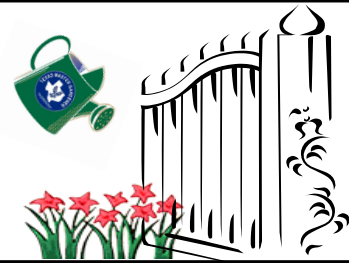




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VIII, Issue Eight

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

August, 2015

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

What's Happening in August?

Every Saturday from April to October from 8am-1pm.

**410 S. Rogers (across from City Hall in the old lumberyard building)
Visit the Master Gardeners' Booth!**

- ☼ Useful gardening tips
- ☼ Plants and herbs for sale
- ☼ Free handouts...Some items for a fee
- ☼ Tell a friend to sign up for the **E-Garden Newsletter**...it's **FREE!**



August 8th—It's the second Saturday of the month and that means it's kids activity day. There's a fun project lined up for kids of all ages. Grass heads! Intrigued? Stop by the booth next to the MGs and see what's happening. Vendors still have lots of fresh produce and baked goods along with essential oils, jewelry and much more. Shop early to beat the heat!

August 15th—It's GRILL FEST at the market today. Our county agent, Mark Arnold and many master gardeners will be serving up grilled fruits and vegetables. The vegetable vendors make donations, as do some of the Master Gardeners, so that we can share great tasting, locally grown produce grilled up Texas style! If you have never had grilled peaches before, you have got to stop by and try this delicious treat, fresh off the grill! Be sure to visit...it's a lotta fun!

August 22—Today the market is buzzing about beekeeping with MG Ginger Cole and the folks from Boyce Feed & Grain. If you're interested in raising bees, this is a perfect time to visit the market. Ginger is very knowledgeable about what it takes to raise happy healthy bees and Boyce has the supplies you need.

August 29—Come to the market today and learn about rainwater harvesting and drip irrigation. Some of our MGs have gone thru TX A&M training and are on hand to share their knowledge with you. Do stop by to learn important water-saving ideas just in time to implement this fall...when the temperature cools off a bit. There will be plenty of produce still along with baked goods and more at the market. Hope to see you there.

Coming in September! We are just weeks away from our annual **MG Iris Giveaway**. Mark your calendars for September 5th. MGs will be handing out free irises for the 6th year now. You definitely don't want to miss out!

Ellis County Master Gardener Monthly Meeting—You're invited!



The **August monthly meeting** of ECMGA takes place Tuesday, August 10th and will feature our very own MGs. The presentation will be about **HOW TO PRESERVE THE FRUITS OF THE EARTH**. Now is the time! Ellis County Master Gardeners will be sharing their canning and preserving secrets and some of their time-tested recipes. Each presentation will be followed by samples and recipe

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TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION



Listen to KBEC

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

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

Melinda Kocian

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Tomato Basil Relish
By Arlene Hamilton

1 cup Italian tomatoes, seeded and chopped
¼ onion, chopped
¼ roasted red pepper, chopped
3 large basil leaves, chopped
1 T. balsamic vinegar
2 T. olive oil

Mix ingredients in a small bowl. Salt and pepper to taste.

Basil (Annual, 12"–36") A grassy, sweet clove flavor and fragrance; there are 180+ varieties, with more being cultivated each year. Wonderful with tomatoes, both fresh and cooked and a must in pesto. Sprinkle on pasta, fish, chicken and salads. Cook only briefly or cut and add at end of cooking.

Basil will thrive in the heat of a Texas summer in addition to adding color to the landscape. Sweet Basil is the favored variety, but Cinnamon, Thai, Opal, Genovese, Purple Ruffles, Lemon and many others will add texture and color to the garden as well as interest to food.

Basil is a heat-loving plant so plant after the soil is above 65 degrees and night temperatures do not drop below 60 degrees.

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

Planting

- ✿ If you haven't already done so, this is the time to begin sowing seeds for fall transplants. By starting now, you can have pansies, calendulas, Johnny-jump-ups, flowering cabbage, lettuce and other cool season transplants ready to plant in the garden in September or early October.
- ✿ Plant bluebonnets and other spring wildflowers now. They must germinate in late summer or early fall, develop good root systems and be ready to grow in spring when the weather warms. Plant the seed in well-prepared soil, one-half inch deep and water thoroughly.
- ✿ It is time to divide spring-flowering perennials, such as iris, Shasta daisy, Oxeye daisy, gaillardia, cannas, day lilies, violets, liriopse and ajuga.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- ✿ Caladiums require plenty of water at this time of year if they are to remain lush and active until fall. Fertilize with 21-0-0 at the rate of 1/3 to 1/2 pounds per 100 square feet of bed area and water thoroughly.
- ✿ Don't allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture. Hollies will frequently drop their fruit under drought conditions.
- ✿ Use pesticides with caution and only as needed. Follow all label directions and never increase the rate. Do not rinse sprayers or dispose of excess spray in the drain, storm sewer or other places where runoff can contaminate our water system.

