



# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VII, Issue Eight

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

August, 2013

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](http://www.ECMGA.com), click on subscribe, and it will be sent around the 1st of every month. Best of all; it's FREE! Susan Clark, Editor

## What's Happening in August

### IT'S BACK! Every Saturday from March to December 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!**



## Special Events at the Waxahachie Downtown Farmers Market

**Saturday, August 3rd** is the Annual Fruit and Vegetable Grill Festival. Beginning about 9 a.m., the Ellis County Master Gardeners will be washing, chopping, slicing, and dicing fruits and vegetables provided by the market sellers. Mark Arnold, our Ag Agent, will fire up his grill and the fun begins! We will be serving **FREE** samples of the outstanding produce available at the market that morning. The festival goes on until the food runs out.

**Saturday, August 17th** is the return of the Master Gardeners' Great Iris Give-A-Way. The iris is the official flower of Waxahachie. **The first 50 visitors to the Master Gardener booth will go home with a bag of iris rhizomes** and instructions on how to plant and care for them.

**August 1-31, 9am-5pm**, The Dallas Arboretum presents August Dollar Days. Come enjoy the final month of summer at the Arboretum, featuring the Alice in Wonderland Flower Village. \$1 admission, all ages (ages 2 and under are free) Parking not included. For more info about events and visiting the arboretum, go to: [www.dallasarboretum.org/](http://www.dallasarboretum.org/)

**Various August Dates, Garden Inspirations Classes.** Classes in August include vegetable gardening, tower gardening, herbs, seed saving, canning, and herbal vinegars. For complete details and to register for classes, visit [www.gardeninspirations-tx.com](http://www.gardeninspirations-tx.com).

**Saturday, August 3, 7am-9am, Walk and Talk Bird Tour with Dan Harvey and Jane Ramberg at the John Bunker Sands Wetland Center.** Binoculars and field guides are available for use. Cost: \$10.00, includes admission. \$5.00 for members. For info, call (972) 474-9100 or email [contact@wetlandcenter.com](mailto:contact@wetlandcenter.com). Visit <http://www.wetlandcenter.com/> for directions and a map.

**Saturday, August 3, 10am-2pm, BRIT First Saturday.** Enjoy tours, children's activities, a rain barrel competition, vendors and booths, farmers market, and a special program. August's program is **Garden Like a Native (Plant): BRIT Research and Ecoscapes Point the Way**. This presentation will show how local homeowners can

(Continued on page 3)

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## Listen to KBEC

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

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

Melinda Kocian

## Inside this issue:

<i>It's August, What Needs to be</i>	2
<i>Wildflower of the Month</i>	3
<i>Herb of the Month</i>	4
<i>In the Vegetable Garden</i>	5
<i>August Garden Tips</i>	6
<i>Landscape Gardening</i>	7





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

### Planting

- ◆ Plant fall vegetables during the first of the month to produce a crop before the first fall freeze. The average date of first fall freeze for this area is Nov. 15th. However, it could occur a week or two before or after that date. It is best to use transplants if available. Many vegetables can be planted from seed such as corn, winter squash, and beans. Leafy (green) and root crops can be planted later in the month. A planting guide for fall vegetables can be found on the web site: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>.
- ◆ Plant bluebonnet and other wildflower seeds in full sun and directly in the ground. The soil should be free of weeds and grass and the surface should be lightly cultivated. Make sure they make good contact with the soil. Water well as these plants must germinate in the late summer or fall.
- ◆ Plant fall flowering bulbs such as spider lily, naked ladies, rain lily, fall crocus, and oxblood lily. Place them in the ground twice as deep as the diameter of the bulb. These bulbs may not bloom the first year.

