



Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume II, Issue 6

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

August, 2008

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, 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 August

Tuesday, August 12, 7:00 pm. The Greenery, Waxahachie, Lavender Ridge Farms owners will give a talk to the Green Thumb Organic Club. They left corporate America, bought acreage in Gainesville and started their farm. They also have pick-your-own flowers and vegetables. Come and enjoy hearing about their endeavors. The public is invited.

Saturday, August , Cedar Ridge Preserve.

1. **8:00 am. - Seed Ball Making Party** - For more information and to RSVP, contact Master Naturalist Sara Beckleman at sbeckelman@arborillogical.com. We will be making seed balls to sow into the area around the new entrance gates. Bring family and friends; it's lots of fun. Kids love it!

(What are seed balls? A combination of red clay, humus, seeds and water mixed to a consistency of mud that can be rolled into 3/4-inch spheres. After they dry, they are sown into a restoration area waiting for the next rain to dissolve and plant the seeds.)

2. **9:00 am. - "Conservation in Action"** workday. Come and join in the fun as we work in the butterfly garden and on the trails, and perform other chores. Water and snacks will be provided. Wear sturdy boots or shoes with good ankle support, bug and sun protection, and bring gloves, if you have them, although we will also have some available. Bring a friend! **Location:** Cedar Ridge Preserve, 7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas 75229. Information and to tell us you are coming - even if it is for just part of the morning: www.volunteers@audubondallas.org or 972-709-7784.

August 29 - 31, (Friday thru Sunday) Garden Retreat, Milford, TX. Hosted by "Garden Inspirations" (Marilyn Simmons from The Greenery and her daughter, Donelle). Lucy Harrell will present her organic garden workshop series. For more information go to website: www.gardeninspirations-tx.com.

Call 214-566-6862 or email: duchess@gardenspirations-tx.com.

Saturday, August 30 - 9:00 - 6:00 pm. SATURDAY GARDEN ONLY RETREAT, 8:45 am sign-in. Milford, TX. Learn about organic gardening by design, companion planting, theme gardening and more! Price includes lunch and snacks, class materials, and classes on Saturday. Join in on the fun and begin building friendships over our garden gates.....Price is \$125 due on August 20th, or \$135 due on arrival.....must reserve your spot first!



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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Coming Soon to the Farmer's Market!!

On September 13, 2008 the Master Gardener's will have a Grilling Festival at the Farmer's Market; from 9:00 to 11:00. Mark Arnold, our Ellis County Agrilife agent has agreed to grill fruits and vegetables for the public attending the market that morning. We've done this in the past but not for the past several years. This is always a very popular event. So come and enjoy!

It's August - What Needs to be Done?



Featured Plant for August

Black-eyed Susan (Native)*Rubeckia fulgida* 'Goldsturm'

Also called a coneflower. It is a tough and easy to grow perennial. *Rubeckia* 'Goldsturm' is one of the most popular varieties. Fast growing plant that spreads by rhizomes to form a large mass. Needs well-drained and prepared soil for best performance. Divide plants when they become crowded, usually every few years.

Exposure: Full sun
 Size: Ht 2-21/2'
 Spread: 2'
 Spacing: 12-18"

Planting and Sowing

- For fall color, plant annuals from nursery stock, including zinnias, marigolds, celosia, and firebush. Choose plants with buds, but are not yet flowering.
- Plant fall bulbs such as oxblood lilies and spider lilies.
- Sow beans, squash, cucumbers, and corn early this month. Broccoli, cauliflower, cabbages, and Brussels sprouts are sown mid-month. Lettuce, radishes, spinach, beets, and turnips follow 2 weeks later.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- Prune bush roses by one-third to promote new growth and fall bloom.
- To encourage lush fall growth and a late-season round of blooms, apply high-nitrogen fertilizer to all landscape plants, including warm-season annual and perennial beds.
- Trim back leggy annuals such as moss rose, purslane, petunias, begonias, and impatiens by one-third to one-half to produce re-growth for fall flowers.

