12pm. There will be lots of delicious samples. You definitely don't want to miss out!



## Indian Trail Master Naturalists Events

Join the **Indian Trail Master Naturalists** at their monthly meeting on **Monday, August 22**. The program for the evening is entitled "**Fifty Shades of Green**" presented by **Ricky Linx**. Program by **Ricky Linx—Wildlife Biologist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service**. Ricky Linx will provide a Photo Presentation, "FIFTY SHADES OF GREEN", of 50 common to rare native plants - about 90% forbs and a few grasses and a woody or two - all that will grow in north central Texas. The program is free and follows the 6 p.m. Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. Meeting location: First United Methodist Church, Family Life Center 505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email [ellis-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:ellis-tx@tamu.edu)



**Saturday, August 20, 9am, Wildflower Walk.** Members will be leading a walk at Mockingbird Nature Park. Our walk starts at 9:00 am at the Butterfly Garden. Please join in this half mile stroll along the trails as we identify the wildflowers. Everyone is invited to attend, and there is no charge. Bring drinking water and wear close-toed shoes. Insect repellent is a good idea, also. Walk will be canceled in the event of rain. Info at: <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/> or email: [Information@itmnc.com](mailto:Information@itmnc.com) 1361 Onward Road (off Mockingbird Lane), Midlothian TX

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION



## Listen to KBEC

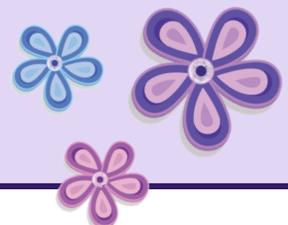
Saturday mornings at 9:00 a.m. on 1390 AM.

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

Melinda Kocian

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**Prickleleaf Gilia** (*Gilia rigidula*) This beautiful little flower is only four inches high with almost no leaves, but a blossom up to an inch across. The flower has five petals and is deep blue with a cream colored center. Blooms May to October.

## It's August....What Needs To Be Done?

### Planting

☞ Plant these fall vegetables early in the month: beans, cucumbers, squash and corn. Follow up later in the month and into early September with leafy and root crops, including lettuce, mustard, spinach, carrots, beets, radishes and turnips.

☞ Plant bluebonnet and other spring wildflowers starting this month. Select a sunny, well-drained area with minimal vegetative competition. For best results, plant seed in well-prepared soil, one-half inch deep and water thoroughly. If planting into existing vegetation, first mow the area as short as possible; then lightly disturb the area with a disk, harrow or similar equipment. The seeded area should be rolled or dragged to ensure good seed-soil contact.

☞ Plant fall-flowering bulbs such as spider lily, naked lady lily, rain lily, oxblood lily and fall crocus. Place in the ground twice as deep as the diameter of the bulb.

☞ It is time to divide spring-flowering perennials such as iris, Shasta daisy, oxeye daisy, gaillardia, cannas, day lilies, lirioppe and ajuga.

### Fertilizing and Pruning

☞ Caladiums require plenty of water at this time of year if they are to remain lush and active until fall. Fertilize with 21-0-0 at the rate of one third to one half pound per 100 square feet of bed area and water thoroughly.

☞ Prune bush roses by cutting out dead canes and weak, spindly growth. Cut back tall, vigorous bushes to about 30 inches. Then apply a complete fertilizer and water thoroughly for beautiful fall blooms.

### Garden Watch

☞ Control fire ants in your lawn with mound treatments, as opposed to baits, since ants are foraging less now. Organic insecticides such as pyrethrin and spinosad can be sprinkled on or drenched into the mound.

☞ Order your spring-flowering bulbs for planting in November and December. Remember 'biggest is best' in regard to bulb size. Also be aware of so-called "bargain" bulbs as they may be small or of inferior quality.

☞ Continue to follow the *Homeowners Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule* to protect pecan trees against pecan weevils and hickory shuckworms, and to control peach tree borers on peach and plum trees. The schedule can be found here: [http://agrifecdn.tamu.edu/coastalbend/files/2011/10/FruitNutSprayGuide\\_6.pdf](http://agrifecdn.tamu.edu/coastalbend/files/2011/10/FruitNutSprayGuide_6.pdf)

☞ The rapid death of established landscape plants and orchard trees during the summer may signify the presence of cotton root rot, a soil-borne fungal disease that is common in our calcareous clay soils. Since there is no effective control, verification by the Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab at Texas A&M will help you know what plants can be used as replacements.

