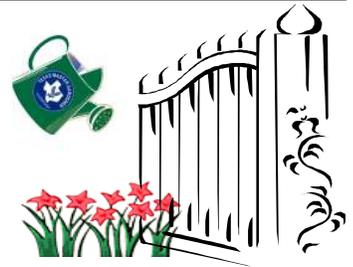




# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume III, Issue 1

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

February, 2009

Welcome to the Ellis County Master Gardener's **E-Gardening** newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to give you a month by month agenda of what you should be doing to your landscape. We will be featuring horticulture articles that we hope you will find interesting, important dates where you can find the Master Gardeners speaking, demonstrating and passing out information relative to your garden. If you would like to receive this newsletter monthly via your email address, log onto our website [www.ECMGA.com](http://www.ECMGA.com), click on subscribe, and it will be sent around the 1st of every month. Best of all; it's FREE!

Melinda Kocian, editor

## What's Happening in February

### Lighthouse for Learning

with the Ellis County Master Gardeners

For reservations call 972-923-4631, Extension 142

**Monday, February 23, 6:00-7:30** - *Getting Started with Roses*, Instructor: **Jim Suggs**. \$10.00. Start planning now for beauty and fragrance around your home. You will learn about bed preparation, plant selection, placement in the garden and care of roses.

**Monday, March 2, 6:00-7:30** - *Vegetable Gardening*, Instructor: **Robert Shugart**. \$10.00. Power Point presentation and discussion on preparing your garden site, selecting what to plant in your area with special emphasis on tomatoes.

**Monday, March 9, 6:00-7:30** - *Azaleas*, Instructor: **Sandra Jones**, \$10.00  
Learn the easy way to have azaleas in your flower beds. You will learn how to grow these easy plants and enjoy the blooms of early spring and again in the fall. They are much easier to grow than you think!

**Monday, March 30, 6:00-7:30** - *Plant Propagation*, Instructor: **Walt Friis**, \$10.00.  
Students will learn the basics of Plant Propagation, increasing and multiplying plants for the house, landscape and garden. After a short presentation in the classroom, students will have hands-on experience in the WISD High School greenhouse.

**Monday, April 6, 6:00-7:30** - *Greenhouse Management*, Instructor: **Walt Friis**, \$10.00.  
Considering buying or building your own hobby greenhouse? Learn the basics of greenhouse management, starting with choice of site, design, heating, cooling, lighting and watering needs.

**Monday, April 20, 6:00-7:30** - *Irrigation and Water Saving Tips*, Instructor: **James Bell**, \$10.00. Come learn how to use sprinkler systems and save money. You can have a green lawn without spending so much money. Come and learn what's new in sprinkler systems. Also learn what a drip system can do for your flower beds and shrubs.

**Mondays, April 20-May 11** - (four classes) "Ag 101" - *Designed for New or Small Acreage Landowners, Session A*, Instructor: **Mark Arnold**, \$20.00. Join this experienced instructor as you cover topics: soils and soil fertility, soil testing, pasture management, basic livestock productions and pond management.

**Monday, April 27, 6:00-7:30** - *Energy Efficient Living*, Instructor: **Pam Daniel**, \$10.00. Homeowners wanting to conserve energy and save on bills are looking for ways to improve efficiency and comfort. This presentation provides an overview of value added options and alternatives that can make a difference to you.