Garden Watch

- Control nutsedge (often called "nut grass") in lawns and garden beds by applying a treatment of Image or Manage this month.
- Cotton root rot causes rapid decline and loss of trees and shrubs, even several years after they have been

planted. It is prevalent in alkaline soils and there is no chemical control. Species that are resistant to the disease include oaks, pecans, cedar elms, magnolias, eastern red cedars, and redbuds.

- Refer to the "Homeowner's Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule", available from your county extension office, for the timing of this month's spray applications to control pecan weevils and hickory shuck worms on pecan trees and peach tree borers on peach and plum trees.

This and That

- Select and order the spring-flowering bulbs that you'll want to plant in October and November.

Tips of the Month

Slow-releasing fertilizers have the following advantages:

- Makes more nitrogen available as a nutrient to the plant.
- Resists leaching or washing through the soil into the water supply.
- Decreases risk of fertilizers burn associated with heavy applications of conventional fertilizers.
- Releases independently of microbial and bacterial action.
- Offers controlled-release feeding for 10 weeks.
- Stimulates a more drought-tolerant plant.

**Don't forget!! Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market!**

Saturday, May 31 through the end of October

Hours: 8:00 a.m. thru 1:00 pm.

Visit the Ellis Co. Master Gardener's booth

Free handouts • Help with gardening questions
 2008 Gardening Calendar • Flower and butterfly wheels for sale
 Master Gardener Cookbooks • plus many more items of interest.

Summer Moonlight
 Movie, downtown
 Waxahachie at 9:00 p.



m. The Lions Club will have concessions available, including water, pickles, popcorn, snow cones and soft drinks. The movie is free to the public. This is the **last movie of the summer:** August 15 - "Back to the Future"

For more info call the city of Waxahachie at 972-938-2101.

DRY, DRIER, DRIEST

By Nancy Fenton, Ellis County Master Gardener



Anyone remember conjugating verbs? Our recent weather seems to be reminding us daily! The long hot season has set me to thinking just how lucky we are to be living in 2008. Lucky you say? Yes! The advances in agricultural practices and new reservoirs just may keep us from experiencing the "dust bowl" of the 1930's. Think with me about the **only natural lake** in Texas: Lake Caddo. All the others are man-made to address the growing need for water!

It's up to us to conserve what we have both in our landscapes and in our homes. Did you know turning off the water just when we brush our teeth and soap up our hands will save gallons of water needed elsewhere? Many cities have already gone to water rationing in obvious areas such as outdoor watering. They specify days and times as well as methods of getting the water to thirsty plants. How much better to plant the plants that don't require as much water to begin with! For those areas with the much beloved plants that we can't give up quite yet, there is always drip watering rather than the spray sprinklers that many of us have. Yes, I have them too, left over from an old system I inherited with the house.

The drip system is really not difficult to set up and will keep the water in the root zone of your plants rather than in the air around them. Check the local retailers as well as the Extension office, 972-825-5175, for more information. Mulch, mulch, mulch is really the final word on the subject.

Now on to the fall garden. Dry is the word here too. Keep those tomatoes and other veggies mulched and water deep. You can put in the tomato (Surefire and Heatwave), pepper, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, and Brussel sprout plants this month in preparation for the fall garden. Just shade them a bit and water faithfully until they get their roots down so they can fend for themselves! Winter squash, beans, beets, corn, yellow squash, potatoes, black-eyed peas, and okra can all go in the ground in seed form. A light mulch will allow the little plants to come up and then you can increase the mulch as they grow.

Our ground is already degrees warmer than average for this time of year and probably is going to do nothing but get warmer as the summer progresses. The trees and shrubs are already suffering and will continue to show effects of the dry weather for up to three (3) years. They lose their fine feeder roots in the top 8 inches of soil when it remains dry as it did this winter. This leads to die back of leaves and limbs so the plants can sustain the growth it has. Even when the rain does come, the roots are gone and the plant can't take up the needed amount of water. It's a catch 22! Combining more organic matter helps as does mulch.

Be aware of your actions and be responsible for saving those trees and that water! What a great way to be remembered!!