Garden Watch

- ✿ Chinch bugs are a major lawn pest of St. Augustine in the summer. If patches in the lawn look dry and you are certain, after testing the soil, that water is sufficient—then suspect Chinch bugs.
- ✿ Order your spring-flowering bulbs now. Make your selections and place orders for spring-flowering bulbs now so that they will arrive in time for planting in October and November. A good guideline to use is 'biggest is best' in regard to bulb size. Be careful about so-called "bargain" bulbs as they may be small or of inferior quality.



Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Englemann Daisy—Sunflower family (Asteraceae)
Engelmannia pinnatifida Nutt. ex. Nutt.

Region: 2–10 (Ellis County is Region 4)

Size: 1½–3½ feet

Blooms: February–November, Perennial

When you drive through Texas in May, this plant seems to be everywhere, but take another look! It flowers from the roadside to the fence line, but not on the other side where there are livestock. Englemann daisy is so rich in protein (nearly 27 percent) that animals love it, and it is being utilized in the restoration of rangeland.

A deep taproot enables this plant to survive drought conditions and to bloom nearly year-round, with one to two-inch, lemon-yellow flowers. The eight to ten ray flowers are indented at the tip. Both the stout stems and alternating leaves are covered with hairs. Basal leaves are six to twelve inches long, decreasing in size up the stem. The leaf blade is long-stalked and deeply-cut or lobed, hence another common name, “cutleaf daisy”.

What's Happening (Continued from page 1)



sharing. Social time begins at 9:30am and the program begins at 10am. Please be our guest! The meeting takes place at the First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie. For info, call (972) 825-5175.

Indian Trail Master Naturalists Events

Join the **Indian Trail Master Naturalists** at their monthly meeting on **Monday, August 24**. The program for the evening is entitled **“Pollinators and Natives, An Ancient Marriage”** presented by **Randy Johnson, President of NPSOT**. Randy emphasizes the fact that pollinators and flowering plants co-evolved with and for each other. The need to create and maintain pollinator habitat is discussed with examples of native genera offered. Diversity is the key-word and its importance to the maintenance of natural systems is highlighted. This program is free and follows the 6pm Master Naturalist meeting, also open to the public. Meeting location: First United Methodist Church, Family Life Center 505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email ellis-tx@tamu.edu

Master Naturalist 2015 Annual Spring Training Class. ITMN will hold their Annual Training Classes on Tuesdays from 6pm–9p.m. from September 15 to November 17 at First United Methodist Church Family Life Center, 505 West Marvin Avenue, Waxahachie. The Texas Master Naturalist Program is co-sponsored by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. **Applications are due by August 19**. For more information and to receive an application, please e-mail ellis-tx@tamu.edu, or contact the AgriLife Extension Service Office by phone at (972) 825-5175.

Saturday, August 15, 9am, Wildflower & Bird Walk. Members will be leading a walk at Mockingbird Nature Park. Join in this ½ mile stroll along the trails to identify wildflowers and birds. Free to the public. Participants should bring drinking water and binoculars. The walk will be canceled if raining. Info at: <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/> or email: Information@itmnc.com

Fall Gardens—Have You Planted One?

*With Cerelda De Heus
Ellis County Master Gardener*



Rains were welcome this spring, but about the time I was looking for an ark they had worn out their welcome. My spring garden produced an abundance of bell peppers and nothing else! This fall offers another opportunity for gardeners and I have almost always had better luck in the fall than spring. So if you haven't tried planting a fall garden, consider planting one. You may be pleasantly surprised with what and how much your garden can produce.

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

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

As in spring, a gardener has two choices, transplants or seeds. When selecting transplants, select the largest and healthiest you can find as these have established root systems for the shorter fall growing period. You can also start your own transplants by sowing seed. Seeds must be kept moist to germinate and in our hot summers this can be tricky.

