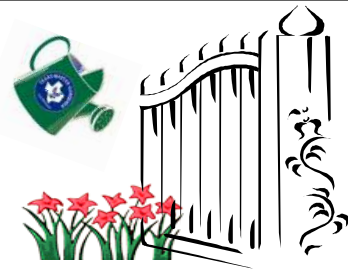




# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume III, Issue 9

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

October, 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 October?

**Saturday, Oct. 3, 9-11:00am** - 2nd Annual Iris Giveaway, hosted by the Ellis County Master Gardeners at the Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market.

**Thursday, Oct. 8, 7-9:30pm** - Household Canning Class - Instructor: Chef Jeri McGinty, 972-998-5879. Focus on safety, sanitation, tools, and ingredient variety. Students will work on a canning project during the class session. Please bring a chef's knife and cutting board with you to class. Cost \$45.00; 1728 Bluff Springs Rd., Ferris, Texas.

**Saturday, October 17, 9:30 a.m.** - **Rain Barrel Class**, 401 S. Elm. The city of Waxahachie's Parks and Recreation Department, in conjunction with the Ellis County Master Gardeners, have planned a class to instruct residents on how to construct a rain barrel, held at the Parks and Recreation building. Cost: \$30.00/person. Take home a completed rain barrel. Registration deadline is Oct. 9. Space is limited; only 20 participants on a first-come, first-served basis. Register in person at City Hall, 401 S. Rogers, in the Utility Department downstairs. For more info contact John Smith 972-937-7330, ext. 181 or Amy Hollywood 972-937-7330, ext. 284.

**Saturday, October 17, 9:30am** - **Petal Pushers** - "How to Grow Food in Texas". Learn about planting garlic, how to protect your garden through the winter. Also, what type of winter cover crops to plant. Instructor: Val.

**Saturday, October 17, 9-noon** - **Cedar Ridge Preserve - Conservation in Action!** Habitat Restoration & Trail Maintenance at Cedar Ridge Preserve happens the 3rd Saturday of every month throughout the year, rain or shine. Volunteers remove non-native plants, restore trails, and work in the butterfly garden. Repairing trails reduces erosion trouble spots and removing non-native plants saves water and nutrients for plants native to the area. We'll provide snacks, water, pruning shears, shovels, and work gloves. All you need to bring is sun screen and bug repellent. Although we provide equipment, some volunteers like to bring their own gloves and a favorite tool. Questions? Contact info: [CRP@yahoo.com](mailto:CRP@yahoo.com).

**Monday, October 19, 7:00pm** - Garden Inspirations - Marilyn will be discussing organic products available in nurseries and organic procedures and techniques. Tour the garden. Chef Jeri McGinty will be cooking a vegetable from the garden to sample. 108 Ridgcrest, Waxahachie (off 813 Rockett), 214-497-3918; public welcome.

**Landscape Design Class** is underway; however, drop-ins are welcome to come anyway. Classes run through the second week in November. Call Marilyn, 214-497-3918 for more information on remainder of classes and the cost for drop-ins.

**Friday, November 20, 3:00pm** - **Pettigrew Academy**. Free Pie Social...public invited. 806 E. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie. Call Kim Bauman, 972-923-1633 for more info.

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



### Fall Aster

*From the garden of Pam Daniel*

#### Planting and Sowing

- Plant daffodil, grape hyacinth and crocus bulbs in well-prepared beds, so the base of the bulb is at a depth that is three times the diameter of the bulb. Plant slightly higher in clay soils.
- Trees and shrubs planted now will have well-established root systems by next summer's heat wave.
- Cool-season annuals (pansies, pinks, snapdragons, ornamental kale) that were started in August can be transplanted as soon as daytime temperatures are 90 degrees or cooler.

#### Fertilizing and Pruning

- Apply one cup of lawn fertilizer per cubic yard to your current compost pile and mix it in with a spading fork. Keep the pile moist and warm over winter to hasten microbial activity.