Common Tomato Problems

by Kim Ellis, Ellis County Master Gardener



Are your tomatoes flowering but not setting any fruit? Are they splitting when they do set fruit? These and many other problems plague the beginner gardener as well as the experienced. The Texas A&M Plant Answers staff have addressed these and many other questions. Here are a few common questions we have been getting from gardeners across the county.

Question: My tomato plants look great. They are dark green, vigorous and healthy; however, flowers are not

forming any fruit. What is the problem?

Answer: Several conditions can cause tomatoes to not set fruit. Too much nitrogen fertilizer, nighttime temperatures over 70 degrees F., low temperatures below 50 degrees F., irregular watering, insects such as thrips or planting the wrong variety may result in poor fruit set. Any of these conditions can cause poor fruit set, but combinations can cause failures. If Agrilife Extension-recommended varieties are used, the main reason

tomato plants do not set fruit is because they are not planted where they can receive 8-10 hours of direct sunlight daily. Any less direct sunlight will result in a spindly growing, nonproductive plant with healthy foliage.

Question: What causes a tomato to crack? Is there anything I can do to prevent it?

Answer: Cracking is a physiological disorder caused by soil moisture fluctuations. When the tomato reaches the mature green stage and the water supply to the plant is reduced or cut off, the tomato will begin to ripen. At this time a cellophane-like wrapper around the outer surface of the tomato becomes thicker and more rigid to protect the tomato during and after harvest. If the water supply is restored after ripening begins, the plant will resume translocation of nutrients and moisture into the fruit. This will cause the fruit to enlarge; which in turn splits the wrapper around the fruit and results in cracking.

The single best control for cracking is a constant and regular water supply. Apply a layer of organic mulch to the base of the

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Don't Forget Herb!

By Jamey Guarascio-Cosper
Ellis County Master Gardener

Looking at your yard and wondering what to do to spruce it up and add some variety? I'm sure you've considered a flowerbed or a veggie garden, but when you think of flowerbeds and gardens, do you remember to include herbs? Tomatoes are great, but how good would that salsa be without the cilantro? Roasted chicken is wonderful, but it is twice as good with rosemary. And Italian food without the oregano, garlic and basil would be ... unspeakable!

Storing Fresh Herbs

Fresh herbs are perishable, but you can store fresh herbs for up to 5 days by trying the following. Trim the cut ends (like fresh flowers) of your herbs, rinse away any sand or dirt, immerse the cut ends in 2 inches of water in a glass jar (Mason type), cover with a plastic bag, store in refrigerator.

Loose leaves are best kept in the coldest part of a refrigerator in perforated bags. It's a good idea to crumple a paper towel and put it into the bag under the herbs. It absorbs excess moisture and lengthens the useful life of the herbs.

Keep in mind that some moisture is good for fresh herbs, but too much moisture promotes decay. Shake herbs as dry as possible before storing.

Cooking with Herbs

Stocks, soups, and stews are much richer with herbs. However, prolonged cooking can cause herbs to lose their fragrance and their flavor. To minimize this effect, add the fresh herbs near the end of the cooking time. Keep in mind that the flavors develop very quickly and shouldn't cook in liquids for more than about

an hour to get the most from them.

Vegetables can be made more flavorful, but adding fresh herbs to the water when cooking. Either chop and drop them into the water so they'll be part of the finished dish or tie them in a little cheesecloth bag and remove them before serving.

Roasts, poultry and seafood should be rubbed with herbs before cooking. Do so by chopping the fresh herbs with a bit of salt and pepper as they enhance the flavor of one another. Rub the seasonings on the meat and finish as usual.

Meatloaf, hamburgers and other ground meats will benefit if you finely mince the fresh herbs and mix into the meat before cooking.

Fresh herbs may be added to both batters and crumb mixtures used for fried foods. Chop finely and add as desired. Keep in mind, fresh herbs are stronger than dried herbs and can quickly overpower batters and crumb mixtures if not careful.

Fresh herbs will change the way you think about bread. A general rule of thumb is to add somewhere between 1 to 2 tablespoons of chopped fresh herbs per one-pound loaf. Herbal cornbread is wonderful, not to mention healthy. Likewise biscuits, dumplings, savory pancakes and waffles - add up to a tablespoon to 2 cups of flour.

