



# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume IV, Issue 3

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

April, 2010

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

## And The Winners Are.....



**"Most Outstanding"  
The Greenery**



## 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



**"Most Creative"  
EarthTones Greenery**



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**Ellis County Master Gardener  
2010 10th Annual Lawn & Garden Expo**

## What's Happening in April

**Thursday, April 1-30** - Ennis Bluebonnet Trails, (go to the Ennis C of C for a self-guided tour map)

**Saturday, April 4, 10:00 am** - Petal Pusher's Nursery, "Solving the Mystery of Tomatoes and Peppers". Classes are free. 813 Straus Rd. Cedar Hill. For more info call 972-291-7650 or [www.petalpushersgarden.net](http://www.petalpushersgarden.net).

**Monday, April 5, 7:00 pm** - Lucy Harrell's Organic Classes. The 1st Wednesday of every month. Classes are free. Contact Lucy at 5208 Hidden Oak Lane, Arlington, 817-572-0148 or [lucygeorge5208@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lucygeorge5208@sbcglobal.net).

**Friday, April 2 - Saturday, April 10** - EarthTones Greenery Open House Sale/Event

**Saturday, April 3** - EarthTones Greenery Spring Main Event. Door prizes, BBQ lunch. [www.earthtonesgreenery.com](http://www.earthtonesgreenery.com) for more info.

**Monday, April 12, 6:30 pm** - Rainwater Harvesting Class, City of Waxahachie, Parks and Recreation Bldg., 401 S. Elm, \$30.00/person. For more info, contact John Smith, Parks and Recreation Director @ 972-937-7330, ext. 181 or Amy Hollywood, Community Relations Manager, 972-937-7330, ext. 284. Only room for 20 participants on a first come, first served basis.

**Saturday, April 17, 10:00-12noon**, Pettigrew Academy - "Children's Earth Day Celebration". Free. 806 E. Marvin, Waxahachie, 972-923-1633

**Saturday-Sunday, April 17-18** - Ennis Bluebonnet Trails Festival

**Monday, April 19, 7:00pm** - Garden Inspirations, "Heirloom Tomatoes". Here's the scoop on the strange looking tomatoes with the funny names! 108 Ridge Crest, Waxahachie, 214-497-3918 or [marilyn@gardeninspirations-tx.com](mailto:marilyn@gardeninspirations-tx.com).

**Saturday, May 22, 8:00 a.m.**, Garden Inspirations, "Learn how to garden by square foot". Class held at the Farmer's Market. \$10.00.

**Saturday, May 22** - Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market begins!



## Events Outside of Ellis County

**Now through April 11** - "Dallas Blooms", Dallas Arboretum & Botanical Garden (Fair Park)

**Saturday, April 3, 10-11:00 am**, Texas Discovery Gardens, Fair Park. "Butterfly Gardening 101 - Gardening For Our Native Butterflies", <http://www.texasdiscoverygardens.org>.

**Saturday, April 3, 10-11:30 am**, Twelve Hills Nature Center 1, South Oak Cliff, "Wildflower Walk" hosted by Jim Varnum, Master Naturalist. For more info go to [www.twelvehills.org](http://www.twelvehills.org).

**Sunday, April 4, noon -5pm**, Weston Gardens, 8101 Anglin Dr., Fort Worth. **Easter Celebration:** Ship tour, free Easter Cupcakes with tea and beautiful music. Please RSVP: 817-572-0549

### Cedar Ridge Preserve

(for more info contact Jim Varnum at 214-543-2055 or [jevarnum@aol.com](mailto:jevarnum@aol.com).)  
7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Duncanville, TX

**3rd Saturday of every month:** Habitat Restoration & Trail Maintenance, [info\\_CRP@yahoo.com](mailto:info_CRP@yahoo.com)

**Saturday, April 10, 10am** - Early Spring Wildflower Walk.

**Saturday, May 1 and 8, 8-10am** - Painted Bunting Walk. Marcy Brown Marsden at [mebrown@udallas.edu](mailto:mebrown@udallas.edu). Or 214-492-9409.