**Monday, May 4, 6:00-7:30** - *Grow-Anything Soils*, Instructor: **Nancy Fenton**, \$10.00. This class will concentrate on getting the soil right for special plants.

~~~~~(Continued on page 2)



### Listen to KBEC.....

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

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

Melinda Kocian

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**Saturday, February 7, 9:30 - Petal Pushers**, Cedar Hill. Topic: "Cool Season Plantings". Different methods and planting of asparagus, onions and potatoes, direct sowing of cool season crops and seasonal information on grapes and fruit trees. Call 972-291-7650.

**Thursday, February 12, 7:00 pm - Green Garden Organic Gardening Club**, The Greenery. To be held at Keith and Patty Crabtree's, 932 Country Creek, Red Oak. Amateur wildlife photographers. Travel all over Texas photographing birds and wildlife. Visit their website: [www.ripplesoftime.com](http://www.ripplesoftime.com). Directions: North 35E, exit 664; go east. Right on Uhl Rd., left on Country Ridge Ln., right on Country Creek Rd. For more info call Marilyn Simmons @ 214-497-3918. Everyone welcome!

**Monday, February 16, 7:30 - FREE Garden Classes**. Starting in February through the end of the year – the THIRD Monday of the month will be our free gardening class....It will begin at 7:30 pm and go for about 1.5 hours or less.....it's free, it's fun, it's educational!! Bundle up on cooler nights and dress down on the warmer nights, you NEVER know about our weather! We will have something in store for you each 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday. Contact Donelle (Duchess) Simmons, 214-566-6862.

**Saturday, February 28, 10:00 - Petal Pushers**, Cedar Hill. **Antique Rose Day**. Vicki Thaxton will be discussing roses and newer "old finds". Lots of roses on hand such as Knock Outs and David Austin and more. For more information, call 972-291-7650.

**Friday-Saturday, March 20-21, Texas Rainwater Catchment Association (TRAC)**, 1st Annual State Conference. Please refer to article written by Rick Daniel, Ellis County Master Gardener, on page 7 in the January issue of the E-Garden Newsletter.

**Cedar Ridge Preserve (CPR)** - At an elevation of 755 feet, Cedar Ridge Preserve (formerly the Dallas Nature Center) is a slice of the hill country just 20 minutes outside Dallas. Located at 7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas, Texas 75249, Cedar Ridge Preserve is a not-for-profit natural habitat of 633 acres featuring:

CRP has been managed by Audubon Dallas since April 2003 by charter from the Dallas County Park & Open Space Program and the City of Dallas. In addition to the general rules and regulations, please be aware that wheeled vehicles of ALL types are prohibited on the trails, including bicycles.

- 10 miles of hiking trails
- Native junipers, grasses, wildflowers
- Butterfly gardens
- Picnic areas
- Wild animals, birds, insects and reptiles

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Preserve Hours</b><br/> <b>Nov. 1 – Mar. 31</b><br/>                 30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.<br/> <b>Apr. 1 – Oct. 31</b><br/>                 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.<br/>                 Closed Mondays<br/>                 972-709-7784</p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**Sunday, February 22, 2009 @ 1:00 PM**, Geoffrey B. Stanford Trout Lily Walk #1

**Description:** Trout lilies, or white dog-toothed violets, are the harbingers of spring in the plant world. These flowers in the lily family bloom from just mid-February to mid-March. And there are many interesting facts about trout lilies. Did you know trout lily bulbs produce just one leaf in the first 6 years, then 2 leaves, a scape (stem) and a flower in the 7th year? **Walk Details:** Master Naturalist and long-time CRP volunteer Jim Varnum will conduct a short walk to observe trout lilies. The walk will start at 2:00 PM and will last approximately 1 hour. Bring your camera. Wear sturdy boots or shoes with good ankle support. Join Jim for a nature walk afterwards. **More Info?** Jim Varnum [jvarnum@aol.com](mailto:jvarnum@aol.com) or 214-543-2055. RSVP is not needed.

**Saturday, March 7, 2009 @ 10:00 AM**, Geoffrey B. Stanford Trout Lily Walk #2

**Description:** Trout lilies, or white dog-toothed violets, are the harbingers of spring in the plant world. These flowers in the lily family bloom from just mid-February to mid-March. And there are many interesting facts about trout lilies. Did you know trout lily bulbs produce just one leaf in the first 6 years, then 2 leaves, a scape (stem) and a flower in the 7th year? **Walk Details:** Master Naturalist and long-time CRP volunteer Jim Varnum will conduct a short walk to observe trout lilies. The walk will start at 10:00 AM and will last approximately 1 hour. Bring your camera. Wear sturdy boots or shoes with good ankle support. Join Jim for a nature walk afterwards. **More Info?** Jim Varnum [jvarnum@aol.com](mailto:jvarnum@aol.com) or 214-543-2055. RSVP is not needed.



## Mark Your Calendars!

**The 2009 Ellis County Master Gardener's EXPO is set for Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup> at the Waxahachie Civic Center.**

Anyone wishing to become a sponsor or an exhibitor of the 2009 Expo, can find additional information on our website: [www.ECMGA.com](http://www.ECMGA.com) or contact James Kocian: 972-814-0699, or [expo.ecmga@yahoo.com](mailto:expo.ecmga@yahoo.com).

**Keynote Speaker: Neil Sperry!**

*It's February - What Needs to be Done?*



**EarthKind™ Garden**

*from the garden of James and Melinda Kocian*

**Planting and Sowing**

- Sow cool-season vegetable seeds directly into your garden this month. Cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, and potatoes should be planted 4 weeks before the last average frost date (March 15 in Ellis County). Lettuce, radishes, carrots, spinach, beets, chard, and turnips should be planted 2 to 4 weeks before the last average frost date. Cucumbers can be started late in the month.