Big box stores offer only a limited variety of plants, so sowing your own seeds eliminates this and can introduce new types of foods to the family table. You must know the average first frost for your area (Ellis County's average first frost

date is November 15). Count back from this date to check if your choices will have time to produce. The important thing to remember is to get your plants up and growing to catch the last wave of summer heat.

Daily checks of any garden are a necessity for being productive, whether it is a vegetable or a flower garden. Soaker hoses laid out before sowing seeds or planting transplants is a

good choice in our hot dry temps. Too much summer sun can be handled by shade covers, cloth held by hoops or stakes or a board held above with bricks. Shading can mean less water evaporation and eliminate burning of tender shoots.

Mulching between plants

with newspapers, cardboard, grass clippings or rotted leaves will help to block light, preventing weed growth and will also keep the soil cool and moist. Any area to be mulched should be wet first, covered, and wet again.

Covering your seedlings/transplants from day one with netting or lightweight row covers will help eliminate some of the pests that will be attracted to your root and leaf vegetables. Raise your row covers as the plants grow. The cooling temps of fall nights will ease some of the insect problems. If you have deer, your row covers might help eliminate their ability to enjoy your garden.

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

and some cabbage, cut the primary head high, this stub will allow smaller secondary heads to form.

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

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



Plan now for fall vegetables

Enjoying the Flavorful Herbs of Summer

*By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener*



Summer and the Texas heat come much too fast for me and for much of my vegetable and herb gardens, but there are some herbs that love the Texas heat and continue to thrive in our 90+ degree heat. The trick is to get out there early in the morning and check things out.

If you are a regular reader of my column, you know I am a lazy gardener and have discovered many kindred spirits out there. We are out in the garden before the sun comes up checking for the latest ripe tomato, or seeing if there are any squash bugs lurking about or areas where some extra watering is needed. I head out with my first cup of coffee just to look things over, then often find myself grubby and sweaty hours later wondering where the morning went.

When the sun rises too high, I can retreat to the cool kitchen with my garden bounty in hand. The meals will be easy to prepare, using the freshest produce available and doing the least with them to preserve their full flavors and nutrition.

The herbs that are thriving in July include basil, marjoram, oregano and Mexican oregano. Lemon verbena, lemon balm, and lemongrass are also doing well. All of these herbs prefer regular harvesting to keep them from flowering and going to seed. The flavor of most herbs will get bitter if allowed to flower. Some herbs such as mint, parsley, and salad burnet

which have a mild, sweet flavor in the spring go bitter in the heat, whether they flower or not. Come cooler weather, the new more flavorful growth will return. Just trim away the older leaves and add them to the compost.

During our summers, water is the garden's most important need. Even with a thick layer of mulch, my herbs require a good soaking every three or four days. (Hopefully your rain barrel is full from the bountiful spring rains.)

One reason I love growing herbs is that they don't require as much feed as other plants. I fertilize my beds with a weak solution of seaweed and fish emulsion every four weeks or so. Compost tea is also added monthly. Feeding will pick up a bit with cooler weather. The volatile oils in herbs that give them their wonderful flavors are diminished with too much fertilizer.

Back to the herbs of summer. When you think of



Tomatoes and basil not only work well together on the dinner table, but the pair are also excellent garden companions.

basil, marjoram and oregano, don't you automatically think of tomatoes? Try fresh tomato slices with fresh mozzarella cheese and basil. How about a simple tomato sauce with fresh tomatoes, onions, a little garlic, olive oil and the three herbs of summer simmered for about 30 to 40 minutes. Note: add the basil at the end of the cooking time to preserve its flavor, season with salt and pepper and serve over pasta. Yum! Try the same ingredients, but don't cook. Add some chopped Greek olives and serve over toasted baguette slices.

So get out early, keep your garden and your body healthy, and enjoy the results of your labor with flavorful fruits, vegetables and herbs!



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Contact James Kocian at
expo.ecmga@yahoo.com

Reserve the date: March 19, 2016!



Going on Vacation—Is Your Garden Ready?

By: Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener



You've stopped delivery of the newspaper, asked your neighbor to keep an eye on your house and take in the mail, had the car serviced and you're ready to go. Or, are you? What about your garden? Will it survive while you are away?

That summer vacation is great for the gardener, but disastrous on the garden. Unless you have only well-established native plants, your garden can't take two weeks of our dry Texas heat and wind without some care.