**Saturday, May 8, 10:00 am**, Special nature walk to observe monarch butterflies and milkweeds.

## Lighthouse for Learning

With the Ellis County Master Gardeners and AgriLife Extension

(for reservations, call Melissa Cobb @972-923-4631, ext. 142)

**Monday, April 5, 6-7:30pm** - *Growing Perennials*, **Instructor:** Shirley Campbell, \$11.00. Learn which perennials will take our summer heat and clay soil, including the latest *Flameproof* and *Arboretum-approved* perennials from their trial gardens.

**Monday, April 12, 6-7:30** - *Smart Gardening in Ellis County*, **Instructor:** Maureen Nitkowski, \$11.00. Start smart by knowing soil, climate and pests. Stay smart with plant selection, monitoring and sanitation.

**4 classes each Monday, April 5-26, 6-8:00pm** - "Ag 101" - *Designed for New or Small Acreage Landowners*, **Instructor:** Mark Arnold, County Extension Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources. Cover topics on soils and soil fertility, soil testing, pasture management, basic livestock productions and pond management.

## 2010 Photo Contest Winners

### And the Winners are...

The Ellis County Master Gardeners would like to extend a gracious thank you to all who contributed photos in the 2010 Ellis County Master Gardener Association photo contest. We received nearly one hundred and fifty entries; everyone a winner. Look for the contest for 2011 to begin this summer, so get out your Brownie!

### First Place



Ray Downs, Italy



Patty Smith, Waxahachie



Jeff Prachyl, Waxahachie

### Second Place



Carol R. Harding Midlothian



Brenda Wilmer, Red Oak



Sunil Kumar Bangalore,  
Karnataka, India

### Third Place



Debbie DeMont Waxahachie



Anthony Ortiz Columbus, MS



Anthony Ortiz Columbus, MS



## It's April - What Needs to be Done



### Zephirine Drouhin Rose

Photo by Nancy Prikryl

*This is a beautiful, high-centered, cerise-pink flowering rose with an overwhelming Bourbon fragrance, making this climbing rose a knockout in spring and fall. The canes are thornless and the dark green foliage is thick and very healthy, displaying coppery purple new growth making a vivid contrast with the pink blossoms. The 55-gallon wood rain barrel collects rainwater off the roof, stores for landscape watering and conserves this precious resource!*

### Planting and Sowing

- Plant St. Augustine and hybrid Bermuda sod. Make good ground contact and keep moist until new roots are established. Common Bermuda can be started from seed, but is best to hydro-mulch. In either case keep the area moist for several weeks. This may require watering several times a day if no rainfall.
- Plant warm-season annuals from seedlings. For sun: zinnias (profusion, or narrow leaf also called Mexican zinnias), moss rose, purslane, butterfly weed, lantana (usually considered a perennial, but can be used as an annual), sweet potato

vines, Dahlberg daisy and Angelonia. For shade: begonias, coleus, and impatiens.

- Vegetables such as okra, black-eyed peas, corn and water-melons. You can still plant the cucurbits: squash, cucumbers and melons.
- Wait until May to plant the hot weather tropicals: hibiscus Esperanza, plumbago.

### Pruning and Fertilizing

- Apply a high nitrogen fertilizer to lawns. This is usually after the third mowing when the entire lawn is green. Follow up with additional fertilizer in June (optional) and again in September.
- Mow Bermuda grass frequently at 1 ½ inches to keep thick and healthy—St Augustine at 2 ½ inches.
- Use mulching mower and leave grass clippings on the ground. They will provide a source of nitrogen to feed the lawn.