- February is an excellent time to select and plant container-grown roses to fill bare spots in your rose garden.
- Two- to three-year old asparagus roots should also be planted in a well-prepared, permanent location in the garden early this month.
- Start planting your gladiolus corms late this month, then

every two weeks to prolong flowering. Dahlia tubers can also be planted now.

- Dig and divide warm-season perennials (cannas, cone-flowers, perennial salvias, mums, fall asters) before they break winter dormancy.

**Fertilizing and Pruning**

- Prune bush roses mid-month. Cut out dead, dying and weak canes. Leaving 4 to 8 healthy canes, remove approximately one-half of the cane's growth above an outward-facing bud. However, wait until after their spring bloom to prune climbing and "once-blooming" roses
- Mow your mondo grass and Asian jasmine at the highest setting to even them up. New spring growth will quickly correct their initial sparse appearance.

**This and That**

- Fall-flowering perennials such as mums, and Mexican bush sage should be dug and divided this month, before spring growth starts up.

**Garden Watch**

- February sprayings to control pests and diseases on fruit and nut trees are very important. Contact an Ellis County Master Gardener or your County AgriLife Office to obtain a copy of the "Homeowner Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule".

**EarthKind™ Tips for February**

Everyone loves roses! EarthKind roses are not immune to pests; however, their tolerance levels are so great that they rarely require chemical pesticides. They also do well in any of our native soils. For a list of these roses and more information visit: <http://earthkindroses.tamu.edu/>.

**Did you know?**

*By Betty Reuscher*  
Ellis County Master Gardeners

**G**t's Better to be Square.

Trees planted in a square hole have better root growth and spread. The roots penetrate flat soil surfaces more readily and efficiently, since round sides may encourage newly planted tree roots to continue in a circular growth pattern. However, top dressing mulch was applied in a circular pattern.

*This information came from professional gardeners during a program originating in Britain called "The Year at the Kew." All twelve programs aired Sunday, January 4 on PBS. The Kew Gardens in London recently received the coveted "International Heritage" designation alongside The Taj Mahal, and The Grand Canyon. The Gardens cover 300 acres and house 40,000 plant species.*



**G** have never had so many good ideas day after day as when I work in the garden. ~David Erskine

# GARDEN TALK

By Homer McCain  
Ellis County Master Gardener



I must admit that winter is not my favorite season of the year. After all, it is the dormant season – a time when most plants are asleep. It can be a dismal time of the year when grasses turn a shade of tan and many perennials die back to the ground. Deciduous trees and shrubs lose their leaves with only their trunk and branching structures awaiting the rebirth of growth come spring. But winter doesn't mean you can't have color and interest in your landscape and at least you don't have to water and mow grass every week.



One way that I use color in my garden is to plant pansies or violas in my annual beds in the front and back yards. Violas have smaller flowers but have more blooms and can be used quite effectively when planted in mass. Pansies come in a wide range of colors. I prefer using a single color for the best effect. You can also use different shades of one color such as purple or blue. In fact, many pansies now come with multiple-colored flowers, so there are lots of choices. They also do well in containers; just be sure to use plastic or glazed containers; as the terra cotta or clay ones tend to crack and flake during winter freezes. I place containers of pansies in strategic areas around the front of my house for public viewing. If you plant them in the backyard make sure to plant them where you can see them from inside the house.

Don't overlook the use of berries for winter color. They attract and provide food for many species of birds. One of the most attractive trees in my backyard is the Possumhaw holly (*Ilex decidua*). Its leaves drop during the winter revealing stunning red berries covering its branches.

Another good choice for winter color is the evergreen yaupon holly tree (*Ilex vomitoria*) with its bright red berries. Make sure you get a female one as the male trees do not produce berries. The best way to be sure is to buy one with berries on it. Wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*) is still another evergreen tree that has beautiful blue berries during the winter. Many other varieties of hollies have red berries and most have glossy green leaves during the winter.



The coralberry or Indian current (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*) in my garden is a deciduous perennial with pink or coral berries that are very prominent in the winter. It will tolerate some shade in the summer, so use it as an understory plant. There is another species that has white berries.

Plant a sweep or mass of nandinas (*Nandina domestica*) for its beautiful amber, orange, red and maroon foliage color. There are many varieties, such as Harbour Dwarf, Gulfstream, and Fire Power. There is a compact form of the standard one called *Nandina 'compacta'*. They grow in full sun or part shade. The best winter hues come from those grown in full sun with an evergreen backdrop such as, Indian Hawthorne, dwarf Burford holly or Cleyera.

Ornamental grasses will provide motion and structure as well as color in the winter landscape. And yes, tan is a color. Wait until late winter to cut them and other herbaceous perennials back. The dead tops are food and cover for the birds.