- Holly plants with a heavy set of fruit often suffer a fertilizer deficiency. An application of complete fertilizer late this month can be helpful and provide a head start next spring.

#### This and That

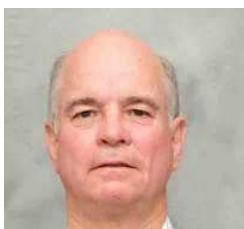
- Chill tulip and hyacinth bulbs in the refrigerator until mid- to late-December before planting. The lower part of the refrigerator is best. Do not leave bulbs in airtight plastic bags and avoid storing them with fruit.
- Keep Christmas cactus evenly moist and where night temperatures can be kept below 65°F or new buds will drop. They should also be kept in total darkness from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 a.m. for about 30 days beginning mid-month to initiate flower buds.
- There is still time to divide and reset such perennials as phlox, violets, hollyhocks, irises, daylilies and Shasta daisies

#### Garden Watch

- October is a good time to reduce the insect and disease potential in next year's garden. Clean up the garden, removing all annuals that have completed their life cycle. Remove the tops of all herbaceous perennials that have finished flowering or as soon as frost has killed the leaves.

#### EarthKind™ Tips for October

Leaves and lawn clippings left in streets and driveways are a major pollution threat to water supplies. A small amount of runoff from thousands of homes becomes a major concern. For more information please visit: <http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/>.



### Watch for Armyworms in Pastures and Lawns

By Glen C. Moore

Extension Agent – IPM, Texas AgriLife Extension

Scattered outbreaks of fall armyworm have been reported infesting Bermuda grass pastures, wheat and lawns in north central Texas. The fall armyworm is often most abundant during August through early November in our area. When present in large numbers, caterpillars can consume a pasture, crop or lawn in a short period of time.

**Eggs.** Eggs are laid in masses of up to 50 eggs on the grass leaves and are difficult to find. The eggs are covered with the grey scales from the moths body, giving the egg mass a fuzzy appearance. Eggs hatch in 2-3 days.

**Caterpillar.** Fall armyworms are green, brown or black. A distinct white line between the eyes forms an inverted Y pattern on the face. There are four black spots aligned in a square on the top of the 8th segment near the back end of the caterpillar. Armyworms are very small at first, because of little plant damage and as a result infestations often go unnoticed. Larvae feed for 2-3 weeks and full grown larvae reach about 1 to 1.5 inches long. Armyworms consume 80% of their total food intake during the last few days of

*(Continued on page 4)*



## Ellis County Master Gardeners 2nd Annual 'Iris Give-Away'

By Rosemary Morgeson

Saturday, October 3, the Ellis County Master Gardeners will host the second annual "Iris Give-away" at the Farmer's Market in downtown Waxahachie.

Now is the best time to plant, transplant and just clean out those iris beds. The Master Gardeners have been busy collecting from various gardens in the Ellis County area as well as their own beds.



Irises are one of the easiest perennials to grow. They survive with little care and reward you with beautiful blooms each spring.

An iris needs at least a half day of sun to produce blooms; raising the beds slightly will insure the plant good drainage.

With the challenge of our black clay soils, it is best to work with well-composted organic materials, sand and agricultural gypsum. Mix in some all-purpose garden fertilizer (i.e. 10-10-10). All these amendments should be worked into the soil prior to planting.

Irises can be planted or transplanted, with good results, July through October. Early planting enables the root systems to become well established before winter. To plant your iris rhizome, dig a shallow hole in your prepared bed, place a small handful of bone meal in the bottom of the hole and cover it with a little soil. Place the rhizome in the hole just deep enough so the very top of the rhizome will be at the surface of the soil with the roots spread out beneath it. Fill in the hole pressing the soil firmly in place.

Plant three irises per clump toe to toe. For a fuller effect create a ring by repeating with three more irises surrounding the original clump.