☞ By the end of the month, you will know the real winners and losers in your landscape. To improve on your success, consider a Texas Superstar<sup>®</sup> as you plan your landscape. These Texas-tough plants have been tested extensively and have proven to be outstanding performers under our growing conditions. See page five for three great options or visit [www.TexasSuperstar.com](http://www.TexasSuperstar.com) for a complete list of these amazing stars.



**Paleflower Gilia** (*Ipomopsis longiflora*) The range of the paleflower gilia is not well known, but is found in Ellis County. It grows eight to twenty inches high and is branched near the bottom. Each stem has two to four blossoms at the tip. This annual blooms from May to July.

## Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener



**Bluebell, Prairie Gentian**—Gentian Family (Gentianaceae)  
*Eustoma grandiflorum* (Raf.) Shinnery

**Region:** 1 through 10  
**Size:** 1 to 2 feet  
**Blooms:** June through September, Annual/Biennial

Texas has two species of *Eustoma*. Both have paired, smooth, bluish-green leaves that clasp the stem. Bluebells (*E. grandiflorum*) and catchfly (*E. exaltatum*) are difficult to distinguish. Flowers are cup-shaped, with five to seven blue to deep blue-violet petals, although the color can vary from pinkish to light blue or white. A dark, purple blotch surrounded by a light halo is centered in the cup, as is a prominent two-lobed yellow stigma. Flowers are two to four inches across.

These handsome plants are available in nurseries. They were first cultivated by the Japanese, who recognized their horticultural merit more than thirty years ago. Bluebells prefer seasonally moist areas where rainwater sometimes stands, such as roadside ditches, meadows, or prairie swales. Sometimes a single plant or only a few are seen at one location; in other places, bluebells may blanket many acres.

### SAUTÉED PARMESAN VEGETABLES

Serves 6

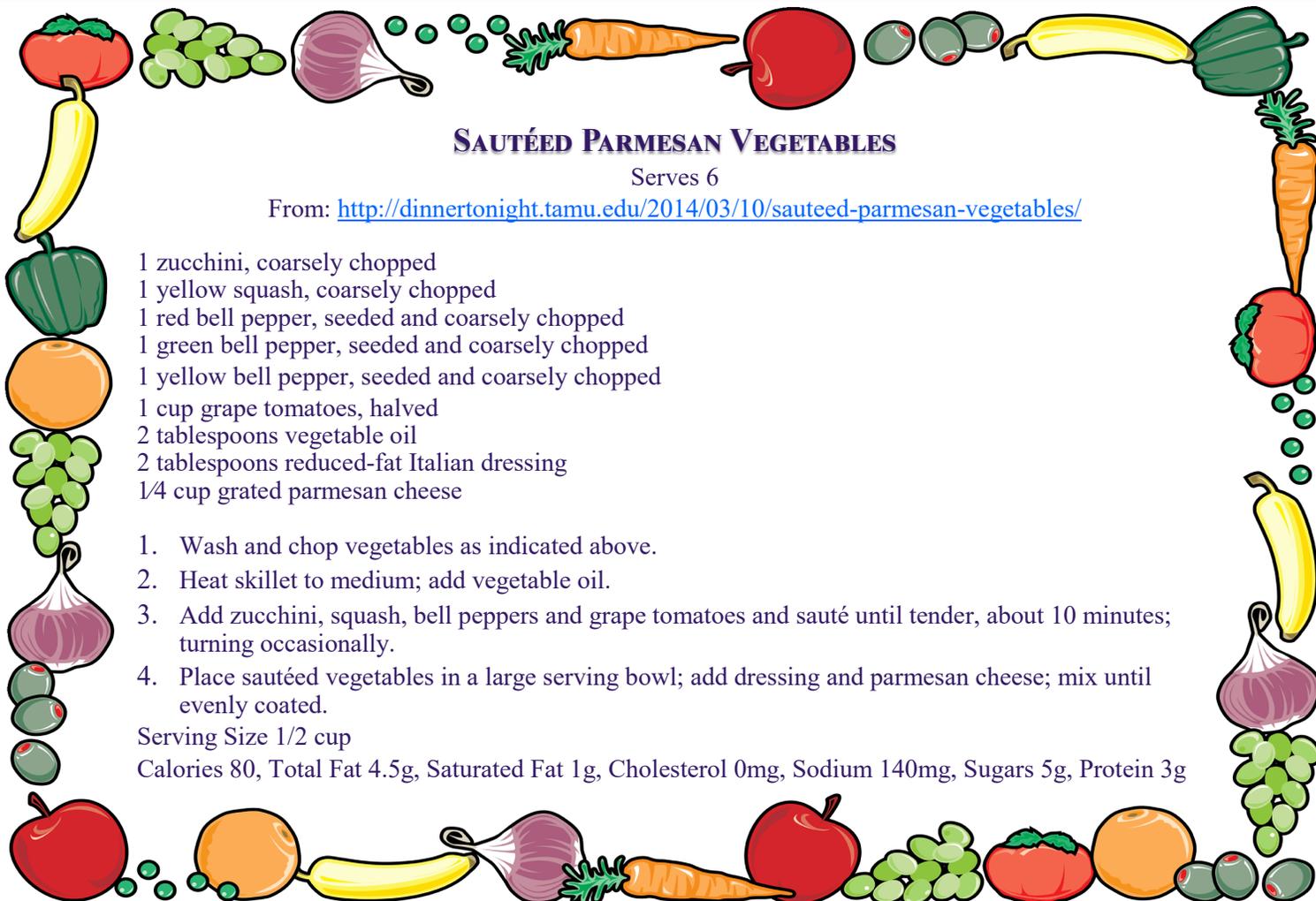
From: <http://dinnertonight.tamu.edu/2014/03/10/sauteed-parmesan-vegetables/>