### Garden Watch

- Closely inspect plants for insects; identify pest. If a type that must be controlled is found, use pesticides labeled for that insect. Carefully read and follow label instructions.
- Treat individual fire ant mounds with an appropriate bait. Beneficial nematodes (microscopic worms) which may be purchased at many nurseries are also effective. Make sure you get the type that kills fire ants.

### This and That

- After planting annuals in the landscape, use any leftovers to make interesting container groupings. Put plants that are or near the same color, but a different shade, in one container. Or use plants of complimentary colors (orange and blue, purple and gold) that are opposite each other on the color wheel. Take cuttings of plants from your garden that are not commonly seen, and hard to find, and share with others.

#### Tips for April

Excessive and haphazard pruning of shrubs and trees is wasteful and unhealthy. Hedging, topping and shearing only encourage excessive growth. Proper pruning will promote healthy plants with stabilized growth habits.



### Monarch Butterfly News

According to Jim Varnum, :*Jim Varnum's This and That*", [jim-varnum@aol.com](mailto:jim-varnum@aol.com), Kip Kiphart at the Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne, TX reported that milkweed was found in the milkweed patch at the "Center" on March 17 - **"the monarch are on their way"**. The overwintering colony was only 1.92 hectares; the lowest on record! With the storms and flooding near Anganueo, only about 50% of the colony survived. So the number migrating through Texas will be low this year.

Please go to [www.audubondallas.org](http://www.audubondallas.org) for details.

## Vegetable Gardeners Monthly

By Rick Daniel

Ellis County Master Gardener/Vegetable Gardening Specialist

Hello, and welcome to the April 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.

I hope you've all recuperated from the long cold winter we had this year and the late freeze and snow we had in March. The Ellis County Lawn and Garden Expo show we just completed should have gotten you out of the winter doldrums and motivated you to get that garden planted. Finish planting warm season vegetables by mid-April (beans, cucumbers, cantaloupe, peppers, pumpkins, radish, sweet corn and squash and tomatoes) and plant hot season vegetables (okra, black-eyed peas and watermelons) mid- to late-month.

### Featured Vegetable of the Month

*By Rick Daniel*

*Ellis County Master Gardener*



### PEPPERS: Vegetable of the Month



**Planting dates:** After all danger of frost and soil has thoroughly warmed, usually about 2 weeks after tomatoes are planted. Like tomatoes, peppers do best when transplanted. Peppers need to mature and produce while nighttime temperatures are above 60 degrees and daytime temperatures are below 80 degrees. When temperatures are outside of this range, peppers tend to shed their blooms and most fruit produced will be small. Most varieties completely stop fruiting when temperatures get above 90 degrees. Exposure to temperatures in the low 40's for even a short period of time may stunt peppers, reducing their harvest. Probably best to replace transplants if concerned they may be stunted, as they will not recover. The best method to determine when to transplant your peppers is to measure soil temperatures about two inches below the surface.

When you have three consecutive days with soil temperatures above 55°F degrees, that is the ideal time to plant. For fall crops, need to plant about 100 days before first expected freeze date. Probably best to protect from weather for a few weeks after planting, in both the spring and summer.

**Planting methods:** Peppers transplant easily and that is the most common method, 18-24 inches apart. The best transplants are about 7-8 weeks old, 5-6 inches tall and have good foliage free of any obvious disease. At planting time, the soil should be slightly moist. Pour about one cup of starter solution in each hole. Deep planting should be avoided. Water thoroughly and protect from the weather for a few weeks.

**Varieties:** The amount of capsaicin in a pepper determines how hot they are. This can be scientifically measured as Scoville units. Peppers can vary greatly in the amount of heat they generate when eaten. The bell pepper has a Scoville rating of 0, while the hottest pepper, the Naga Jolokia, has a rating of about 1 million Scoville units. If you want to know the rating of the peppers you are considering planting, you can Google Scoville scale and get the answers. I usually plant a combination of sweet, mild and hot peppers, to have the right pepper for most occasions.