Your new iris will require weekly watering until the roots are established; then frequently but deep watering is needed. Overhead watering is not recommended during the summer heat. I recommend some type of drip irrigation. You will need to fertilize at least two times a year; around March 1 and again in mid-September. Irises will benefit from the application of super-phosphate or a good quality time-released product. Do not apply a high-nitrogen fertilizer; it will cause vigorous leaf growth with little or no blooms, and can cause soft rot. Soft rot occurs usually due to too much water or high nitrogen fertilizer. If a fungal leaf spot appears, treat with a fungicide — two sprayings ten days apart.

Many years ago irises were referred to as "flags". Typically you may have run across only a few colors in your grandparent's garden. Today there are hundreds of colors and sizes to choose from; dwarf miniature to tall bearded ranging in height from 2 inches to 40 inches. Pay close attention during the early spring and you might just be lucky enough to see a little blue flower with a yellow dot in the center. This is the smallest iris of them all reaching only about 1 inch tall.

Most all irises will have a wonderful fragrance at the time of blooming — from smells of cinnamon toast to my favorite, grape candy. With little to no effort these jewels make great additions to your perennial gardens and will reward you year after year.

## Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener



### **White Milkwort** - Milkwort Family (Polygalaceae)

*Polygala alba* Nutt.

Size: 8-16 inches

Blooms: March-October, Perennial

Milkworts do not have the sticky white sap that oozes from milkweeds when they are cut, so don't let the similar names confuse you. White milkwort has many erect stems growing from a woody base. The tiny leaves are sparse. They alternate up a stem that ends in a spike-like raceme of densely clustered, quarter-inch white flowers. Certain species in this family were believed to increase the flow of milk when grazed by cows. The botanical name is from the Greek words *poly* (many) and *galu* (milk). The dried, powdered root is commercially marketed for the treatment of respiratory ailments. Over twenty-five specials of milkwort are found in Texas.

(Continued from page 2)

development. Given their immense appetite, great numbers, and marching ability, armyworms can damage entire fields or pastures in a few days. Once the armyworm completes feeding, it tunnels into the soil about an inch and enters the pupa stage.

**Pupa.** The full grown armyworm tunnels into the soil and transforms to the pupae, an inactive, non-feeding stage. In 7-10 days, the moth emerges from the pupa and repeats the life cycle.

**Moth.** The fall armyworm moth has a wingspan of about 1 inch. The front pair of wings is dark gray with an irregular pattern of light and dark areas. Moths are active at night and common around lights at night. A single female can deposit up to 2000 eggs. Development from egg to adult requires about 4 weeks during the summer and is longer during cool weather. There are several generations a year. Development ends with cold weather in November.

#### **Management.**

It is important to detect fall armyworm infestations early before they cause economic damage. Fall armyworm larvae feed primarily during the night and during cloudy weather. During the day, look for armyworms under loose soil and fallen leaves on the ground. The presence of chewed leaves can indicate the presence of armyworms. Small larvae chew the green layer from the leaves and leave a clearing or window pane effect and consume only a small amount of foliage. Consequently, infestations may go unnoticed unless the field is closely inspected. Once larvae are greater than 3/4 inch, the quantity of leaves they eat increases dramatically. During the final 2-3 days of feeding, armyworms consume 80% of the total foliage consumed during their entire development. For this reason, extensive feeding damage can occur in a few days. The density of armyworms sufficient to justify insecticide treatment will depend on the stage of crop growth and value of the crop. Seedling plants can tolerate fewer armyworms than established plants. Infestations of 2-3 armyworms per square foot may justify treatment. Hot, dry weather and natural enemies limit armyworm populations.

**Labeled Insecticides for Armyworm Control in Pastures and Hayfields.** Always read and follow all label instructions on pesticide use and restrictions.