- 1 zucchini, coarsely chopped
- 1 yellow squash, coarsely chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and coarsely chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and coarsely chopped
- 1 yellow bell pepper, seeded and coarsely chopped
- 1 cup grape tomatoes, halved
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons reduced-fat Italian dressing
- 1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese

1. Wash and chop vegetables as indicated above.
2. Heat skillet to medium; add vegetable oil.
3. Add zucchini, squash, bell peppers and grape tomatoes and sauté until tender, about 10 minutes; turning occasionally.
4. Place sautéed vegetables in a large serving bowl; add dressing and parmesan cheese; mix until evenly coated.

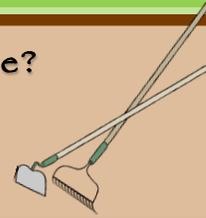
Serving Size 1/2 cup

Calories 80, Total Fat 4.5g, Saturated Fat 1g, Cholesterol 0mg, Sodium 140mg, Sugars 5g, Protein 3g



## Fall Gardens—Have You Planted One?

With *Cerelda De Heus*  
*Ellis County Master Gardener*



The fall growing season in Texas offers another opportunity for gardeners, and I have almost always had better luck in the fall than in the spring. So if you haven't ever had a fall garden, consider planting one. You may be pleasantly surprised with what and how much your garden can produce. The basics of planting a garden, spring or fall, are the same.

The weather isn't quite as extreme in the fall, a majority of bugs have fulfilled their life cycles, and if managed your garden can be productive well into December. Planting in the fall can give you a jump in the spring. Garlic, shallots, kale, spinach, and some varieties of lettuce thrive if planted in the cooler fall. Cover these crops with mulch or shredded leaves and they will start growing as soon as spring arrives.

As in spring, a successful fall garden depends on planting the right type of vegetable at the proper time for your area. Many vegetables prefer the cooler growing temperatures of fall and can survive some exposure to cold and frosts. You may have to experiment at first, but the potential of having fresh vegetables and herbs almost year round is a possibility for everyone. Kale, beets, broccoli, cabbage, collards, garlic, lettuce, mustard, spinach, carrots, radishes; these root and leaf crops all taste sweeter due to cooler temperatures.

As in spring, a gardener has two choices: transplants or seeds. When selecting transplants, select the largest, healthiest ones you can find; these have established root systems for the shorter fall growing period. You can also start your own transplants by sowing seed. Seeds must be kept moist to germinate and in our hot summers this can be tricky. Big box stores offer only a limited variety of plants, sowing your own seeds eliminates this and can introduce new types of foods to the family table.

You must know the average first frost for your area. In Ellis County, that date is November 15. Count back from this date to check if your choices will have time to produce. The important thing to remember is to get your plants up and growing to catch the last wave of summer heat.

Daily checks of any garden are a necessity for being produc-

tive, whether it is a vegetable or a flower garden. Soaker hoses laid out before sowing seeds or planting transplants is a good choice in our hot dry temperatures. Too much summer sun can be managed with shade covers, cloth held by hoops or stakes, or a board held up using bricks. Shading can mean less water evaporation and eliminate burning of tender shoots.

Mulching between plants with newspapers, cardboard, grass clippings or rotted leaves helps to block light, preventing weed growth and keeping the soil cool and moist. Any area to be mulched should be wet first, covered, and wet again. Covering your seedlings/transplants from day one with netting or lightweight row covers will help eliminate some of the pests that will be attracted to your root and leaf vegetables. Raise your row covers as the plants grow. The cooling temperatures of fall nights will ease some of the insect problems. If you have deer, your row covers might help eliminate their ability to enjoy your garden.