**Culture:** Easy to grow in most any healthy soil. Use lots of compost and organic material, and mulch heavily. Peppers do best when planted on raised, well drained beds, as they like to have warm feet and don't do well with wet feet. When you water is more important than how you water. Avoid letting soil dry enough to cause plants to wilt. May need to water about twice a week if Mother Nature doesn't provide needed water. Must be grown in full sun, with well-drained soil and need lots of attention. Peppers do best with soil pH between 5.5 and 7.5

**Fertilizer:** Use about one cup of starter solution for transplants and side dress cautiously after first fruit sets. Too much fertilizer can cause excessive vegetative growth, while too little at first bloom can stunt growth. Very sensitive to fertilizer, need it in small doses only at bloom time. Use about half a handful of organic fertilizer per plant or side-dress with about 2 tablespoons of ammonium sulfate or 1.5 tablespoons of ammonium nitrate in a circle around each plant.

**Harvest:** Don't break peppers from plant. Cut them off. Some recommend cutting off the first set of peppers to stimulate faster production. Can pull up entire plant and hang in garage at first freeze. Most peppers will turn colors (yellow, red, purple, etc), when they are fully mature, but can be harvested when green.

## Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton  
Ellis County Master Gardener



### April Herb of the Month

#### Dill

by Arlene Hamilton, Ellis County Master Gardener



Dill, (*Anethum graveolens*) has a long and ancient history in many countries as a culinary and medicinal herb. The earliest known record of dill as a medicinal herb was found in Egypt 5,000 years ago, where the plant was referred to as a "soothing medicine". The name "dill" means to "calm or soothe", and most likely originates from the plant's ability to calm troubled stomachs and colicky infants.

Dill's family members include parsley, cilantro, fennel, and Queen Anne's lace. Dill is an aromatic herb native to the Mediterranean area. While it is sometimes grown as a biennial, it is most commonly grown as an annual. Depending upon the variety, the plant can grow anywhere from 1 foot to up to 4 feet tall. In Texas dill is grown as a cool weather herb meaning it will flower and set seed as the temperature rises. During prolonged periods of drought, dill requires some watering. It grows well in temperatures ranging from 40 to 80 degrees. Shorter varieties are preferred in Texas as high winds can cause damage to the hollow stems which break and bend easily. Dill prefers a damp soil but not soggy. Plant dill in full sun. Seeds germinate best when planted in the fall after the first frost. Seeds will begin to germinate as the weather warms in the spring. Like all plants with a long tap root dill prefers to grow where sown and does not transplant well.

Do not let your plants flower if you want a continuous supply of leaves or dill weed. Dill weed is best used fresh. Keep the tops trimmed regularly to delay flowering. Dill flowers and leaves are used in pickling. Dill seed is harvested at the end of the plant's life cycle. The seeds can be easily harvested when they have turned a golden brown color. Place the seed heads in a brown paper bag allowing some of the stems to remain outside of the bag. Tie the opening closed and hang the stems upside down in a well ventilated area to dry. Clean seeds from plant material and store in an airtight container.

Dill is most commonly known for giving dill pickles their flavor. However dill is a very versatile herb in the kitchen. Dill weed can be added to soups, stews, casseroles, meat dishes, pasta, salads and egg dishes. Cooks use dill seeds as a condiment and combined with onions, cabbage, potatoes, cumin, chili powder and paprika. They can be added to casseroles, lamb, fish, vegetable dishes and sauces. Dill seeds take a long time to release their flavor, so it is best to add them early in the cooking process.

Dill is a wonderful host plant for butterflies, providing food and protection for their eggs and larvae. Be sure to plant enough dill in your garden to meet your needs as well as those of the butterflies. You won't be sorry when you are enjoying the black swallow-tails in your garden.

Resource: *The Herb Society of America's Essential Guide to DillHer*





## Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



*Portulaca umbraticola* H.B.K.