Don't forget that birds can provide a splash of color and interest in the winter. I always fill my feeders with a mixture of seed to attract all kinds of birds. All you need to attract birds is food, water and some cover such as trees and shrubs. This winter, I have enjoyed watching the following birds: red bird, blue jay, titmouse, black capped chickadee, dark-eyed junco, wren, finch and the usual mockingbird and sparrow.

Finally, in late January and early February, I always look forward to the sweet smelling yellow tubular flowers of Carolina Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) draped over my fence.

So, if you aren't experiencing the joy of winter color and interest in your landscape, pick up the phone and call the Ellis County Extension office at (972) 825-5175. One of our Master Gardeners will be glad to help you.

## Birth Flowers

Similar to a birthstone and an astrological sign, we are all assigned a birth flower for the time of year we are born. Each birth flower has a historical or meaningful significance. Some people are surprised to hear that birth flowers exist. Here is a brief overview of the birth flowers and their meanings. Read more at: <http://davesgarden.com>. Type in "birth flowers".

## Vegetable Gardeners Monthly

by Rick Daniel

Ellis County Master Gardener/Vegetable Gardening Specialist

Hello, and welcome to the first edition of the **Vegetable Gardeners Monthly**. Ellis County was fortunate to have five of their Master Gardeners complete Vegetable Gardening Specialist Training in 2008. This is a new specialty for Master Gardeners and we attended the first training session offered in October in Georgetown. So, you now have additional resources for all those gardening questions. Just give us a call at 972-825-5175 or contact us via the web at [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com).

This will be a monthly update with monthly tips and reminders, and I will pick one vegetable each month to go into greater detail.

For February, be sure your garden is prepared and ready to plant. Clear all old vegetation and till in compost and well rotted organic matter; the earlier the better.

Plant your onion sets or transplants early this month, but wait until mid month or later for other cool-season vegetables, such as beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, chard, English peas, lettuce, potatoes, radishes, spinach and turnips. Cucumbers can be planted late month. One to two year old asparagus roots can be planted as well (see below).

### Featured Vegetable of the Month

*By Rick Daniel*  
*Ellis County Master Gardener*



## Vegetable of the Month



### **ASPARAGUS:**

**Planting Dates:** Late winter, usually in February

**Planting Method:** Division or crowns. Plant 18-24 inches apart in rows, in a permanent location and in full sun. Can also be grown from seed, but this requires an extra year before first harvest (3 years total).

**Varieties:** Jersey Giant, Jersey Jem, UC157, Mary and Martha Washington

**Culture:** Highly organic soil and excellent drainage are critical. Over watering can cause crown rot and loss of plants. Best planting method is to prepare beds with heavy amounts of compost, lava sand, organic fertilizer or manure, then add earthworm castings. Soak roots in sea-weed water, cover with 3-4 inches of compost and then add 6-9 inches of shredded mulch. Plantings should last 10-15 years or longer if organic. Another planting method is to dig a trench, about 8 inches deep, add a couple of inches of compost and/or old manure, one inch of dirt and then place the crowns in the trench about 18 inches apart and then cover with about two inches of soil and water well. Wait until the spears start to grow and then gradually cover with soil as they grow until they reach the garden surface. Then mulch around the plants with organic matter. They will require about one inch of water per week during the growing season the first two years after planting.

**Fertilizer:** Medium-heavy feeder. High phosphorous, potassium and organic matter at planting. Annual nitrogen in late winter or very early spring. Benefits from yearly top dressing of compost.

**Harvest:** Don't harvest many, if any, the first year. Go easy on harvest the second year and even in the third year and subsequent years let some of the shoots grow to produce foliage while harvesting other shoots. Never harvest tall shoots. Should cut shoots off just below the top of the soil with a sharp knife. Store shoots at 32-40 degrees for 2-4 weeks. Male plants produce more shoots. Female plants (with red berries) produce larger spears but have a higher mortality rate. It is recommended that you replace female plants with males to increase yield. You may harvest for 4-6 weeks per year. Cut foliage down to ground level after first freeze when foliage yellows. Remember, next years crop is produced from this year's foliage, so do not over harvest and allow the foliage to grow!



## February - Think Roses

By Nancy Fenton, Ellis County Master Gardener

February is the time to think about working with your roses. If you don't have any, now is the time to evaluate your spaces and get some great ideas. The next few weeks we will be talking about roses and various kinds that should do well despite the Texas heat and humidity.

There are some common features that every rose will share and will serve you well if you begin on the right "foot."

- Choose a sunny spot for your rose, 6-8 hours of direct sun is required for a full luscious bloom
- Choose a healthy plant to begin with. This means 3-4 canes in good shape, if you are in one of our local stores looking at bare rooted plants or vigorous growth in a potted plant
- Last, but not least, proper planting; meaning organically enriched soil, lots of good drainage and a "hill planting" (plant it higher than the bed level).

A good 3 to 4 inches of mulch plus watering daily for a week before you settle into a weekly watering routine should see you well into a season of glorious blooms and few pest problems.

For more information, call the Master Gardeners of Ellis County at 972-825-5175.