We've all heard of herbal teas, but have you considered adding herbs to lemonades? Next time you have a hole to fill in a flowerbed or veggie garden, consider filling it with an herb! Your cooking will never be the same ... and your family will be thankful!

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plant. This serves as a buffer and prevents soil moisture fluctuation. Water plants thoroughly every week. This is especially important when the fruits are maturing. Some varieties are resistant to cracking, but their skin is tougher.

Question: What causes the black spots on the bottom of my tomatoes?

Answer: Blossom end rot, caused by improper (fluctuating from too dry to too moist) moisture. Maintain uniform soil moisture as the fruit nears maturity. Remove affected fruit.

Question: The lower foliage on my tomatoes is beginning to turn yellow and drop. The leaves have circular, dark brown to black spots.

Answer: This is *Alternaria* leaf spot or early blight. It is a common problem on tomatoes and causes defoliation, usually during periods of high rainfall. Plant tomatoes on a raised bed to improve water drainage. They can be spaced enough so air can move, dry the foliage and prevent diseases. Follow a spray program using daconil beginning when the fruit is set and continuing at 1-2 week intervals during the growing season until harvest.

Do you have a question for a Master Gardener? Is there a plant you would like to see highlighted? Send us an email to www.ellis-tx@tamu.edu.

Summertime and our Feathered Friends

Summer season provides all the natural food that your yard guests need. They thrive on insects, weed seeds and grains. However, water is essential. A birdbath can be a wonderful addition to your yard. For an added treat, quarter fresh fruit

(leave the skin on) and either hang from branches or put on feeding trays. Soon the migration will begin and the resident guests will return to your feeders.



Bring in the Birds

By Kim Ellis, Ellis County Master Gardeners

As the temperature rises with the approach of August, we are spending a little less time outside. We deserve a little break from all the hard work we have put into our gardens over the last few months. Why not make the next couple of months of heat a little more enjoyable by attracting some wildlife to your garden. It only takes a few minutes a day tending to a birdbath and a few birdfeeders to bring the sweet sound of song birds to the beautiful garden you have worked so hard to establish.

The song birds will be encouraged to visit your backyard if they have a water source, food source, and some type of shelter. Trees and bushes will provide protection from predators. Did you know a cardinal can hear running water such as a sprinkler from about a mile away! If you plan on watering your yard or flowerbeds, toss out some sunflower seeds opposite your watering zone. Cardinals are not the only ones who love sunflowers. Blue jays, doves, and even the titmice all eat the Black Oil sunflower seed. If all you have is the striped sunflower seeds, you can still attract the jays and cardinals and even a few woodpeckers.

If you would like to see a flash of yellow fly through your backyard, a hanging feeder filled with thistle seed will attract the goldfinch. Feeders attached to the trunk of a tree and filled with a suet block will be a tasty treat for any little chickadee passing through the neighborhood.

Hummingbirds are, by far, one of nature's most amazing and stunning creatures to watch. You don't have to spend a fortune to feed them. You can make your own nectar at home! Mix four parts water with 1 part sugar and boil. When the mixture has cooled, fill the feeder and hang from a branch. Be sure to empty and wash out the feeder about every 3 to 4 days. It is not necessary to add red food coloring, it may be harmful to the birds.

Texas is home to a wide variety of birds. If you have been trying to attract Purple Martins without any success, don't close up the houses just yet. Check to see if your housing is at the center of an open area and at least 30-120 feet from human housing. The Purple Martin Conservation Association also recommends that the height of the house be 10-17 feet high. They are attracted to white houses. Good thing too, white will reflect the sun off the houses and they won't get too hot. Don't forget to add 1 to 2 inches of nesting material. If you have done all of this and still no Martins have a little more patience. Fledglings can hunt for next year's breeding ground up until the end of August. For more information on attracting Purple Martins visit The Purple Martin Conservation Association. For all other birds visit the National Wildlife Federations website www.nwf.org.