**Portulaca Family (Portulacaceae)**

**Purslane**

**Zone:** 1-8 and 10 (Ellis Co. is zone 4)

**Size:** 2 - 6 inches

**Blooms:** March-December, Annual

**Purslane** is the little succulent often considered a weed in the garden, although it can be quite showy on barren, sandy sites where it typically grows. Six species of purslane are known in Texas, some with attractive yellow, orange or pink to purplish flowers. Moss-rose (*P. grandiflora*), with two-inch flowers, is a South American native that has escaped cultivation in Texas. Pussley (*P. oleracea*), thought to be a native of India, has spread nearly worldwide and has been used as food for over two thousand years. Shaggy portulaca (another name for the species shown), as well as chisme (*P. pilosa*), were collected by Indians and dried to store for winter use.

## What is your perception—Weed or Wildflower?

by Sandra Martin, Ellis Co Master Gardener



Is the Bluebonnet a weed? The answer will depend on your perception. According to Wikipedia, a weed is defined as any plant that crowds out cultivated plants. The term "weed" can refer to a nuisance plant, and is normally applied to unwanted plants in human-made settings (gardens and lawns).

The Bluebonnet is a native Texas plant, and is the official Texas state flower. There are 5 Bluebonnet types recognized as the state flower (*L. subcarnosus*, *L. texensis*, *L. Havardii*, *L. concinnus*, and *L. plattensis*). Bluebonnet blooms are blue, white and pink. Blue is the most prolific color you will see. A maroon bloom is under development. Go A & M!

The plant (*L. subcarnosus*) is a broad leaf, herbaceous perennial. If you have this plant in a human-made setting, and you want to get rid of it, use mechanical practices (hoe, pull, and cut). If you observe this plant thriving in a place you wish to grow it, then nurture it with mulch.

Since it is a native Texas plant, it is hardy and draught tolerant. The seed has a tough coat that will sprout when wet. The seed coat is composed of varying thickness, so not all seeds will sprout at the same time, or in the same year. The seed should be planted in the fall so the fall/winter/spring rains will help the plant develop into rosettes indicating the roots are becoming established. If you are nurturing this plant and want it to return, do not cut it between April and July. That is the time of year wildflowers seed out.

As a result of the time of year this plant seeds out, Cedar Hill has adopted a municipal ordinance (Sec 16-2, b) establishing regulations for the maintenance of any public right of way. The following information is according to the ordinance posted on the municipal web site:

(b) Wildflower exception. To ensure the environmental sanctity and beauty of the wildflowers in the city, the mowing is prohibited from April 1 to July 15 annually in designated areas until the wildflowers have seeded out. Signs are posted in these designated areas during the prohibited time.

If you think wildflowers are weeds, please check your municipal web site to see if an ordinance prohibits mowing specific right of ways, designated as wildflower areas, before you register a mowing complaint.

One last thing – is it illegal to pick a Bluebonnet in Texas? No. However, because of the way they propagate, it would not be prudent to remove the blooms or plants if they are growing in welcomed areas.

If you decide to stop on the side of the road to take a picture, check the traffic laws. Please do not trespass on private property, and above all, maintain safety first as you enjoy the beautiful colors of Texas wildflowers.

## Expo Sponsors



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## Thank You!



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## It's April - What Needs to be Done?

By Nancy Fenton, Ellis Co. Master Gardener

**C**ritters that inhabit our yards with us. I have raccoons and am constantly on the lookout for signs of chewing and gnawing. They can be much more than a pest when they chew their way into your house. According to Texas A&M, there are some basic rules for controlling raccoon damage. First you need to remove any possible food supply; they are smart critters and will open bins, containers and the like to get at dog or cat food. They will even venture in a doggie door if the enticing odor is strong enough. The same goes for water supply. If you can feed outdoor animals early in the day and get the food and water left back in a secure area before dark, you will be much better off. Screens on all chimneys, large drainage pipes, foundation and attic access may alter their habitat enough to discourage them. A locking trashcan is a must. Their sharp toenails go through plastic garbage bags in a jiffy. Lastly, call the animal control or get a trap if all else fails. If you do catch one, remember they are wild and can inflict bodily damage plus they carry fleas, ticks and disease. Landowners are encouraged to notify representatives of the Texas Parks and Wildlife if they choose to relocate the raccoons. Please choose a place a long distance from where they were caught for they have a great memory!