## Katharina Zeimet Rose

By Pat Dockins, Ellis County Master Gardener



Katharina Zeimet roses are in the Polyantha class of roses. Polyantha is a new word to me. The first time I read it I smiled; I guess because the word reminded me of "Pollyanna", meaning a positive outlook on life. Well, that's what roses do to me. They give me a positive little "zing". I don't know anybody who doesn't like roses. Even old meanies like roses. They may not like working with them, but they love looking at them — like everybody else.



The Katharina with another

This particular delicate than

rose is one that was unknown to me, but will soon be a favorite. Its flowers are more those of most other Polyantha roses. They are double, pure white and formed in large clusters. This is a shrub rose that blooms continuously. It grows 3-4 feet and does well in zones 5-9.

Polyantha rose class was the result of crossing China roses with the rambling Japanese multiflora rose.

Zeimet was raised by Peter Lambert of Germany in 1901, who crossed Marie Pavie Polyantha.

Polyanthas are hardy and disease-resistant. Their dwarfed and compact nature lends themselves well when used as low borders, mass plantings or in containers. So, see, what's not to like?

For further information, contact the Ellis County Master Gardeners at the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, 701 South I-35 E., Suite 3, Waxahachie, or call 97-825-5175 or email ellis-tx@tamu.edu.

## Quietness Rose

By Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener



Another rose cultivated by Dr. Griffith Buck is the Quietness Rose, the rose named for the stillness that occurred when flights were grounded after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

It comes in a soft pink with a richer center. Quietness is a profuse blooming variety, 3-4 feet by 3 feet high and moderately fragrant. This is a shrub rose which will look outstanding as a hedge. The rose is recommended as disease tolerant.



All of the Buck roses tend to tolerate the heat in Texas with minimal adverse effects. Not all of Dr. Buck's roses are going to adapt to our southern climate. Those cultivars which have adapted give outstanding performance from plants with tremendously strong genetic foundations. Efforts are presently underway by Texas A&M to test 30 Buck cultivars in the first EarthKind trial.

For further information contact the Ellis County Master Gardeners at the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, 701 S.IH-35E, Suite 3, Waxahachie, 972-825-5175 or email: ellis-tx@tamu.edu.



## Roses for sale at Ellis County Master Gardeners' Expo March 28, 2009 at the Waxahachie Civic Center



**Belinda's Dream (Pink):** Belinda's Dream was designated as a Texas Superstar in 2002. This is a gorgeous shrub rose that grows in full sun to a height of 4-5 feet and width of 3-4 feet. It is a fragrant shrub rose with large, double pink blossoms and long stems. It produces successive flushes of bloom spring to frost. Being a Texas Superstar means it has been tested for cold hardiness, heat resistance, insect, and disease tolerance. It is tolerant of most soil types. This versatile rose can be used in mixed borders, hedges, tubs, barrels, formal, and informal gardens. It is perfect for fresh-cut flowers and for dried floral arrangements.

**Carefree Beauty (Pink):** Carefree Beauty was introduced by Dr. Griffith Buck in 1977. This is another very disease free and easy to grow rose. It is quite tolerant of poorer soils and grows in full sun. It is an upright shrub with semi-double, medium pink flowers that repeat throughout the growing season. It grows as an upright bush 3-5 feet in height and 3-4 feet wide. The foliage is medium-sized, olive green and smooth. Carefree Beauty blooms are large (3" to 4.5"), semi-double (15-20 petals). Carefree Beauty has a moderate fragrance. It is quite tolerant of poorer soils. Carefree Beauty makes a very nice specimen plant and is also well adapted for hedging.

**Martha Gonzales (Red):** Martha Gonzales is a found rose, discovered in Navasota, Texas, and resembles the old China hybrid, 'Fabvier'. It grows 2-4' tall and 2-3' wide. This is a fine compact rose for a small garden. 'Martha Gonzales' has twiggy growth, and smallish dark green foliage with single, bright crimson red flowers. The plant is almost always in bloom until frost, and the foliage is quite disease resistant. The flowers are 1-2.5" and occur in great profusion and in mild winters the flowers turn velvety and can be 3 to 3.5". This plant makes a very good low hedge, is effective in mass plantings and is also a good rose for container culture. It is even suitable for use as a ground cover. It has a very light scent. Martha Gonzales is rather drought tolerant and will bloom and perform satisfactorily in partial shade, although it prefers bright sun.

**Mutabilis (Red):** Mutabilis is another old China rose. Chinas comprise a class of roses best known for their repeat blooming habit. The blooms are flat with a single circular row of petals. Each blossom "mutates" or goes through three distinct color changes. They open peach gold, then change to a beautiful pink and finally turn a stunning crimson. In 2005 the Mutabilis Rose, first introduced in 1894, was named "EarthKind Rose of the Year" by Texas Cooperative Extension's Earth Kind team. It blooms from spring through fall. Like all Earth Kind roses, Mutabilis needs at least eight hours of direct sun daily and good air flow over its foliage. It will grow in almost any soil, from well-drained acid sands to highly alkaline clays. It's also very drought and heat tolerant once established. Mutabilis makes a large, very handsome landscape shrub that reaches a symmetrical 7' tall and 7' wide at maturity.