### Pruning and Fertilizing

- ◆ Prune most roses by cutting out dead canes and weak spindly growth. Cut back stems about one-third. Fertilize and water well for beautiful fall blooms.
- ◆ *Salvia greggi* (autumn sage) can be cut back at least by one-third. Do not flat top any blooming shrub; always leave the tops in a rounded, natural shape. If pruned now, it should display great fall and early winter color.
- ◆ Prune abelia after it blooms.
- ◆ Prune other prolific growing shrubs and vines to keep them in bounds (for example, variegated privet, elaeagnus, hollies, trumpet vine, and honeysuckle).
- ◆ Pinch back the tips of fall-blooming perennials such as Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*), mountain sage (*Salvia reglia*), Mexican mint marigold, copper canyon daisies, mums, and aster if their buds have not already set.

### Garden Watch

- ◆ Continue to follow the *Home Owner's Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule* to protect pecan trees against pecan weevils and hickory shuckworms which can destroy the crop.
- ◆ The same schedule also applies to peach and plum trees to protect from peach tree borers.
- ◆ Many insects are prevalent this time of year. Identify the insect and only use a pesticide if it is necessary. Treat grubs and chinch bugs in turf with a labeled pesticide if they were a problem last year, or if three or more grubs are found in a square foot of turf.

### Earth-Kind® Beneficial's in the Garden

- ◆ Did you know that 97% of the insects most commonly seen in homes and gardens are considered either beneficial or innocuous? Learning how to put these "beneficials" to work is an important Earth-Kind® practice that can help reduce the use of chemical pesticides in the environment.
- ◆ Beneficial insects come in a remarkable variety of sizes, shapes and functions. Using function as the determining criterion, they can be divided into four basic types: predators, decomposers/recyclers, parasitoids, and pollinators.
- ◆ You can learn more about Earth-Kind® Beneficials in the Garden by clicking on the Resource tab at [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com) and then click on Earth-Kind® Publications.

Pollinators have long been recognized for their contributions to mankind's welfare and comfort. Without pollinators, we would have no apples, pears, cherries, citrus fruit, coffee, melons, cucumbers, squash, or many other common foods. It is estimated that pollinators are worth at least 20 billion dollars annually in the United States alone. The best known "flower duster" is, of course, the honey bee. Some less well-known pollinators, such as hover flies, do double duty as beneficial insects. As adults, they pollinate flowers and as larvae, they prey on aphids and other soft-bodied insects.



## Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



**Plains Coreopsis** – Sunflower Family (Asteraceae)  
*Coreopsis tinctoria* Nutt.

**Region:** 1 – 10 (Ellis County is Region 4)

**Size:** 1 – 4 feet

**Blooms:** February through December, Annual

Plains coreopsis is seen as large splashes of yellow along roadsides and in fields in spring, especially in relatively moist soils. It is sometimes spectacularly mixed with Texas paintbrush and bluebonnets. The plants produce numerous flower heads on slender, branching stems. Brown centers are flecked with yellow. Ray petals are yellow with a maroon spot at the base, which may be small,

or may occupy a large part of the ray. There are many species with several varieties of coreopsis in Texas, often making identification difficult. Although its big show is in the spring, coreopsis will bloom until frost in a year with ample rains.



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Expo Exhibitor?**

Contact James Kocian at  
[expo.ecmga@yahoo.com](mailto:expo.ecmga@yahoo.com)

**Reserve the date: March 29, 2014!**

### *What's Happening in August (Continued from page 1)*

best deal with the ongoing drought conditions in North Texas in terms of plants and underlying geology that make up residential landscapes. For more info, visit <http://www.brit.org/events/more-children-families>.

**Mondays, August 5 and August 19, 9am—11am, Wildflower & Bird Walk.** Members of the Indian Trail Master Naturalists will lead a combined Wildflower and Bird Walk the first and third Monday of each month through August. Please bring drinking water and binoculars. 1361 Onward Rd, Midlothian. Free. Visit <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/> for info.