Month of the Marigold

By Kim Ellis, Ellis County Master Gardener

With triple digit temperatures upon us, who can imagine getting out there and actually planting something? Well, there are a few of us who are just crazy enough to venture out into the heat. Who can resist the beautiful oranges and yellows and even reds of the Marigold? Not many. August is the perfect time to brighten up that dried up spot in your garden by adding a few Marigolds.

Why August? Marigolds are highly susceptible to those pesky spider mites. Because the marigold loves the sun and heat but also needs a medium amount of water, August is a great time for planting. Giving the flowers a good spray of water once a week underneath helps to control the spider mites. Mari-Mums really hold up the best. If you are going for some great curb appeal, consider choosing one of the larger flowering varieties like the American or African marigold. They tend to be larger than the French marigold.

To increase your curb appeal, plant clumps of like colors together. Before you try this next tip, make sure you have a great neighbor! I do have great neighbors across the street so I set my plants in the spot I am considering placing them, then dash across the street and see how they look from a distance! I also try to make it a habit of complimenting my neighbors on the

things that look good in their yard.

So how big can they get? Marigolds can grow from 6-36 inches tall and spread as wide as 10-36 inches. Make sure you check the tags before purchasing your plants to get a better idea of the growth pattern. Most tags should also tell you what kind of water requirements the plant will need. Marigolds hold up well in heat and love light, but they do need a medium amount of water so if you are in a city that has watering restrictions or specific residential watering guidelines, double check them before making any purchase.

Finally, be sure to deadhead (cut off fading flowers) to increase blooming. Don't forget to give the marigolds and any other plants suffering from spider mites a good spray of water to remove them from the leaves. While you are at it, give a good spray to the kids or your spouse! Enjoy the heat!

Do you have a question for a Master Gardener? Send them to ellis-tx@tamu.edu with "question for Kim" in the subject heading. We have specialist in most fields of gardening who would love to help answer your questions. We will include the question and answer right here in the paper.



Earth Kind:

Environmental Stewardship Programs for the Urban Landscape

Department of Horticultural Sciences
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas



What is Earth Kind?

Earth Kind uses research-proven techniques to provide maximum gardening and landscape enjoyment while preserving and protecting our environment.

The objective of Earth Kind is to combine the best of organic and traditional gardening and landscaping principles to create a horticultural system based on real world effectiveness and environmental responsibility.

Earth Kind Goals Include:

- Landscape water conservation
 - Safe use and handling of fertilizers & pesticides in the landscape
 - Reduction of yard wastes entering landfills
 - Landscaping for Energy Conservation
- As your interest and knowledge in these areas grows you will have an increased awareness of the many programs, practices and activities that are Earth Kind. Working together we can make a difference in conserving and protecting our valuable natural resources.

Do You Want to:

- Take the Earth Kind Challenge?
- Find an Earth Kind Plant Selector?
- Read Earth Kind Publications?
- Plan an Earth Kind Home Landscape?
- Learn IPM (Integrated Pest Management)?
- Find more Earth Kind links?

Program:

- Texas WaterWise Council
- Grow Green
- Texas Superstar
- Drought Information
- Texas Smartscape
- Efficient Use of Water in the Garden & Landscape
- Composting
- Don't Bag It - Leaf Management
- Problem Solver Guides
- Organic Lifestyles

Description:

- Promoting water conservation practices in Texas
- Recommended Earth Kind practices
- Selected Landscape Plant Materials
- News Articles on Landscape Water Conservation
- Landscape Water Conservation
- Recommendations on Conserving Water
- Guidelines on Making and Using Compost
- Alternatives to Filling Landfills With Leaves
- Visual Problem Diagnosis Guides
- Info on a Broad Range of Organic Topics

Log onto the Agrilife website: <http://earthkind.tamu.edu>. And you can access all the information listed above and the program/descriptions below.

News Release

Date: July 10, 2008
 From: Mark Arnold
 County Extension Agent
 Agriculture & Natural Resources
 Ellis County



Rain/Freeze Sensor

Install a rain/freeze sensor on your irrigation system!