**Malathion 57%** and Malathion ULV. Zero days to harvest or grazing.

**Mustang Max** (9.6% zeta-cypermethrin). Applications may be made up to 0 days for forage and hay, 7 days for straw and seed screenings. Labeled for a large number of insect pests, including armyworms, grasshoppers

**Warrior A** 7 day waiting period should be observed before grazing.

**Tracer.** Do not allow cattle to graze until spray has dried. Do not harvest hay or fodder for 3 days after treatment. There is no pre-harvest interval for forage. Treat when eggs hatch or when larvae are small. Use higher rates for larger larvae.

**Sevin 4F, Sevin XLR, Sevin 80S, Generic Carbaryl.** When applied to pastures, there is a 14 day waiting period before grazing/harvest.

**Dimilin 2L.** Wait one day until harvest. Label does not list a restriction on grazing. To be effective, Dimilin must be applied before larvae reach inch or longer. Will not control larger larvae. Provides residual control for up to 2-3 weeks, as long as forage is not removed from field. Dimilin acts as an insect growth regulator.

**Intrepid 2F.** Do not harvest hay within 7 days of application. There is no pre-harvest interval for forage. Begin applications when first signs of feeding damage appear. Use higher rates for heavier infestations. Intrepid is an insect growth regulator.

**Lannate.** Bermuda grass only. Do not apply within 7 days of feeding forage or allowing livestock to graze. Do not apply within 3 days of cutting for hay. Lannate is a highly toxic POISON and all label precautions must be carefully followed. A restricted use pesticide.

#### **Labeled Insecticides for Armyworm Control in Wheat and Small Grains include:**

Baythroid, carbaryl, Lannate, Lorsban, Mustang Max, methyl parathion, Proxis and Tracer. Refer to label for restrictions on grazing and harvesting treated crops.

Always read and follow pesticide label directions.

#### **Insecticides for Armyworm Control in Lawns:**

Insecticide labeled in lawns and turf include halofenozide (Mach® 2), bifenthrin (Talstar®), cyfluthrin (Tempo®, Bayer Advanced®), carbaryl (Sevin®) permethrin (multiple brands) and spinosad (Conserve® and others).

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## Vegetable Gardeners Monthly

By Rick Daniel

Ellis County Master Gardener/Vegetable Gardening Specialist

Hello, and welcome to the October edition of the Vegetable Gardeners Monthly. If you have questions that this article doesn't address, just give us a call at 972-825-5175 or contact us via the web at [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com) and ask for one of your Master Gardener Vegetable Gardening Specialist.

Thanks Mother Nature for that wonderful rain we received this month. We've received right at 13 inches this month at our house near Ovilla. Our vegetable garden looks better than it has most of the year. The rains we received this month should also make for a colorful spring, as those wildflowers should now have the moisture they need to get started.

Not a lot of vegetable gardening to be done this month. You can sow radish seeds and garlic cloves the first couple of weeks of October. Strawberries should also be planted this month. Keep an eye out for those pests and keep them under control. Keep picking those ripe vegetables and enjoy, as the growing season for most ends next month.

### Featured Vegetable of the Month

*By Rick Daniel*

*Ellis County Master Gardener*



### Vegetable of the Month

#### ONION:



**Planting dates:** Plant transplants in late winter or very early spring. Sets and plants can be transplanted 2-1 to 3-17.

**Planting method:** When using transplants, choose plants only ½ inch in diameter or less. Fall transplants will probably be harvested as green onions in winter. For big onions, plant transplants with 8-10 inch spacing in December. When sowing seeds, sow the previous year in September up until October 1. Planting too early and exposure to cold temperatures causes seed stalk development.

**Varieties:** **Yellow:** Texas supersweet, yellow granex **Red:** Red Granex, burgundy, **White:** Crystal white, white granex. If an onion is listed as a long-day variety, it bulbs when it receives 15-16 hours of daylight. Short-day variety bulb with about 12 hours of daylight and are used in southern areas for winter onion production

**Culture:** Soil should be healthy and well drained. Add lots of compost and organic fertilizer. Soil needs to be kept moist, not too wet, just moist. The size of the bulb is determined by how much green top the onion has. During a mild winter, freezes won't damage young onions and they can be left until spring.