**Saturday, August 17, 8am—11am, Cedar Ridge Preserve—Conservation in Action Workday.** Volunteers help remove non-native plants, restore trails, and work in the butterfly garden. Water, snacks, pruning shears, shovels, and work gloves provided. Contact: [info\\_CRP@yahoo.com](mailto:info_CRP@yahoo.com). Location: 7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas. [www.audubondallas.org](http://www.audubondallas.org)

**Saturday, April 24, 9am—12pm, Dogwood Canyon—Fourth Saturday Workday.** Help with trail-building, habitat management and much more. For info, contact Julie Collins at [jcollins@audubon.org](mailto:jcollins@audubon.org).

**Monday, August 26, 7pm—8pm, Indian Trail Master Naturalists present “Native Milkweed—A Prairie Keystone” with Randy Johnson,** owner of Blackland Seeds and Blackland Natives and Randy Johnson Organics Consulting. Randy will speak on the many roles Native Milkweed played in the prairie habitat from insect survival food source to a shelter and hiding place. The program is free and follows the 6 p.m. Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. It takes place at the Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Parkway, Red Oak. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email [ellis-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:ellis-tx@tamu.edu).



## Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton  
Ellis County Master Gardener



### Herb of the Month: Chile Peppers

You're probably as tired of talking about the hot weather as I am. So let's talk about some wonderful plants that love the long hot summers of the Southwest and inspire passion around the world. Chile Peppers (*Capsicum* spp.) are favored in our gardens, on our plates, and even in our medicine cabinets.

Like beans, corn and avocados, chile peppers are a New World plant, found in South America by Christopher Columbus as he searched for a route to India, home of the black pepper (*Piper nigrum*), the most expensive spice in the world at that time. Columbus returned to Europe with the holds of his ships filled with plants, seeds, and peppers. Within a very short time chile peppers had spread throughout the world as their flavor and heat added zest to bland diets. Even the poorest could easily cultivate this inexpensive flavor enhancer.

There are hundreds of varieties of chile peppers in many shapes, sizes, colors and flavors, from sweet to searingly pungent, hot and sweet at the same time, green and vegetal, earthy, and fruity. Some favorites for the Texas garden are habanero, Anaheim, Hungarian banana, cayenne, Tabasco, Thai, and of course, jalapeño.

The tiny piquin (*pictured above*) has been brought to my garden by the birds that frequent the tender perennial plant in the fall then deposit the seeds throughout the area. It is a very fiery hot pepper that makes a wonder-

ful condiment when the ripe peppers are added to a bottle of vinegar, aged, and then enjoyed splashed over salads, eggs, and vegetables.

August and September are peak times for harvesting chiles from your garden or shopping our local farmers' market. My very favorite chile is the Hatch, (*pictured right*) grown in Hatch, New Mexico.

We first came across this large, mild to hot pepper as we crossed southeastern Colorado several years ago. The markets, roadside stands, and parking lots lining Highway 50 boasted large tumble roasters grilling up bushels of Hatch chiles. You could catch the aroma long before you saw the grill. I have already made one pilgrimage to Central Market for the first batch and will surely return for more before their short season is over.

Once you get past the pain of cleaning and seeding chiles, you are rewarded with not only the wonderful flavor, but also the healthful benefits of chiles. They contain large amounts of vitamins C and A. By weight, fresh peppers have about three times as much vitamin C as oranges and as much vitamin A as carrots. The capsaicin oil that causes your fingers to burn while cleaning them is being studied as a medicine. Capsaicin is the active ingredient of creams for painful skin and nerve conditions including shingles and neuralgia. It is being

tested in cream form for diabetic neuropathy, osteoarthritis, and rheumatoid arthritis.

Pepper plants should be planted in the early summer after the soil has become warm. They grow best in loamy soil with organic matter and a little greensand added. Good drainage is important. Water frequently and feed once or twice during the season.

My favorite way to preserve Hatch peppers is to blacken the skin on the grill, remove the skin and seeds, then layer the peppers flat between sheets of waxed paper. Place these in zip topped freezer bags and freeze. These packets lay flat, taking up very little room. A few pieces make the base for Chile Rellenos casserole, chopped in salsas and chili, or added to all foods needing a bit of a kick.