To get the most from your fall garden consider using double or triple rows, high density planting, or use a zig-zag pattern to fit more plants into less space. Dwarf varieties allow closer plantings without problems associated with overcrowding. How you harvest can also help prolong your garden production. With broccoli and some cabbage, cut the primary head high, this stub will allow smaller secondary heads to form.

Replacing the summer lightweight row covers with winter weight fabric and using the hoops or stakes already in place will help protect your garden once temperatures start dipping. Experiment and you might be surprised how long your garden will produce after your tomatoes have been killed by frost. Keep a notebook, so that next year you will know what you did, when, and the results. Experiment and Enjoy!

Find a *Fall Direct Seeding Guide* at:

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/fallgarden/falldirect.html>



## Superstars—Strong and Stunning Plants for Texas

By: Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener



To become a Texas Superstar isn't easy. Only the toughest, most reliable, and best looking plants make the cut. Every plant earning the Texas Superstar designation undergoes several years of extensive field trials by Texas A&M AgriLife Research and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. During the field trials, plants receive minimal soil preparation, minimal water, and no pesticides. The plants highlighted here have made the grade. Ask for these at your local nurseries.

**Turk's Cap** (*Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*) How would you like a plant for your garden that takes full sun to shade, is drought tolerant once established, has showy flowers all season long, attracts hummingbirds and butterflies, and oh yeah, is a native plant so it poses no issues with being invasive? Too much to ask from one plant? Not really.

Turk's cap, known in the scientific community as *Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*, is a native of south-central and south-east Texas woodlands where it is usually found in the shady understory. Plants are very site responsive with best growth in partial shade and moist rich soils; however, this homegrown Texas Superstar is tough enough to withstand full sun and occasional drought. Turk's cap is perennial in our USDA zone 8a. This species typically has rich cherry red flowers, but white forms are available as is the pink flowering cultivar, "Pam Puryear".

The dark green leaves are a perfect foil for the bright cherry red, soft pink, or white flowers, which resemble miniature Turk's turbans. Plants tend to sucker and form slow growing

colonies with upright stems, typically three to six feet tall depending upon the quality of the site.

Turk's cap is also a fantastic plant for feeding migrating populations of hummingbirds, and the small flattened round cushion-shaped red fruit are eaten by other wildlife. Pests are of minimal concern in the landscape, with white flies, scale, and mealy bugs occasionally encountered, mostly in nursery or greenhouse environments.

"Fiesta" is a variegated form with splotchy yellow, green, and whitish leaves, but it requires pruning of reversion to retain its variegation. This native Texas son deserves a shady spot in every Texas Garden.

**Angelonia** Serena series (*Angelonia angustifolia*) With the common name Summer Snapdragon, this South American native

makes itself right at home in the gardens of Texas. From the hot, humid sum-



Turk's Cap



mers of east and central Texas to the hot dry days of the High Plains, this popular summer annual puts on a non-stop show of flowers during the summer season. It has proven to stay more reliably in flower during the growing season.

Serena can be grown from seed and is available in white, purple, lavender, lavender pink, and a mix. They branch well without pinching and grow to about 12 to 18 inches in the garden in full sun. They are drought tolerant, but need regular moisture. Shearing is not necessary, but can be used to rejuvenate flowering. They can be used in the front of the border, as a ground cover, or as a trailing plant for mixed containers. I purchased Serena transplants and used them in containers last summer and it is one tough plant.

Fragrant "Angelmist" is another outstanding angelonia that has done well in the trial gardens at the Dallas Arboretum. Both are readily available at our local nurseries.

Texas Superstars (Continued from page 5)

**“Baby’s Breath” Euphorbia** (*Euphorbia hy pericifolia* syn. *Chamaesyce hypericifolia*) Very few euphorbias that are not of the weedy type do well in a hot Texas summer. But a new type of euphorbia has come onto the scene that we call “Baby’s Breath” type because of the billowing effect that the small white flowers have in the landscape.

The profusely flowering summer annuals provide clouds of white flowers all season long that can be used for edging, as a ground cover, for weaving between plants in a border, or in mixed containers. The cultivar “White Manaus” has been the most vigorous in our trials and stands up brilliantly to the Texas heat. “Breathless White” is another strong grower.

“Silver Fog” and “Hip Hop” are smaller types that are best used in mixed containers where they blend and support any plant they are mixed with. They are great fillers for mixed containers as they provide a bright, fine texture to the combination. Used alone, they are not showy. All of these euphorbias are selections of a North American species and stand up to full sun conditions, but will also tolerate some shade. Water use is moderate and shearing is not needed.