Another problem that can drive our domestic animals and us all crazy is the flea. They have no season and seem to be always with us. Good flea bombs help, but good sanitation is your first line of defense. Vacuuming removes up to 30 percent of the larva and 60 percent of the eggs in your home. Wash or change the pet bedding often to get rid of more. Unfortunately, adult fleas can lay up to 27 eggs a day after their first blood meal. They then excrete part of the blood and the flea larva use it as food. Awful cycle, isn't it??

Because it is so hard to get all the fleas, eggs, and larva whatever you do, you need to follow-up with more treatment 7-10 days after the first one. If you have a bad infestation, two or three follow-ups may be needed. The best defense is a good offense if you have animals in the house. Veterinarians have several products that are either, pills, dips, or spot treatments that will last 1 to 3 months. Sometimes it takes a combination of home treating, animal treatments, and perseverance to get rid of these pesky critters.

Once the pets and the home are clear, keep it clear of fleas by treating the outside of the home; specifically any areas where you pets rest or sleep, run and play, etc. Fleas really like cool, moist places. Soil temperatures over 95° F and humidity less than 50 percent kills flea larva. There are several nematodes that feed on flea eggs and larva in the soil, but they only work well when it is cool and damp so if you plan to use them on your yard, do it soon. This wet, cool spring will be prime time for flea growth! The nematodes can be purchased from our local feed stores and nurseries as well as on line. It usually takes two applications and you have armed your lawn with millions of flea hungry critters! Good luck in keeping your home and animals flea free.

For more information give us a call at the Texas AgriLife Extension office at 972 825 5175. There is a great 4-page handout with lots of specific facts and information available that we can send you.

The ever-present mosquito; not only a nuisance, but with the potential to carry killer diseases, we need to be vigilant about controlling them. A little prevention goes a long way in that if we can destroy the areas that hold standing water around our homes that the mosquitoes love to lay eggs in, we can effectively deal with ones left! Even a bottle cap full of water will hatch a whole new generation of these varmints. You can imagine what a giant group will come out of an abandoned tire or bucket. Puddles that stay around more than a day need to be dealt with, but moving water will discourage growth. If you are using a rain barrel to catch and save water, use one of the easily purchased "dunks" to keep it critter free. I use saucers under my plants and watch to see that all the water is absorbed in 24 hours. If not, I dump it and try to remember not to put so much water in it next time!

We have porches around our house so I also need to walk around several times a year and look under them to locate and remove pots, jars, lids or cans that may have found their way under there. Anything that will hold water is a great "growing place" for mosquitoes.

The use of "repellant" plants or those that have a strong odor can help keep the mosquitoes that come in from your neighbors' yards at bay as well as some of our purposed products and sprays. Be sure and give young children a good squirt of repellant since they seem to run around and sweat it off a lot. The evening hours just before dusk seem to be the most dangerous time for meeting the disease laden ones, so when in doubt, stay inside behind the screens or under the moving fans.

Although the various municipalities try to do an effective job controlling mosquitoes, it's up to us to do our part in areas around our homes and properties.

In addition to fleas, raccoons, and mosquitoes we nearly all have some ants in our landscaping. Any ants can be a nuisance, but **fire ants** are especially troublesome. Texas A&M has been working on this for a good many years and has come up with some specific recommendations. There are actually 4 different varieties in Texas. The three native ones, the tropical fire ant, the southern fire ant

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

and the desert fire ant really don't cause us much trouble in urban areas, but then there is the imported red fire ant with its multi-queen mound and very aggressive nature.