Here's an easy recipe using fresh fruits and peppers found at the Waxahachie Downtown Farmers' Market the next few Saturdays.

**Melon Salsa:** Combine 1 cup each, honeydew, cantaloupe and watermelon seeded and cubed, 2 jalapeno peppers, seeded and minced, juice of one lime, a small bunch chopped cilantro, mint and basil, and salt and pepper to taste. Combine in a blender. Refrigerate overnight for best flavor. Serve with chips or over fish, shrimp, or chicken



## In the Vegetable Garden

With Monica Nyenhaus  
Ellis County Master Gardener



It's August in North Texas and we had a wonderful cool spell and rain in July! Last year, we were at 100° or more for almost a month at this time and everything was brown. As we go into our hottest month of the year, our vegetable gardens are readying for another planting season...or not.

Some people like to maintain their garden just for the spring and summer crops. For those veggie gardeners, harvest is coming to an end and it's time to relax and wait for a cool day to clean up the fried tomato plants and debris for next year's crops. One caveat is the pepper plants, which will stay till frost, if you like, and produce huge crops if you keep them fertilized and watered through the heat. The same for the tomato plants if they are indeterminate. You can cut them back for fall harvest.

For those of us who garden year round, it seems you're always looking for the next planting and trying to figure out the strategy of crop rotation and what veggie did best in what spot in the garden. I try to write down what I planted where, each year, to help with the nutrients in the soil. I can't remember where I left my keys most of the time, so keeping notes on the veggie garden has helped increase my yield. It's also helped me to plant specific varieties that seem to do better than others.

Here in North Texas, fall gardens are a bit of a challenge as we can have very wet and early frosts...or not. With that in mind, be sure to prepare for freezes by having row cover on hand or old sheets. Keep rocks on hand or something you can use to hold down the

sheets or row cover so they don't blow away in the howling fall winds. You will need cages to lay over the veggies so the cover doesn't lay right on the plants. Whatever you use, be ready when the forecast calls for a freeze so you can run out and cover the babies.

So, what do you plant in a fall garden? Broccoli, Brussels sprouts (*pictured*), cauliflower, cabbage, carrots, cucumbers, kohlrabi, tomatoes, peppers, chard, spinach, radish, beets, winter squash, pumpkins, peas, lettuce, chard, and I'm sure I have missed others. The point being that you can try whatever you want and give it a go.

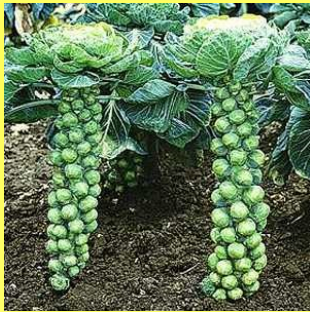
Remember at 100°, seedlings may come up and then fry in the heat. Keep that in mind before running out and putting seed in the ground.

Most fall plants will be in the stores and nurseries when the time is right for planting. Give them a call and ask when plants will be in.

Many plants will go right through a freeze and keep on growing. Spinach is one that thrives in the cold and just keeps on going. Cabbage and Brussels sprouts weather the frosts and freezes well, too. But, for the most part, your fall veggie garden will be...well...toast after the first freeze if you don't take the precaution of covering them up when you need to.

There is an enormous amount of information online at the ECMGA or Texas A&M sites. Look for varieties that grow well in North Texas. Notice how and when to plant each one. You can also visit "Da Boys", as I call them (Robert Shugart, Billy

Crawford, and Jim Dockins) at the Waxahachie farmers market. These guys are seasoned veggie gardeners and can provide some great information for you, but beware of Billy's salsa, its hot!!



Take a chance on a fall garden. It can be very rewarding. Below is my favorite broccoli recipe.