Try out some of these tough and showy options for your fall garden. Visit [TexasSuperstar.com](http://TexasSuperstar.com) for additional details about these amazing stars.



*Euphorbia “Hip Hop”*

**Save The Date!**  
**Saturday, March 25, 2017**



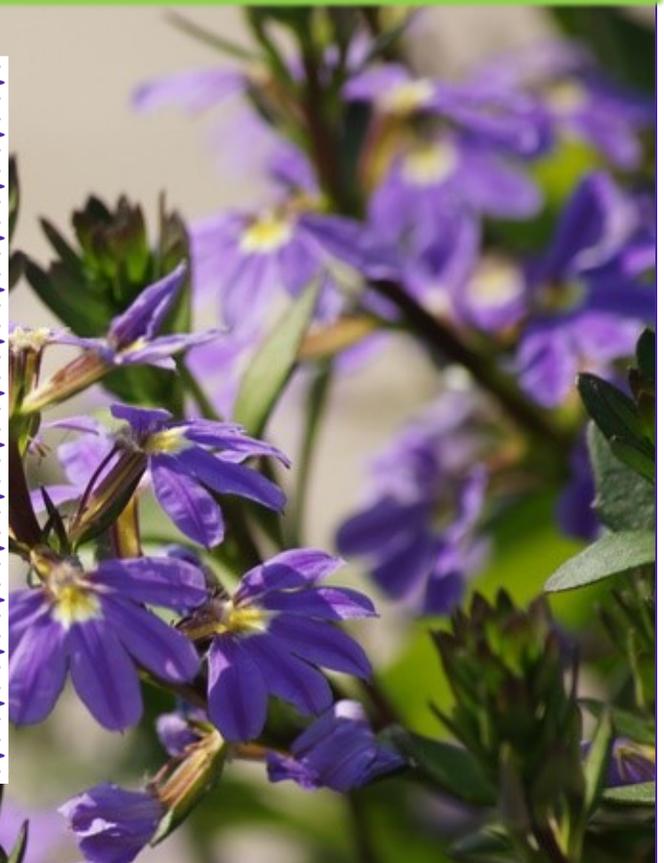
*Angelonia “Serena”*



Find us on:  
**facebook®**

Are you a Facebooker? Ellis County Master Gardeners are on Facebook and we’d love to have you join us. Use our page as your point of contact to ask us gardening questions or get information about flowers, vegetables and herbs...we cover it all! You’ll find us at the link below, and all you have to do is click the “Like” button to see our daily posts! We look forward to hearing from you with questions and comments.

<https://www.facebook.com/ECMGA>



# WHAT MASTER GARDENERS HAVE BEEN UP TO!



## POP-UP HORTICULTURAL CLASSES AT THE WAXAHACHIE FARMERS MARKET

Master Gardeners Jim Derstler and Alan Paxton discussed ways to improve home lawn and garden irrigation systems and answered questions from market visitors. Equipment and accessories needed to improve irrigation efficiency were also on display.

Thanks to Jim and Alan for sharing their time and expertise.



## MASTER GARDEN ACHIEVEMENTS!

Left to right: Awards from the 2016 Annual Texas Master Gardener Conference presented.

Cyndi Fuller, Dan Smith, and Arlene Hamilton accept the First Place award for the Presbyterian Children's Home & Services JMG project in the Youth Category

Sheila Cloonen, Melinda Kocian, and James Kocian accept the Second Place award for the Ellis County Master Gardener Calendar (Tenth Edition) in the Written Education Category

Ray Pouliot received his Greenhouse Specialist certification

## Sunflowers—Beneficial for Humans, Livestock and Wildlife

By Arlene Hamilton  
Ellis County Master Gardener



Sunflower, (*Helianthus annuus*) sometimes called maize de Texas (Texas corn). The common sunflower is an American plant that has been widely cultivated and much improved from its modest ancestry. Here in Ellis County, these sun worshippers are blooming now in meadows, along roadsides, and in gardens to the delight of butterflies, birds, and people. Millions of acres of land in the U.S. are devoted to the production of sunflower seed oil. In Ellis County, 20,000 acres of commercial sunflowers are produced annually for their oil according to Mark Arnold, our extension agent.

Sunflower seeds are roasted and sold as a snack food. Sunflowers can be processed into a peanut butter alternative. They are also sold as food for birds, and can be used directly in cooking and salads. Sunflower oil, extracted from the seeds, is used for cooking, and to produce margarine and biodiesel. The cake remaining after the seeds have been processed for oil is used as a livestock feed. Sunflowers also produce latex and are the subject of experiments to improve their suitability as an alternative crop for producing hypoallergenic rubber.