Rain/Freeze sensors prevent your automatic sprinkler system from watering during a rain or freeze and can potentially save more than 500 gallons a day during rainy conditions.

A rain sensor keeps the irrigation system from starting or continuing after rainfall quantities of 1/8", 1/4", 1/2", 3/4", or 1". This is called the reset rate. The reset rate refers to the amount of time it takes the rain sensor to dry out sufficiently for the sprinkler sys

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tem to be allowed to come back on. The time that it takes the rain sensor to reset for normal sprinkler operation after the rain has stopped is determined by weather conditions (wind, sunlight, humidity, etc.). These conditions will determine how fast the hygroscopic discs dry out, and since the landscape is also experiencing the same conditions, their respective drying rates will parallel each other.

There is an adjustment capability on the rain sensor that will slowdown the reset rate. This adjustment can compensate for an overly sunny or shady installation location or peculiar soil conditions. It is suggested to set your sensor to 1/8".

The temperature at which the freeze sensor is activated is $37^{\circ}\text{F}\pm 2^{\circ}$ ($3^{\circ}\text{C}\pm 1^{\circ}$) and is not adjustable.

The placement of your rain/freeze sensor is very important. Please consider the following to insure that your equipment is most effective.

- Mount the rain sensor to a gutter or roof eave where it will be exposed to direct, unobstructed rainfall (but away from sprinkler spray).
- Mount as close as possible to the timer. This will cause the wire run to be shorter, which minimizes the possibility of wire breaks.
- Mount in the highest possible position where rain can fall directly upon the rain sensor.
- Refrain from mounting the rain sensor on a very sunny, southeastern end of a building as it may cause the rain sensor to dry out sooner than desired. Similarly, mounting on the northern end of a building with constant shade may keep the rain sensor from drying soon enough.

By installing a rain/freeze sensor you will not only prevent your automatic sprinkler system from running while it's raining, potentially causing excessive runoff from your property, but will also prevent your plants from receiving excessive amounts of water. Better yet it will save you money and conserve our precious natural resource.

For further information, contact Mark Arnold, County Extension Agent-Agriculture/Natural Resources, 701 South I-35 E, Suite 3, Waxahachie, or call 972/825-5175 or email: wmarnold@ag.tamu.edu.

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin. The Texas A & M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.



The Gardener's Health: Mosquitoes

“With the incidence of mosquito-borne diseases like dengue fever, viral encephalitis, and even the west Nile virus on the rise, insect repellents need to become an integral part of your gardening activities.

The Medical Sciences Bulletin has reported that 38 percent of the Americans who use insect repellents, 22 percent use products containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), the active ingredient of OFF! Cutter Pleasant Protection, Backwoods, Backyard cutter, and Muskol repellents. According to researcher Jamie Heal at the University of Guelph's Department of Environmental biology, ‘Products containing DEET are considered to be very safe. If used correctly, the vast majority of people will not have a problem with them. People use millions of applications each year, and most problems arise due to misuse, or allergic reactions.’

DEET Products - 5-15% concentration = 2-12 hrs. protection.

Organic Alternatives

- Buzz Away-95% protection for 1 hour. Contains citronella, cedarwood, eucalyptus, lemongrass, peppermint
- Blocker-protects as well as 7% DEET, up to several hours; contains 2% soybean oil.
- Avon's Skin-so-Soft-30 minute protection...contains mineral oil. Then it became an attractant as oiliness wore off.

Acoustic devices and oral doses of Vitamin B1 are ineffective repellents.

NOTE: Always check the repellent's label for the active ingredients and for the directions for safe use.”

It's August - What Else Needs to be Done?

By Carolyn Foster
Ellis County Master Gardener



August is a popular month for family vacations and very little rain. Proper watering is critical during this time of the year. If you are going away, even just a few days, get someone to water those container plants and ground covers. Ground covers and perennials grow slowly the first year after planting and speed up as they become better established. So extra care of plants the first year is very important.