**Old Blush 1752 (Pink):** Old Blush is one of the most famous of the China roses and an important parent of thousands of other roses. It forms a compact, somewhat upright, and twiggy bush. The flower size is 3" to 4" with 15 to 20 petals. They flush darker pink in the sun. The bush is full and upright in habit, growing slowly to over 5' high and 3-6' wide, with neat, healthy foliage. It blooms early in the season to late in the season. Perfume is soft, but fruity and pleasant. Whether used in a hedge, as a specimen, or in a border, Old Blush does not take a lot of care. It prefers some shade and mulch to conserve moisture, and it will tolerate poor soils. Mildew may result from insufficient water.

**Seven Sisters (Pink):** Seven Sisters is a legendary and famous climbing rose whose flowers include a range of colors from carmine pink through mauve in a single cluster. This rose grows 15-20' in height. It is a vigorous once-blooming climbing rose that is frequently found in old gardens and home sites throughout the southern United States. There are usually more than seven blossoms in each cluster. The foliage is bright green. Seven Sisters starts blooming in late spring in Texas. The flower is 1.5" to 2" with 40-60 petals.

**Weeping China Doll (Pink):** Weeping China Doll is a medium pink climbing polyanthus that begins blooming in late March or early April, and is nearly continuously in bloom throughout the rest of the growing season. It has long cascading canes of small double-clusters of rose pink fading to light pink pompom blooms. This rose will tolerate shade and is disease resistant. It grows from 4-6' in height. It has a mild fragrance with clusters of small blooms. It can be grown in containers or used as a groundcover. It has a light green foliage.

More information is available at [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com).

## Solving the Mystery of Pruning Roses

Submitted by Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener

*Dr. Doug Welsh, Landscape Horticulturist at Texas A&M University, offers these tips on pruning roses:*

February is the month when most modern roses need to be pruned. Even if your roses have already begun growth, the time has come to prune. Annual heavy pruning is essential to insure the prolific bloom and long-life of a rose bush. Explaining the concept of rose pruning without a live bush to demonstrate on is difficult, so let your mind visualize the following steps in rose pruning:

- Pruning of roses is actually done year round. Every time you cut off old blooms and remove twiggy growth, you are actually promoting new growth. There are two times a year when you prune more seriously, spring and fall.
- You will need the following items: a good pair of hand pruners (preferably the scissor type referred to as a by-pass pruner, not the anvil type), a sharp keyhole saw and large loppers, a heavy pair of leather gloves, a pruning compound and a dull knife.
- The first step in spring pruning of Hybrid Teas, Grandifloras, Floribundas and Climbing roses is to remove any canes that are dead or just old and non-productive. These canes are usually gray in color and scaly.
- This pruning will encourage future "basal breaks" which are the life blood of any rose bush. Basal breaks refer to new shoots, soon to be producing canes, which arise from the graft union. These should not be confused with "suckers" which arise from the rootstock below the graft union. Remove all suckers.
- The next step involves taking a good look at the bud union. If you have any old, dry, scaly wood on the union, remove it. Use the dull knife to scrape the bud union to remove the scaly wood. By doing this it will again make it possible for new basal breaks to come about.
- Beginning to fine tune the pruning, remove all twiggy growth on the remaining canes (**note: the fine tune pruning on climbing roses should be done after they bloom in the spring**). Try to clean out the middle of the bush as much as possible. This allows for good air circulation to prevent insects and disease.
- Now you are ready to prune on the good healthy canes. If your roses have already flushed growth, it is important to prune each cane back to a dormant bud. A bud that has already begun growth and is then pruned will simply continue to grow vigorously and bloom very little. A dormant, non-growing bud will initiate growth after pruning and will produce an abundance of blooms.
- One comment used to describe pruning is to "prune to an outside bud". This means when picking the point on a given cane to cut back to, make sure there is a good bud on the cane facing toward the outside of the plant. This will insure the growth of the new bud is to the outside, therefore keeping the center of the rose bush clear and open for air circulation.
- Another guideline in pruning back an individual cane is to cut the cane at the point when the diameter of the cane is the size of a pencil or slightly larger. This is normally at a height of 18 to 24 inches. If there is the need to prune back to a dormant bud, the size of the cane may be larger and the cane length may be shorter.
- If old and large canes have been removed to the bud union, it is a good practice to seal these large cuts. This helps prevent insects and diseases from infecting the cuts. Smaller canes usually don't need to be sealed. Use some sort of sealing compound such as orange shellac or even Elmer's glue.
- When pruning is completed, remove any old foliage left on the canes and rake up and remove any leaves or twigs. This will help reduce the disease and insect pressure on the young, tender shoots and buds.

The final product of your pruning should be a rose bush about 18 to 24 inches tall with 4 to 8 canes. Add some fertilizer, water, and tender-loving-care, and that pitiful looking rose bush will soon give you a shower of flowers.

Miniatures should be pruned now, too. As for how to prune, use the same guidelines given for the larger type roses except do it in miniature. The end product will be a rose bush about 4 to 6 inches tall with 4 to 6 canes.

If you don't have any miniature roses, plant some this spring. You will be surprised at the wealth of blooms such a small plant can produce.