You too can enjoy these colorful symbols of summer. To grow well, sunflowers need full sun. They grow best in fertile, moist, well-drained soil with a lot of mulch. Seeds should be planted about a foot apart and one-inch deep.

Lucy Harrell, an organic gardener and teacher in Texas, encourages us to grow sunflowers in the garden as a “trap plant” for all sucking, rasping insects. The bugs are attracted to the sunflowers and less likely to damage your vegetable plants. As a companion plant, sunflowers and corn are protective of each other with insect damage reduced on both. Cucumbers benefit when sunflowers are grown near them to provide a windbreak. In Texas, try growing sunflowers on the west side of the cucumber patch to provide afternoon shade.



Children and sunflowers are meant to be grown together! The seeds are large and easily handled by little fingers. They will germinate in just a few days in a small paper cup in a sunny window. One of my favorite garden projects with children is to build a flower house.

Use a stick to trace out a large circle, about six feet across. Drag the stick along the ground and gouge out a trench about an inch deep. Have the children drop fat sunflower seeds and dainty morning glory seeds in the trench. Cover the seeds and give them a small drink of water. Be sure the children water the circle daily until the flowers are well established.

When the sunflowers are about six feet tall pull out a few to make an opening into the circle. With heavy twine weave in and out between the tops of the sunflowers and carefully begin pulling them toward the center of the circle to form a teepee. Within a few days, the morning glories will crisscross through the sunflowers forming a beautiful garden playhouse where dreams and imagination will play out all summer.

The Maximillian sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*) is a beautiful example of one of 38 species of perennial sunflower na-

**THE BRIGHT YELLOW FLOWERS OF MAXIMILIAN SUNFLOWER MAKE IT A POPULAR CHOICE FOR USE IN NATIVE GARDENS. IT CAN BE UTILIZED AS A HEDGE OR NATURAL SCREEN BECAUSE OF ITS HEIGHT.**



**IN ELLIS COUNTY, 20,000 ACRES OF COMMERCIAL SUNFLOWERS ARE PRODUCED ANNUALLY FOR THEIR OIL.**

Traditionally, several Native American groups planted sunflowers on the north edges of their gardens as a “fourth sister” to the better known three sisters combination of corn, beans, and squash.

## Garden Checklist for August

by Dr. William C. Welch, Landscape Horticulturist, Texas Cooperative Extension

- ⊗ Reblooming salvias, such as *Salvia greggii* and *S. farinacea*, should be pruned back periodically during the summer. To make the job easier, use hedging shears, and remove only the spent flowers and a few inches of stem below. Fall-blooming perennials, such as Mexican marigold mint (*Tagetes lucida*), chrysanthemums, physostegia, and *Salvia leucantha*, should be pruned in the same manner during the summer to keep them compact, reducing the need for staking. This type of pruning should be completed prior to September 1, since flower buds begin forming about that time.
- ⊗ Take a critical look at your landscape while at the height of summer development. Make notes of how you think it can be better arranged, plants that need replacement, overgrown plants that need to be removed, and possible activity areas that can be enjoyed by family members.
- ⊗ 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.
- ⊗ During the summer, soil moisture becomes extremely important and essential for good plant production. Because continual watering is oftentimes costly and time consuming, it pays to conserve the moisture around plants. This is best done by mulching. A good mulch will retain valuable moisture needed for plant growth, and improve overall gardening success. Mulches are usually applied two to six inches deep, depending on the material used. In general, the coarser the material, the deeper the mulch. For example, a two-inch layer of cottonseed hulls will have about the same mulching effect as six inches of oat straw or four inches of coastal Bermuda hay.
- ⊗ There is still time to plant some of the colorful, heat-tolerant summer annuals. You can direct-seed zinnias and portulaca, and purchase plants of periwinkle, salvia, marigold, gomphrena, celosia, and purslane. Be sure to water transplants as needed until roots become established.
- ⊗ Removing faded flowers from plants before they set seed will keep them growing and producing more flowers. A light application of fertilizer every four to six weeks will also be helpful.
- ⊗ Now is the time to plan for next spring. Consider digging and dividing any crowded spring bulbs. Once the bulbs have matured and the foliage has turned brown, it is time to spade them up and thin out the stand. Crowded bulbs produce fewer and smaller blooms. They usually need thinning every three to four years.
- ⊗ Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning from now until midwinter. Severe pruning at this time will only stimulate tender new growth prior to frost.
- ⊗ Sow seeds of snapdragons, dianthus, pansies, calendulas, and other cool-season flowers in flats, or in well-prepared areas of the garden, for planting outside during mid-to-late fall.
- ⊗ Plant bluebonnet and other spring wildflowers. They must germinate in late summer or early fall, develop good root systems, and be ready to grow in spring when the weather warms. Plant seed in well-prepared soil, one-half inch deep, and water thoroughly.
- ⊗ Picking flowers frequently encourages most annuals and perennials to flower even more abundantly.
- ⊗ Make your selections and place orders for spring-flowering bulbs now so that they will arrive in time for planting in October and November.
- ⊗ Don't allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture.
- ⊗ A late-summer pruning of rosebushes can be beneficial. Prune out dead canes and any weak, brushy growth. After pruning, apply fertilizer, and water thoroughly. If a preventive disease-control program has been maintained, your rose bushes should be ready to provide an excellent crop of flowers this fall.
- ⊗ It is not too late to set out another planting of many warm-season annuals, such as marigolds, zinnias, and periwinkles. They will require extra attention for the first few weeks, but should provide you with color during late September, October, and November.
- ⊗ Establish a new compost pile to accommodate the fall leaf accumulation.