**Fertilizer:** Heavy feeder. Apply before planting and side dress 3 weeks after transplanting and again when bulb enlargement begins. Use 2-3 cups of organic fertilizer per 10 feet of row 16 inches wide. Don't fertilize if their tops have started to fall.

**Harvest:** For green onions, harvest when tops are just inches tall and for bulbs, harvest after 2/3s or more of the tops have fallen over. Do not wait more than 1-2 weeks after this occurs. Allow time for thorough drying before storage. Store in a cool, dry place.

You can bury a lot of troubles digging in the dirt.  
~ Author Unknown

## Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton  
Ellis County Master Gardener



### October Herb of the Month

#### Thyme (*Thymus* species)

Thymes are hardy evergreen perennials falling into three broad groups: upright sub shrubs 12 to 18 inches, creeping thymes up to 6 inches, and very flat creepers only 1 to 2 inches tall. Nearly all are culinary but most growers prefer the upright shrubs as they are easier to harvest. There are about 400 species of this aromatic herb. Small flower spikes of white, pink, or mauve appear at the end of the stems during the summer and are generally covered with busy bees. Thyme is a popular culinary herb, but can also be used in potpourris, wreaths, and as a preservative. The colonists used thyme to keep lard from becoming rancid and in the preparation of simple cough syrups. Sprigs were used along with rosemary and cloves to prevent moths from feeding on stored woolens.

In the kitchen thyme is one of the basic seasonings throughout the world. Thyme adds a wonderful flavor to stews, lamb, pork and beef, also leafy green vegetables and legumes. It is a prime ingredient in fish dishes.

Common thyme or garden thyme *T. vulgaris* has many cultivars and has long been appreciated as a versatile culinary seasoning. Growth is upright with woody stems. The leaves are narrow, dark green to gray-green and very aromatic. Other flavors to try are the lemon and lime varieties. The leaves add a refreshing flavor to fish, salads, butter and cottage cheese. Try adding a sprig to a glass of wine or sparkling mineral water for a summer time pick-me-up. More unusual flavors of thyme include caraway, nutmeg, and Corsican.

In the Texas garden, thymes thrive and are most flavorful when given lots of sun and a well drained soil with sandy loam. If grown for culinary use, replace shrub plants every two to three years and prune frequently. This will ensure more flavorful growth on young stems. If not kept pruned the branches become very woody and can split.

Creeping thymes are lovely ground covers and excellent choices for rock gardens but be careful with full sun. Our 100 degree summer days can heat the rocks or stones hot enough to cook the small plants. Elfin thyme and Pink Chintz are thriving in my stone patio where they are protected from the sun after about 2 p.m. Creeping lemon thyme makes an excellent border for the herb and vegetable garden or along walk ways where your feet will brush the oil filled leaves and release a delightful aroma.

Seeds can be successfully grown but I find planting seedlings or propagating semi woody cuttings in the fall to be the best way to grow thyme. Once established in a sunny location thymes are relatively carefree and will practically maintain themselves.

#### Summer Tomato Provençal

4 ripe Texas tomatoes, from your garden or the local farmers market  
1 Texas sweet onion  
1 tbs. white wine vinegar  
1 tbs. extra virgin olive oil  
2 tbs. fresh thyme leaves or lemon thyme  
Salt and pepper, fresh ground

Slice tomatoes into 1/2 inch thick slices. Slice onion into 1/4 inch slices. Arrange alternately on a platter. Sprinkle with vinegar, olive oil, thyme, salt and pepper. Serve at room temperature.

## WHAT LIVED? WHAT DIED?



October is here and it's time to take stock of your landscaping and figure out what lived and what didn't this last hot dry year. It's not as easy as we might think since some of us have better water delivery systems, i.e. sprinkler systems, drip systems and/or time to hand water. The Master Gardeners of Ellis County have a demonstration bed on I-35 E. right in front of the Sub-courthouse that you might want to take a look at. This bed is full of green and blooming plants that have had no water other than natural rainfall in over three years! Yes, I said in over three years! And it is in full sun abutting an asphalt parking lot that throws off heat daily.