Texas A&M's 2-step method consisting of a broadcast bait treatment with a follow-up of individual mound treatment is great for large areas with more than 20 large mounds. My yard is not that big and I hope yours doesn't have that many mounds! For us small fry, prevention is the main thing. By that I mean, don't let them get started. If you mow your own yard and do your own yard work you can spot and treat the small beginnings quickly with boiling water! Yes I said, boiling water. Saturate the mound with really hot water every time you see activity. It will kill them 60 % or better most of the time. The others will probably move on to another more favorable location, hopefully not in your yard.

There are other natural products for sale that contain plant-derived ingredients such as botanical insecticides and biological control agents. Be patient; whatever you use, it must reach the queen after going through the digestive system of the workers. It stands to reason if you use a contact poison, the worker will die before it gets to the queen. I am testing self-rising cornmeal on my outcroppings of ants. I use a ¼ cup over a mound about the size of a coffee cup. It seems to discourage them and they either die or move away. Either is fine with me.

What ever you use to combat these critters, be persistent. It would be a shame to get rid of them and then have a queen fly in from a mile away to set up another mound!

**Grasshoppers.** Five types of grasshoppers reside in North Texas. They can cause lots or little damage. Weather is the main factor affecting grasshopper populations. Hot dry summer increase the survival rate of nymph and adults. Warm autumns allow them to feed and lay more eggs. They lay their eggs in the top ½ to 2 inches of the ground. The egg pods hatch beginning in April with peak time about mid June. Cool dry springs may delay the hatch. The length of time from egg to adult is 40 to 60 days. They can strip a crop bare if there are sufficient numbers. Those of us with homes next to forests, fields, crops, and weedy fencerows need to work at keeping a buffer space. Mow it close if you can, increasing the buffer zone during times of drought. If it is bare ground, cover it with 3 inches of mulch to discourage egg laying. There are some plants that grasshoppers really don't like and don't bother. If you live in an area where there is much damage, try planting American Beauty Berry, Artemesia, Crape Myrtle, Iris, Mealy Blue Sage, Roses, and others around your home. For a complete list of some 60 plants common to our area that are considered Grasshopper Resistant call the Ellis County Master Gardeners at the Texas Agrilife Extension office, 972 825 5175.

If you feel you must spray, read the labels on the insecticides and be careful. Because of their hard exoskeletons, grasshoppers may take multiple insecticide applications to protect gardens and home landscapes.

Check out our recently revamped web site at [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com). There is lots of good material and suggestions there or call the Ellis County Master Gardeners at the Texas AgriLife Extension Office at 972-825-5175.



Children's Gardening Workshop







## Thank You to our 2010 Expo Sponsors!



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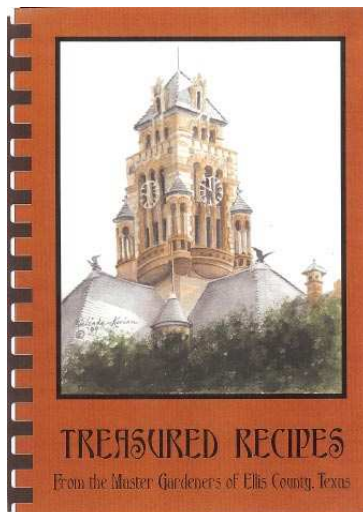
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### Available Now!

### Ellis County Master Gardener's Cookbook *"Treasured Recipes"*

**Only \$10.00**

(beautifully hardbound - 450 recipes)

**Until May 2010 when the Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market  
begins, the cookbooks can be purchased at:**

**The Greenery, Waxahachie**

**ARK Country Store**

**Boyce Feed & Grain**

**EarthTones Greenery, Midlothian**

**AgriLIFE Extension Office, 972-825-5175**

**S IH-35 @Brookside Rd.**