### Cream of Broccoli Soup



Fresh broccoli florets, about 2 pounds  
Butter for sautéing

2 quarts or more of chicken stock

2 medium chopped onions

3 stalks chopped celery

3 tablespoons of flour

2 chopped carrots

3 chopped garlic cloves

3 cups of any desired cheese shredded

Heavy whipping cream, ½ to 1 cup

3 medium chopped potatoes

Salt & pepper

Chopped flat leaf parsley

Dash of nutmeg

Sauté in butter, about ½ stick, the onion, carrots, celery, and potato to soften about 10 minutes. Add garlic and sauté for another minute or two. Make sure you have enough butter. If you need to add more to keep the pan moist, add a tablespoon, so it's not dry. Add the flour and stir constantly for about four minutes. While stirring, add the chicken stock a little at a time. Then slowly add the broccoli. Bring to a boil, then reduce to simmer. Cover and cook for about 20 minutes or until broccoli and potatoes are tender. Add the nutmeg, parsley, salt, and pepper to taste. Puree the soup with an immersion blender or in a food processor. It doesn't need to be completely pureed. If you want it country, leave chunks in it. Add in the cheese and mix thoroughly.

Remove soup from heat and stir the cream in, to taste. Reheat if necessary, but do not boil. Garnish with cheese.



## August Garden Tips

With Susan Norvell  
Ellis County Master Gardener



It's August in Texas and we all know what that means – It's HOT, HOT, HOT. August can be tough on the garden and gardener alike. Wear a hat and light colored clothing, work in the early morning whenever possible, and drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. Remember, you need the water just as much, and probably more than your plants! Please remember to be water-wise. Our lawns and landscape plants need the equivalent of one inch of water per week.



For you vegetable gardener's, depending on the temperatures, you can sow seeds for fall crops of black-eyed peas, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, corn, okra and squash early-to-mid month. If possible, position new plants in the shade of existing plants to protect them from the late afternoon sun. Remember to keep the seedbeds moist until your new plants germinate.

It's time to set out broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, and cauliflower transplants. You can also sow kale, butterhead lettuce, spinach, and turnip seeds in late August.

Refer to the "Homeowner's Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule", available at the Agri-Life Extension Office, for the timing of this month's spray applications to control

pecan weevils and hickory shuckworms (pictured right) on pecan trees and peach tree borers on peach and plum trees.

For your perennial gardens, trim and prune dead, overgrown and leggy plants. Continue to watch for insects and pests and use the proper control methods.

Don't forget to turn the compost pile occasionally to help aerate and speed up decomposition. Be sure the pile is wet. It needs to be the consistency of a wrung

out wet sponge. Start a new compost pile to accommodate the fall leaf production.

Salvia greggii (autumn sage) should be cut back now by at least one-third. Prune your abelia after it stops blooming. Prune other prolific shrubs and vines to keep them in bounds; for example, variegated privet, elaeagnus, hollies, trumpet vine, and honeysuckle.

If you are interested in adding a greenhouse or cold frame in the garden, now would be a good time to purchase it or to start building for the upcoming cool season. Do some research and find one that fits your property, budget, and gardening goals.

Water your landscape deeply and thoroughly once a week. You need to apply one inch of water per week. Make sure your beds are thoroughly mulched to conserve moisture and prevent weeds.

Come on by the Farmers Market each and every Saturday morning to stock up on your locally grown produce. Help support your local growers who consume less energy getting their products to market, as they don't have to be shipped cross-country.

Prune those rose bushes and remove dead canes and any weak, brushy type of growth. Cut back tall and vigorous bushes to about 30 inches. After pruning is completed, apply a complete fertilizer and water thoroughly. It's also time to plant new irises, or divide crowded existing irises.

Plant fall flowering bulbs such as spider lilies, naked ladies, rain lilies, fall crocus, and oxblood lilies. Put them in the ground at a depth that is twice as deep as their diameter. Remember, these bulbs may not

bloom the first year they are planted.

Pinch back the tips of fall-blooming perennials such as Mexican bush sage, Mexican mint marigold, copper canyon daisy, mums, and aster, if their buds have not already set.