What makes it work is a combination of things you can do in your own yard. **First**, there was the soil preparation with lots of organic matter (ground leaves, compost, city mulch) tilled into the existing soil; you can dig this into a small bed. The **second** thing was the choice of plants. All the plants were chosen with an eye to making the bed self sufficient after the first year. Lets face it, **all** new plantings need some extra TLC in the way of regular water and fertilizer the first year. Desert willow, crape myrtles, sage, yucca, nandina, sedum, rosemary, pampas grass, Mexican petunia, and lantana are what you will find growing their hearts out. **Last** but not least was the mulch. A layer of wet newspaper about 8 sheets thick was put over all the bare ground and then quickly covered with three full inches of coarse mulch. Fine or shredded mulch tends to compact and shed the rain!

Watered daily for five days after the initial dousing at planting and then weekly for a month seemed to do the trick. Of course if things got droopy that first year in the hot summer months, out came the water hose. The bed was dug and planted in the end of March; one of the better times to get things started. It could have been done in the fall as soon as the nights cooled off to **less than 70° degrees**. Think about what you want your yard and beds to look like. Now is a good time to evaluate, prepare the soil and chose some plants that will survive another dry winter and a hot summer.

I hope your vegetable garden is holding up! My salad rows are coming on and they will be able to stand the cool nights even if we get a light freeze! Root vegetables and leafy greens can still go into organic amended soils and they will hold up well. I don't have the space but if you do, go for it!

This is the month to start covering any left over poinsettias so that it gets 14 hours of darkness per day. Only do this if you want it to bloom at Christmas! As for me, I think I'll buy mine! I am working on my wish list for Christmas though. Be sure to start looking now for those fun things for gardeners!

(Continued from page 1)

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### Lighthouse for Learning

(with the Ellis County Master Gardeners)

For reservations, call Melissa Cobb, 972-923-4631

**Monday, October 5 - 6-7:30pm.** —**Fall Bulbs**—It's time to plant your fall bulbs now so the beauty of your labor blossoms in the spring. Instructor: DeAnn Bell. Cost: \$10.00

**Monday, October 12, 6-7:30pm** — **Propagation of Plants**—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. Instructor: Walt Friis. Cost: \$10.00.

**Monday, October 19, 6:00-7:30pm**—**Hobby Greenhouse Management**—Considering buying or building your own hobby greenhouse? Learn the basics of greenhouse management, starting with choice of site, design, heating, cooling, lighting and water needs. Instructor: Walt Friis. Cost \$10.00.

**Mondays, Nov. 2 - Nov. 30, "Ag 101" Designed for New or Small Acreage Landowners - Session B.** Ag 101 is also offered in November. Students may choose either session A or session B. Instructor: Mark Arnold, Ellis County Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources. Four classes, 6-8:00pm. Cost: \$20.00.



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

*By Nancy Fenton*

Ellis County Master Gardener

### **Planting bulbs now for spring blooms**

All bulbs are basically an underground storage unit that pops up foliage and a bloom. The foliage then makes more energy for the next year's bloom. The only catch for these easy to grow blooms is that our southern alkaline clay is a very tough environment. The United States Department of Agriculture produces what they call a "zone map." It shows the areas of the United States and the lowest temperatures that can be expected in those areas. Ellis County **used** to be included in zone 7B, but now is included in zone 8A.

This is important because a great many bulbs need to have a minimum number of days of cold temperature to set their blooms. The long and short of it is, for a good shot at lots of great blooms, buy and plant only bulbs that are labeled for zone 8 or higher. The zone numbers may be in small type on a package, but do look for it. Bulbs are fun to have and come back year after year if you have chosen the right bulbs.

I really like the spring blooming ones like jonquils, daffodils and narcissus. Most listed as appropriate for zone 8A will come up and bloom year after year. They will even multiply making more and more lovely blooms if planted in a sunny place at the correct time of year.