Water is the main concern. The most efficient way to water is with a drip irrigation system or soaker hoses on a timer, but you need that gardening buddy to turn it on for you. Lucky you if you have an irrigation system. Mine stays on manual as I "starve" my lawn and landscape beds for water. My theory is the roots will have to grow deeper in search of water. Yes, I have a St. Augustine lawn but you can challenge it by running the system every seven days. Just keep an eye out for wilting plants. Check them for wilting in the early morning, not in the heat of the day.

ing hours to finish watering by 10am. Putting down one inch of water should be sufficient.

Incidentally if you don't have an automatic watering system and are not sure the garden will be watered while you are away, avoid applying high-nitrogen fertilizer close to departure time. The nitrogen can stimulate new growth, which will wilt quickly if the soil becomes dry.



A drip irrigation garden can be highly productive as well as water efficient.



Mulching around plants is an excellent way to conserve soil moisture and encourage vigorous plant growth.

If no gardening buddy is available that programmable timer is the best answer. The timer can be set to water at various intervals – every day, every other day, once or twice a week, or at whatever interval you wish, and for the length of time you decide is needed for each application. The timer will last several years and can be a lifesaver. Set it to go off in the early morn-

Mulching the garden is important year-round, but even more so when you are away and can't provide normal care. Soil that is too hot (over 90 degrees) decreases root efficiency and slows production. Evaporation of soil moisture also is more rapid when the soil becomes hot. A thick layer of organic mulch will insulate the soil from the sun, keep temperatures in the root zone at the proper level, and reduce the loss of soil moisture by evaporation. With a thick layer of mulch and a deep soaking before you leave, plants can go at least a week with no additional water, even during the hottest part of the summer.

While you're enjoying that mountain air or playing on the beach, spider mites, cucumber beetles, squash vine borers or other pests may be feasting on your garden. It doesn't take long for diseases such as powdery mildew on cucurbits or early blight on tomatoes to reach epidemic proportions. Before you leave make a thorough inspection of each plant in the garden and treat the problems. But don't wait until the last day; a repeat treatment may be necessary.

Gather the harvest. Many flowers and vegetables will stop producing if they develop mature seeds. When seeds are al-

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lowed to ripen on the plant, that goal of reproduction has been reached; and from the plant's perspective, there is no need for more flowers or fruit. So frequent harvesting of vegetables and removal of faded blossoms from flowering plants is important.

Mow the lawn a day or two before you leave, cutting it at the same height as you normally do. Don't lower the mower blade for a "closer shave"; doing so could easily cause sun scald and damage.

Put the lights on a timer to give the impression that you are home. Besides it's nice to come home to a lighted house.

Happy vacationing!



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Are you a Facebooker? You should be! Ellis County Master Gardeners are on Facebook and we'd love to have you join us. Check in to find out where and when our local events will be held—events like the Downtown Waxahachie Farmer's Market or Lighthouse for Learning Classes. Drop by our page after an event to see pictures.

Use our page as your point of contact to ask us gardening questions or get information about flowers, vegetables and herbs...we cover it all! Some of the recent articles posted include how to propagate plants through propagation, the newest TX Superstar—a great addition to your landscape, saving your garden from the heat and updates on local events that gardeners will find interesting and educational. You can also post pictures and let us know what is happening in your gardens and landscape.



You'll find us at this link, and all you have to do is click the "Like" button to see our daily posts! We look forward to hearing from you with questions and comments. If you have a QR Code reader on your smartphone, you can scan our code and be taken directly to our Facebook page.

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

Save The Date!
Saturday, March 19, 2016



Landscape Gardening

From: Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener



Ellis County Master Gardeners have a website at www.ecmga.com. Check it for information on gardening in Ellis County, sign up for this monthly newsletter, or access other websites, including the Texas A&M Horticulture website. Questions for Master Gardeners will be answered with a return email or telephone call when you leave a message at (972) 825-5175 or visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ECMGA>.

Gomphrena globosa, Bachelor Buttons

by Dr. William C. Welch, Extension Horticulturist, TX A&M University

As we approach the most stressful period of the year for most garden plants, the few species that really thrive in hot, dry conditions deserve special recognition. Bachelor Buttons are readily available and easily grown from seed.

According to Hortus Third (a plant dictionary), Bachelor Buttons came to us from tropical areas of the Old World. They are documented as having been a part of early American gardens.

Colors options include purple, rose, orange and white, and flowers are about one inch across. In addition to their ease of culture, Bachelor Buttons were popular with our ancestors for their use as "everlastings."

Dozens of individual flowers occur on each plant which are attractive mounds about two feet tall and wide. Cut stems of flowers hung upside down in a dark, dry area and allowed to dry hold their color for a year or more and can be used in a variety of ways.