Now is the time to sow seeds in flats of plants that may be hard to find later in the fall such as calendulas (pictured left). You can also sow seeds of fall and winter annuals like snapdragons, dianthus, and pansies or purchase nursery stock when these become available. Plant seeds of bluebonnets and other wildflowers directly in the ground about a 1/2 inch deep.

The soil should be free from weeds and grass and the surface should be acid treated to facilitate germination. You can also plant fall blooming perennials such as salvia, Mexican Mint Marigold, mums, and asters. Fall-flowering bulbs such as spider lilies and crocus can also be planted.

Many insects are prevalent at this time of year. Identify the insect first and use pesticides only if it is necessary. Treat grubs and chinch bugs in turf with a labeled pesticide if they were a problem last year, or if three or more grubs are found in a square foot of turf.

Select and order spring-flowering bulbs that will grow in our area. Plan next year to plant Texas natives and adapted plants like: salvias, Turks cap, pink skullcap, lantana, Texas betony, butterfly bush, flame acanthus, ornamental grasses, and many others.

Call the Master Gardener office for recommendations on proper pest control or any other gardening questions you may have at (972) 825-5175. You can also check us out on our website, [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com).





## Landscape Gardening

From: Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener

Ellis County Master Gardeners have a website at [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com). Check this website for information on gardening in Ellis County, sign up for a 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, if you leave a message at (972) 825-5175.

### **Chinese Hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*)**

*Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist Texas A&M AgriLife Extension*

Chinese hibiscus offer an excellent source of summer color in the landscape, and are among our most popular tropical and subtropical flowering plants. Popularity in Texas appears to be increasing in recent years, although insects, diseases, and winter injury limit their use.

Even the southernmost extremes of Texas occasionally experience sufficient cold to kill this plant. With this in mind, *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* should be grown as an annual or container specimen in most of the state. In areas where winter does not cause damage, hibiscus is a perennial, and may be used as a more permanent landscape plant.

The glossy green foliage varies considerably in size and texture among the many varieties. Flowers range from 4 to 8 inches in diameter, and may be double or single.

Hibiscus belong to the mallow family and are closely related to cotton, hollyhock, Turks cap, the mallows, shrub althaea, Confederate rose, and okra. Colors vary from white through pink,

red, yellow, apricot, and orange. Generally, the single-flower hibiscus bloom more, and, therefore offer a bigger show in the landscape, but doubles are sometimes preferred for their spectacular individual flowers.

Hibiscus flowers are popular for decoration. They need not be placed in water to prevent wilting, which adds flexibility to their use.

An objection is that the flowers of most varieties last only one day, especially during hot weather. To keep flowers open until evening, pull blooms as soon as they are fully open in the morning, and keep in the refrigerator until just before using. If no leaves are pulled with the blossoms, picking does not damage the plant or reduce the total amount of flowering.

Hibiscus prefer a sunny location and well drained soil containing plenty of organic matter and nutrients. From April through September, small monthly applications of a complete fertilizer are beneficial.

Container-grown plants will require more frequent applications. To bloom and grow profusely, hibiscus must have sufficient water. As with most other plants, watering should be done thoroughly and not too frequently. Some protection

from strong winds is necessary, since the flowers are easily damaged.

It should be remembered that hibiscus are not cold hardy. If your area is subject to freezing temperatures, your Chinese hibiscus must either be treated as annuals and allowed to freeze or be protected during cold weather.

During mild winters, plants may freeze to the ground and then sprout from the base the following spring. Applying a loose mulch, such as pine straw or oak leaves, around the base of the plant before cold weather sometimes prevents severe winter injury.

Certain varieties are more susceptible to cold damage than others. If greenhouse space is available, plants may be dug, placed in containers, and replanted in the landscape after the danger of frost has passed.

In recent years, there has been an increase in use of hibiscus as container plants. Small plants may be purchased early in spring or summer, placed in large pots (at least 12 inches in diameter) and enjoyed until frost.







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