### Sunflowers (Continued from page 8)

tive to Texas and found growing wild throughout the state. They flower in late summer and the three-inch yellow blooms grow up the four to six foot tall stalks. Native Americans used parts of this plant as sources of food, oil, dye, and thread. Pioneers planted Maximilian sunflowers near their homes to repel mosquitoes and used the blossoms in bathwater to relieve arthritis pain.

The Land Institute and other breeding programs are currently exploring the potential for these as a perennial seed crop. If you have a friend with a pasture, you might be able to gather some seed and give this late bloomer a try.



**Save The Date!**  
**Saturday, March 25, 2017**

# Eclectic Gardening

With Jane Slone, Ellis County Master Gardener

THIS MONTH:

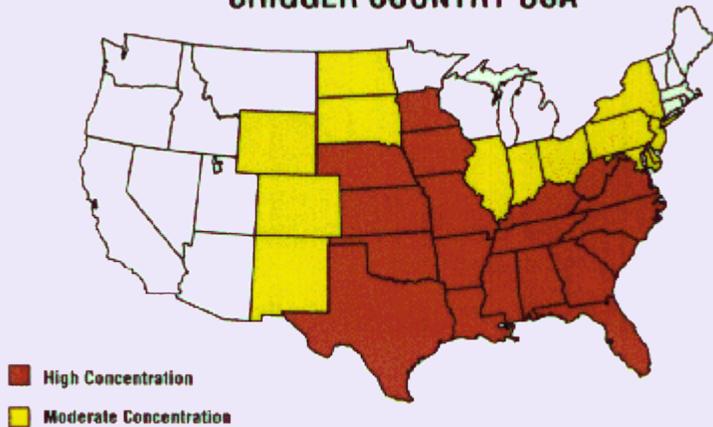
## You May Be Surprised At What You Do Not Know About Chiggers



At the Farmers Market on Saturday mornings, the Master Gardeners have a booth for visitors to stop and ask questions. Usually the questions are: what is best to plant in a particular area or why are my tomatoes plants not producing? It was during the heat of July folks stopped asking questions like this and starting asking about pests.

They asked about the kind of pest that bites, not stings. This was the first time I had ever been asked about chiggers. Questions included how to get rid of them and what happens when they bite you, thus the inspiration for this article. In this month's column, we will learn about this ubiquitous mite.

### CHIGGER COUNTRY USA



Chiggers are small bug-like creatures that can't be seen due to their size. They are reddish-orange and can cause misery for days.

When you move from another climate and encounter Texas heat for the first time, you may come across species of life that is new and perplexing. This nice couple, who moved from California, had encountered these annoying creatures. Not sure if the couple thought chiggers, like the great horned toad, is a Texas kind of thing, so I provided them with a fact sheet produced by TAMU extension research.

Research tells us that chiggers are found all over the world, but Texas has more than its share. Even though they are found throughout the world, they are more heavily populated in the U.S. in the areas marked in the map above.

So let's take a look at the almost invisible creature that gives us such grief.