Use the miniatures in groups of threes, fives, or sevens to make a real splash. The miniatures also work well as a border plant along the front of a shrub bed. And finally, try some miniatures in clay pots and decorative containers to add color to decks, patios, and apartment balconies.

## Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton  
Ellis County Master Gardener



### Coriander/Cilantro *Coriandrum sativum*

The Spanish word for coriander is *cilantro* and because Mexican food has become so popular in recent years most of us refer to the plant as Cilantro. Generally the fresh green leaves are called cilantro while the nutty flavored seeds retain the coriander name.



Cilantro tends to have a love/hate relationship with most gardeners and cooks. Many people find the intense flavor and odor disagreeable; therefore its unflattering name of *stink plant*.

In Texas cilantro is a cool weather plant preferring to sprout in the fall and thrive through the winter. The first leaves are flat and wide, resembling Italian parsley. In early spring pretty white to pink flowers emerge and a secondary set of lacy leaves appear. Seeds ripen quickly and scatter throughout the garden. These seeds can remain dormant until the cool weather of autumn signals a rebirth. To prevent this; gather the ripe seed heads and store in a cool dry place. Use the seeds in breads, game dishes, fish and fruit desserts. Save some seed to replant in the early fall.

Cilantro will grow in almost any well drained soil and prefers morning sun with afternoon shade. It has a deep taproot making transplanting difficult. So plant seeds where you want them to grow and thin the seedlings to 12 inches apart.

February is not a good time to plant seed but the garden centers will have a good supply of young plants. Purchase several now and get them into your garden quickly. You will be enjoying the wonderful, fresh flavor of the herb within a few weeks.

Cilantro makes a pretty spring plant in the garden but goes to seed and dies back quickly in the summer. The flowers attract bees and beneficial insects. It tends to deter harmful insects with its strong odor.

Medicinally coriander aids digestion and taken as a tea helps avoid flatulence.

Harvest the leaves any time and use in salads, salsas, salad dressings, soups and southwestern dishes. If you enjoy the flavor of cilantro, try this quick and easy recipe:

**Salad in a Glass.** 3 cups tomato juice, 2 fresh tomatoes, chopped, 1/4 cup green pepper, chopped, 1/4 cup celery, chopped, 1/2 cucumber, peeled, seeded and chopped, 1 green onion, chopped, 3 sprigs each of cilantro and dill, and a dash of Worcestershire and hot sauce. Blend all ingredients in a food processor or blender until liquid. Serve in a glass over ice.



### More On "Lasagna" Gardening

By Jamey Cosper-Guarascio, Ellis County Master Gardener

My compost piles have been turned and are cooling now, but that itch to get to work in the yard is just beginning. I look out the back window and dream of green plants and beautiful blooms rather than the brown dead stalks I see now. My kids have painted some of the rocks we dug up last year and they're just as eager to get outside and place their works of art. The upside to the dreary dark days is that we have a project we've begun that will make gardening more productive than ever.

Over the last few months, we've stockpiled our newspaper, saved our kitchen scraps, and we've raked leaves - even took a few trips to Dallas last fall to gather bagged leaves from our old neighborhood where everyone throws them away. All we're missing is fresh grass clippings, but that'll be here before we know it. What are we prepping for? Our lasagna garden.

We've selected a site for our new veggie garden that is sunny and close to a water source to keep the garden as low maintenance as we can. Last year we tried to till this area but quickly discovered that the only way we'd get anything to grow here was by lasagna gardening.

(Continued on page 10)

## Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



*Cooperia drummondii* Herb  
Amaryllis Family (Amaryllidaceae)

### Rain Lily

Zone: 1, 2, 4, 6, 7

Size: 1-1 1/2 feet

Blooms: April-October, Perennial

Stems and leaves of rainlilies grow from a bulb, and each stem usually bears a single flower. White, heavy-textured, fragrant blossoms flare from a pinkish tube that varies in length according to the species. One of the most common species in Texas is *C. pedunculata*, which has a tube up to one and one-half inches long; its six petals spreading to two-inches long. It blooms in the spring and early summer. *C. drummondii*, with a tube that may reach seven inches long and a relatively small flower head, is more widespread, and blooms from late summer through fall. The habit of appearing in grassy areas soon after rains, often in large numbers, gives rainlilies their name.

*(Continued from page 9)*

Our site is 4 x 12; not too big, but large enough to try out a few different crops at once. This past weekend we marked the outline of the garden with stakes and string.

Our first layer will be heavy to smother the existing grass and weeds. We'll use thick pads of wet newspaper since we have it in abundance. We'll lay the wet newspaper close together so that the edges overlap slightly to keep the weeds from sneaking through. Cardboard boxes are another great option if you have access to them.

The second layer will be a 3-inch layer of peat moss. If our garden were larger, we'd create pathways with woodchips to save on the amount of growing materials we'll use.

The third layer will be a 6-inch layer of mulch materials. In our case, we'll use compost because we've been prepping it for just this purpose, but you could use a variety of other items, such as: cool animal manure, chopped corn cobs, grass clippings, hay, chopped leaves, sawdust, peat moss, straw, wood ashes, seaweed, etc. We prefer to alternate our layers so that each layer offers different nutrient to our garden, but we're sometimes limited with what we have. In the Spring, our beds have a lot of the debris we left over the winter; the stalks and seed heads I see out my window today. In summer, the beds have a lot more grass clippings and in fall, a lot more chopped leaves.