Experienced gardeners always save a few flower heads from their favorite color plants to use for next year's seed. This is definitely a plant that will not thrive until hot weather arrives. June and July are good times to plant the seeds in most of Texas.

Bachelor Buttons are so easily grown and transplanted that many gardeners simply sow the seeds in a small area of the

vegetable garden or flower border then transplant seedlings to permanent locations when two or three inches tall.

Plants are usually spaced one to one and a half feet apart for a mass effect. They are normally attractive in the garden until late fall. Dwarf forms are available, but appear to be more susceptible to rot.



FIREWORKS

Try Gomphrena 'Fireworks'. This isn't like any Gomphrena you have ever grown! Super-fast growing plants grow to 4 ft. across and 5 ft. tall. The bright magenta-pink golf-ball sized flower heads wave in the breeze at the end of long stems. Super heat tolerance and doesn't need much water. Great for the back of beds or as a WOW plant in containers.



LAS VEGAS PURPLE

The 'Las Vegas Purple' Gomphrena is used for its beautiful color and unique shape. Grows to 18" tall.

Few insects seem to bother Gomphrena, but occasional loss occurs from root rot. Good drainage is essential, but little fertilizer or water are necessary to produce a massive display. It's not too late to start new plants now from seed. Plants started in July or early August can make a beautiful fall display and provide lots of dried material for winter decoration.

Garden Checklist for August

Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist TX A&M AgriLife Ext.

By August many fall vegetable seeds and even small plants may be set out for later production. Be careful to give extra water, and a little shade, to these young plants while they are becoming established. The result will be excellent cool season garden produce.

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Landscape Gardening (Continued from page 8)

- ✿ Trim off faded flowers on crape myrtles and vitex to encourage later re-bloom.
- ✿ Evaluate the volume of water delivered from lawn sprinklers to ensure healthy, stress-free grass during the heat of the summer. One thorough watering that delivers one inch of water at a time is better than several more shallow sessions. The amount of water available through flower bed sprinklers may be checked by placing several shallow pans among shrubs or flowers.
- ✿ Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning from now until midwinter. Severe pruning at this time will only stimulate tender new growth prior to frost.
- ✿ Sow seeds of snapdragons, dianthus, pansies, calendulas, and other cool-season flowers in flats, or in well-prepared areas of the garden, for planting outside during mid-to-late fall.
- ✿ Picking flowers frequently encourages most annuals and perennials to flower even more abundantly.
- ✿ Pick okra, peas and peppers often to maintain production.
- ✿ A late-summer pruning of rosebushes can be beneficial. Prune out dead canes and any weak, brushy growth. Cut back tall, vigorous bushes to about 30 inches. After pruning, apply fertilizer, and water thoroughly. If a preventive

disease-control program has been maintained, your rose bushes should be ready to provide an excellent crop of flowers this fall.

- ✿ It is not too late to set out another planting of many warm-season annuals, such as marigolds, zinnias, and periwinkles. They will require extra attention for the first few weeks, but should pro-



vide you with color during late September, October and November.

- ✿ Establish a new compost pile to accommodate the fall leaf accumulation.
- ✿ Complete installation of warm season turf grasses by late August to mid September to ensure they're established before the first fall freeze.
- ✿ Plant ground covers and tropical and warm season annuals.
- ✿ Plant snap beans, lima beans, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, collards, eggplant, kohlrabi, okra, onion, parsley, Irish potatoes, squash, and watermelon for the fall.
- ✿ Trim back leggy spring-planted annuals and fertilize if needed to encourage new growth and continued flowering.
- ✿ Stop pinching back chrysanthemums and Mexican mint marigold to ensure good bud development for fall blooms.
- ✿ Watch for powdery mildew on cedar elms, crape myrtles and euonymus, and treat with fungicide, if necessary.
- ✿ Check pecan trees for aphids, shuck worms, webworms, and foliage diseases.
- ✿ Protect ornamental and peach trees from borers by applying a labeled borer preventive to the trunks in late August according to label directions.
- ✿ Watch susceptible ornamental plants for iron deficiency (yellowed leaves with darker green veins), aggravated by the hot dry weather, and treat with chelated iron if needed. Drench plants and avoid contact with hard surfaces that will stain.

Thank You All!!

Thanks to the sponsors, exhibitors and visitors
for making the 2015 15th Annual
Ellis County Master Gardener's Lawn & Garden Expo
such a success!

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