**What is a Chigger? Scientific name: *Trombiculidae***

Chiggers belong to the family of mites; it is not considered an

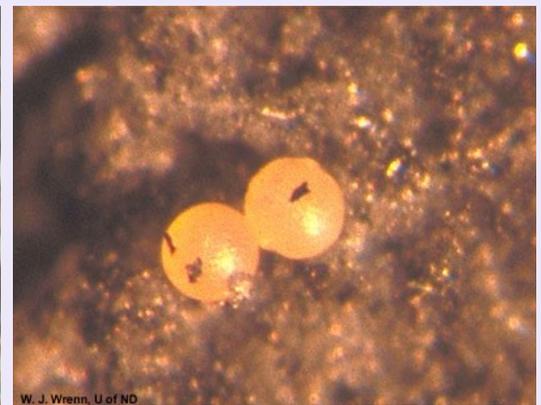
insect. Chiggers are related to a tick or spider. Spiders are classified as *Arachnids*. Chiggers are *Arachnids*, referred to as a mite from the *Trombiculidae* family. It also has several life stages. One stage has six legs, another stage it has eight. The different stages of the life cycle are egg, larva, nymph, and adult. The only stage of development that is harmful to us is the larvae.

Chigger larvae are very small, about 0.15 to 0.25 mm long and are red to reddish orange in color with six legs. Chigger adults are larger than the nymphs and larvae, about one mm (or 1/32nd of an inch) and bright red. Both nymphs and adults have eight legs.

Chiggers are so tiny that they can barely be seen with the naked eye. However, when they are present in a group, they may be noticed on the skin due to their red color.

When chiggers bite humans, they inject a digestive enzyme, which causes breakdown of tissue. This enzyme is what makes the itch. Many people believe that the entire chigger is embedded into the skin and will actually form a blister under the skin and continue feeding. This is a myth. Chiggers have a structure called a stylome, similar to a feeding straw. They insert this feeding tube into the skin and feed on the tissue that was broken down by the enzymes.

The picture below on the left is a female laying eggs. Each female can lay up to 400 eggs. The picture on the right is the developing eggs...from eggs to larva.



The larva must find a host to feed on, so they will look for an animal host. Dogs, cats, and of course, humans. They will continue to feed upon the host until they reach adulthood.

Most chigger bites occur around the ankles, the back of the knees, the crotch, under the belt line, and in the armpits. The itching may last for days to weeks.

Adults do not feed on animal hosts. They will feed off of the land and live in the soil.

(Continued on page 11)

Eclectic Gardening (Continued from page 10)

## WARNING! STINGS AND BITES

Anytime you encounter a sting or bite, you need to determine what attacked you. Are you allergic and are you having unusual symptoms? Some insect bites or stings can be life threatening. If symptoms develop that produce unusual effects, you should seek medical attention quickly. Never depend on the internet to diagnose yourself. Symptoms can include difficulty breathing, swelling, lightheadedness, fever or chills (these are just a few). Seek medical attention immediately if any of these symptoms occur.

### How do you know you have a chigger bite and not a mosquito bite?

When you get a mosquito bite, it may itch, but nothing like that of the chigger. If you have been bitten by a chigger, you know that it itches and itches, then you scratch and scratch, and your skin will be raw from the scratching. You



know you shouldn't scratch, but you can't stop.

It is difficult to tell immediately, but chiggers can attach to your clothing, and it could be hours later before you know that you have been bitten.

In years past, we did not know how to properly treat a chigger bite. If you were bitten, the treatment was not an ointment or spray from the store. Instead a chigger bite was covered with fingernail polish. If the only color you had was red, you walked around with red nail polish all over your legs. Individuals that

used this method of treatment believed that you must smother the chigger. That would stop the itching and kill the chigger. **This is false.**



### Defending Yourself Against Chigger Bites

The recommended way to avoid chiggers is to not come in contact with them.

That may be hard to avoid though if you are camping or jogging in an unknown area



PICTURE ON THE LEFT IS THE NYMPH THAT BITES. PICTURE ON THE RIGHT IS THE ADULT THAT LIVES IN THE SOIL, AND DOES NOT BITE ANIMALS

or like the folks we serve, gardening. When you are out in your landscape, it is important not to sit on the ground. The best defense is to wear clothing that will prevent them from attaching to your skin. Since they are so small and they may be on your clothing, you will not be aware of their existence. So after coming in from the outdoors, remove all clothing and wash it in warm water

### Home Remedies for a Chigger Bite

Antihistamines such as oral Benadryl®, anti-itch creams (camphor and menthol, calamine or pramoxine), or hydrocortisone ointments give the best relief from the intense itching associated with chigger bites. It's also a good idea to apply an antiseptic ointment to prevent infection, especially on bites that have been abraded by clothing or scratching.

<http://extentopubs.tamu.edu/e-365.html>

[http://www.medicinenet.com/chiggers\\_bites/page3.htm](http://www.medicinenet.com/chiggers_bites/page3.htm)

<http://www.fcps.edu/islandcreekes/ecology/chigger.htm>

<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001333.htm>

<http://www.motherearthnews.com/natural-health/get-rid-of-chiggers-zmaz05jjzsel.aspx>



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