Next, we'll add a layer of chopped leaves, then another 6-inch layer of mulch, and we'll alternate materials in layers until the bed is 18 to 24 inches high. We often try to cut down on our landfill items by pulling the paper out of our shredder and making a layer out of it, too.

We top off the bed with a scattering of bone meal and wood ashes to provide extra phosphorous and potassium. That's it.

The great thing about lasagna gardening is that you can build it and plant it the same day. Since we've still got a few weeks before we're ready to plant, we'll cover the bed with black plastic and put bricks on the plastic to keep it in place. The area will cook for up to 6 weeks. When we peel off the plastic, the ground will be loose, earthy and ready for a bumper crop!

To make a planting hole in the new bed, we'll simply pull the layers apart with our hands, set the plant in the hole, pull the mulch back around the roots, and water it thoroughly.

As our beds begin to break down, we simply add a few more layers on top of the old layers and stick new plants in where needed. Our lasagna gardens produce far better than any of our traditional "in the ground" gardens and tend to produce less weeds - those weeds that do appear are easier to pull too.

This year, we'll add a few new lasagna garden beds, and replace an old traditional bed or two. My goal is to only have lasagna gardens within two years.

For more information on lasagna gardening, check out books by Patricia Lanza. I've found her books to be the most user friendly and informative

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

*By Rick Daniel, Ellis County Master Gardener*



This is a good month to think about, plan and prepare your gardens for this spring and summer plantings. Plan ahead and decide what you want to plant, and then order any supplies needed, if you purchase from gardening catalogues.

For you vegetable gardeners; if you haven't already done so, now is time to till your garden and get it ready. It's time to get your onion sets in the ground. If planting asparagus, use two to three year-old roots and plant them in well prepared, permanent locations in your garden.

For your perennial gardens, consider using native and adapted plants, as they will reduce or eliminate the need for pesticide spraying and heavy fertilization. Plants labeled EarthKind™ have been tested and proven under all growing conditions, and are very hardy. Call the Master Gardener Office for recommendations of plants, trees, shrubs and flowers for Ellis County at 972-825-5175. You can also check us out on our website, [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com).

For you vegetable gardeners, the second week in February is the time to sow cool season vegetable seeds directly into your garden soil. Cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli and potatoes should be planted four weeks before the last average frost date, which is March 15<sup>th</sup> in Ellis County.

In Ellis County, roses need to be pruned by mid month. Different types of roses require different types of pruning, so if you need assistance, contact your Ellis County Master Gardener rose experts for advice. Generally speaking, cut out dead, dying and weak canes. Leave 4-8 healthy canes, while removing about one half of the canes growth above an outward-facing bud. Wait until after the spring bloom to prune climbing and "once blooming" roses.

Local nurseries should have a wide variety of roses in stock now, so it's time to pay them a visit.

If you've been procrastinating, now is the time to get your garden tools ready to go for this year. Unless you do it yourself, get your power tools to your local repair shop for a tune up. If you wait much longer, it might take you a while to get them back, as they get real busy around the first week of March.

By mid-month is the time to complete any unfinished pruning of shade, ornamental and fruit trees. Be sure to remove that pesky mistletoe from your trees. Left unchecked, it will enlarge and cause distorted limb growth and weaken your trees. Birds will spread by eating the berries.

By the 3rd week, start planting your gladiolus corms and Dahlia tubers. Fall-flowering perennials such as mums, and Mexican bush sage should be dug and divided before spring growth gets in the way.

By the 4th week, you vegetable gardeners, you can now sow lettuce, radishes, carrots, spinach, beets, chard, turnips and cucumbers in your garden.

**Water wise tip of the month.** Plan your flowerbeds so that plants with similar water needs are planted together, thus eliminating over and under watering of some plants. Rainwater Harvesting is a great way to save water. The Ellis County Master Gardeners have information on how to catch rain and save it for future watering needs. We also offer classes on rainwater harvesting. We hope to have a couple of rainwater demonstration sites you can visit completed in the next couple of months. Stay tuned for details.

Speaking of classes, be sure and mark your calendar for our annual Master Gardener Lawn and Garden Expo on March 28<sup>th</sup>. Come and hear Neil Sperry and many of your local Master Gardener Experts speak on many exciting gardening topics.

For additional information or questions, contact the Ellis County Master Gardener office at 972-825-5175, or visit us on the web at [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com).

It takes a while to grasp that not all failures are self-imposed, the result of ignorance, carelessness or inexperience. It takes a while to grasp that a garden isn't a testing ground for character and to stop asking, what did I do wrong? Maybe nothing.

~Eleanor Perényi, *Green Thoughts*, 1981