Before you leave:

- Water thoroughly; moisten the soil down about 4 to 6 inches.
- Make sure plantings are weeded and mulched; 3 to 6 inches will choke out the weeds.
- Trim and prune dead, overgrown and leggy plants.
- Remove the spent flowers from plants. This will help plants survive the heat.

If you think that planting annuals will guarantee you nonstop color from spring until fall, think again. Often, once an annual plant has produced a good crop of flowers, and they've set seed for the next generation, that's it. The plant thinks its job is done. So how do we keep the blooms coming? **DEADHEAD** - simply remove the flowers **BEFORE** they set seed. The more you clip, the more the plant will churn out. Most will bloom until the first frost. So, get out there and clip way and you'll fill your house with flowers all summer long.

A lady called about midsummer, "my lobelia started looking raggedy, so I cut it back and waited for the encore performance. But weeks later, still nothing. What's going on?" It's called **HEAT CHECK**. It's a flower's version of a summer vacation. Lobelia, Alyssum, and French marigold are some plants that like to chill out when the weather gets steamy. Don't worry, when the nights get a little cooler, they'll start to bloom again. For now just keep them watered and watch out for pests. When they start to bloom, feed them every 3 weeks and they'll put on a show.

Now is good time to take some cuttings from you favorite plants. Start with a good rooting hormone. Take a 4" to 6" cutting from a plant that is healthy and strong from a semi-mature stem. Use clean, sharp clippers and clean with a solution of 1 part bleach to 8 parts water after each cut. Wrap the cutting in a wet paper towel and cut again about 1/4" below a node (where leaves meet the stem) once you're back inside. Pinch off lower leaves of the bottom half so the stem is bare. Keep upper leaves in place but no buds or flowers. Dip in rooting compound and put into the growing medium. Firm soil, water lightly and cover with plastic. Remove plastic for 1 hour a day to prevent mildew. In 3 to 5 weeks you should see new shoots forming. Remove plastic, protect until spring and you're good to go.

The Ellis County Master Gardeners is a great place to learn more about all types of gardening. Call 972 825-5175 and ask a Master Gardener your questions. You can also go onto our website: www.ecmga.com and ask a question from there. Also, there are other websites you can access from our website to research yourself. Check it out; it's filled with great information.

Half the interest of a garden is the constant exercise of the imagination.

~ Mrs. C.W. Earle, *Pot-Pourri from a Surrey Garden*, 1897
(Thank You, Jessica)

We Couldn't Have Done It Without You!

2008 Lawn and Garden Expo Sponsors:

Gold Shovel

Premier Ag & Lawn
The Greenery
Earth Tones Landscaping
James Hardie
Ellis County Living Magazine
KBEC 1390 Classic Country
Waxahachie Daily Light - The Ellis County Newspaper Network

Bronze Bucket

Waxahachie Civic Center
Vintage Bank

Green Thumb

CNB of Texas
Tex-Scapes Greenery
Urban Farmers
Gardenscapes by Diane
H-E-B
Holcim (Texas), LP
Ennis Garden Club
Rod & Bubba of Metroplex Toyota

2008 Ellis County Master Gardener Calendar

Citizens National Bank of Texas
Cancun's & Acapulco's
Creative H₂O
Yuko Mauldin-North Texas GMAC Real Estate
Petal Pusher's Garden Emporium
Animal Hospital of Ovilla
Powerscape Equipment Company
Natural Stone Works
Natural Water Works
The Greenery
Maui Wowi
Boyce Feed & Grain
Travis Equipment Co., Inc.

Urban Farmers
Stone River Landscape & Irrigation
The Dove's Nest Restaurant
Jeanette's Custom Embroidery
Rainwater Harvesting Solutions, Inc.
Midlothian Feed & Supply
Patio Scapes
WNI Waxahachie Daily Light
Gingerbread Press
Pam Daniel-Ebby Halliday Realtors
Loma Linda Events
ARK Country Store
Tex-Scapes Greenery

Thank You!

Our Calendar Committee has already started working on our 2009 Ellis County Master Gardener calendar! It should be available the first week of December. A lot of time and work go into producing the calendar, but it is a labor of love and the response from the Ellis County community, as well as our sponsors has been TERRIFIC!