Choosing a well-drained sunny spot is the first step. In the heavy clay in some parts of Ellis County, it can be a challenge! Don't get discouraged, for you can plant the bulbs a little less deep in our heavy clays. Try only twice as deep as the bulb is high rather than the standard 3 times the height. The foliage won't have to fight its way through quite as much sticky stuff come spring.

In my yard, the second challenge is finding the sun during the fall planting season for spring bloom. I have to keep in mind that the bulbs will be up and blooming before the trees leaf out. I can actually plant in areas that will have deep shade in late June and July, but lots of sun before the deciduous trees put on their leaves! Live Oaks, cedars, pines, magnolias and other trees that don't drop their leaves are "no-nos." Even after the bloom is spent, the foliage needs to yellow naturally so it can make food for next year's blooms.

Now for the various types of bulbs that should do well in Ellis County:

Jonquils, narcissus, and daffodils are much the same in lots of ways; many of the blooms we call daffodils or jonquils are really a part of the narcissus family. We call the smaller bulbs jonquils and they usually bloom in the early, early spring. I have some along my creek that bloom the first week in February. I've even run out to pick them when the last freezes are forecast! They have very little smell. Even though they are small bulbs, they multiply readily. Trevithian, Sweetness, Tete-a-Tete and Campervella are all rated for zones 8 and should give you a "golden show."

Narcissus are usually thought of as blooming white, but can be two or more colors. Paperwhites that are usually for sale for forcing are an example of the white ones, but they really are not a good variety for repeat blooms in Ellis County. Cheerfulness, Ice King, Thalia and White Favorite are much better choices for Ellis County. They are the correct zone for us and will give you a white blitz, growing more and more abundant year after year.

Daffodils remind me of jonquils, only bigger. King Alfred is the most commonly sold variety and it is great if you live north of Oklahoma. I found out the hard way that there are much better varieties for Ellis County. Look for the big bulbs zoned for 8A or higher. Of course the best guide to getting great bulbs is to have a friend who needs to thin theirs and will share them with you!

We've spoken about USDA zone hardiness (we're in zone 8A), planting techniques (lots of sun and planting depth of 2 to 3 times the height of the bulb) and specific varieties that bloom and bloom again in Ellis County.

So why then do some bulbs already in the ground just not bloom despite all our best efforts? Some pre-packed bulbs are not top quality to begin with. Softness in a bulb is a sure sign of rot. Throw it away and start over! A great many chain stores have corporate buyers who have no idea what grows well in Texas! Be selective when you buy. If your bulbs have foliage but no blooms, don't give up. Give it another year and then move the bulbs to an area with better drainage and sun.

Existing bulbs that have bloomed often profit from division every 3 or 4 years. Lightly fertilizing once or twice a year with a balanced blend will encourage more and bigger blooms. It goes without saying that the foliage is vital to storing up energy for the next season's blooms. Don't trim or mow until it yellows and flops down. If your plantings are in the lawn, mow around them.

Good bulbs, proper site selection and good planting depth are all that is needed to have a great spring bloom next year and for many years to come.

If you have other questions, feel free to call the master gardeners at the Texas AgriLife Extension office, 972-825-5175 or check the master Gardener website at [www.ECMGA.com](http://www.ECMGA.com).





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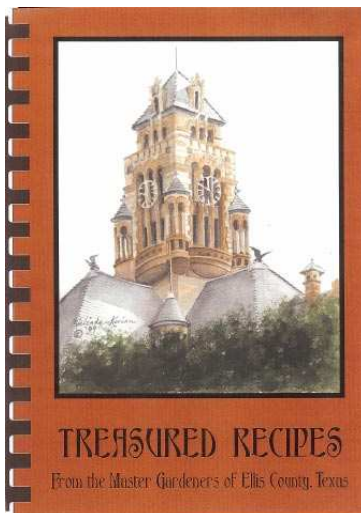
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