



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, 2014

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

IT'S BACK! 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!**
- ✱ **NEW! Look for the plant of the month on sale-see page 5.**
- ✱ **ANNUAL GRILL FEST THIS SATURDAY—AUGUST 2ND!**

Camps for Kids! Get your kids involved with nature by exploring the many opportunities available in our area. Check the websites for BRIT, Discovery Gardens, Dallas Arboretum, and Garden Inspirations to learn more.

Saturdays from now until October 25, 8am-1pm, Ennis Farmers Market. Local vendors featuring baked good and produce, activities for the family, and more. Information at <https://www.facebook.com/ennistxfarmersmarket>. Located at N. Dallas St. in Downtown Ennis.

August 1-31, 9am-5pm, The Dallas Arboretum presents August Dollar Days. \$1 on-site admission for the general garden and \$1 for the Children's Garden. Parking not included. For more info about events and visiting the arboretum, go to: www.dallasarboretum.org/

Friday, August 1 to Sunday, August 3, Brumley Gardens, Bishop Arts Location—Big Annual Summer Clearance Sale. Everything on sale from 50-75% off. 700 West Davis, Dallas, (214) 942-0794. For more info, visit <http://www.brumleygardens.com/home/>

Saturday, August 2, 8am-1pm, BRIT First Saturday-Science in the Real World. Enjoy tours, children's activities, and a farmers market! Events include: plant walks, free tours, Bella's Story Time for children and more! For complete details, visit <http://brit.org/prairieday>.

Monday, August 4, 7pm-9pm, Kaufman County Master Gardeners present "Topiary" with Master Gardener Nancy Bowman at their monthly meeting. Learn the ins and outs of topiary and how you can craft your own. The event is free and the public is welcome. Light refreshments will be served. Location: First Community Church, 103 S. Main St., Crandall. Visit <http://www.kcmga.org/> for info.

Saturday, August 16, 10am, John Bunker Sands Wetland Center Pond Trail Hike. This 1.8 mile trail is great for families and those interested in native plants and animals. Cost: \$5.00, includes admission. Visit <http://www.wetlandcenter.com/> for directions and a map. For info, call (972) 474-9100 or email contact@wetlandcenter.com.

Saturday, August 23, 9am-12pm, Dogwood Canyon—Fourth Saturday Workday. Located at 1206 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill. For info, contact Julie Collins at jcollins@audubon.org.

Indian Trail Master Naturalists

For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email ellis-tx@tamu.edu

Visit: <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/>

Saturday, August 9, 9am, Wildflower Walk. ITMN members lead a wildflower walk focused on the way butterflies and pollinators see our world. Kids will receive pollinator glasses

(Continued on page 3)

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

Planting

- ✧ Put out fall vegetables during the first of the month to produce a crop before the first fall freeze. The average date for the first fall freeze in 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, as some crops planted by seed may not yield a crop before the average fall freeze date. Many vegetables can be planted from seed such as winter squash and beans. Leafy (greens) 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/>.
- ✧ Sow seeds for bluebonnets and other wildflowers 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 the seed makes 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 as soon as they become available. Put them in the ground twice as deep as the diameter of the bulb. These bulbs may not bloom the first year.
- ✧ *Salvia greggii* (autumn sage) can be cut back at least by one-third to extend colorful flowers until late fall.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- ✧ Keep a spray can of pruning paint in your garage to immediately paint any wound on your oak trees. We no longer say there are windows of safety because of cold weather or hot weather. Central Texas weather is too unpredictable and changeable—paint every wound all year long.
- ✧ 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.
- ✧ Prune summer flowering shrubs. Do not flat top any blooming shrub; always leave the tops in a rounded, natural shape.
- ✧ 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*), *Salvia regla*, Mexican mint marigold, copper canyon daisies, mums, and aster before fall buds 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 them from peach tree borers.

BLACKFOOT DAISY

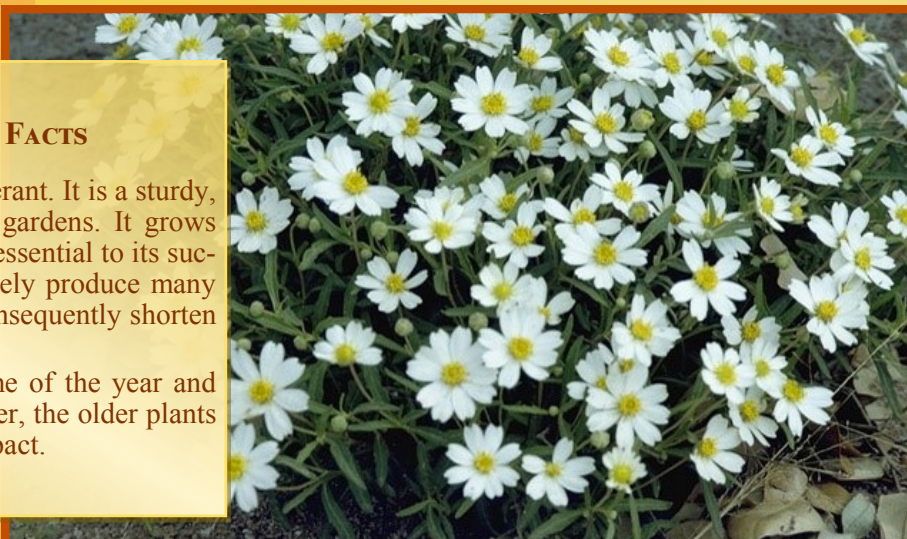
Blackfoot Daisy is the common name of *Melampodium leucanthem* and is also known as mountain daisy. It is commonly used as a bedding plant or perennial wildflower. It is native to the limestone soils of Arkansas, Colorado and Texas.

Low-growing plants form compact mounds and bloom white, daisy-like flowers with yellow centers from spring through fall. The Blackfoot daisy rarely needs irrigation and will not tolerate wet feet. It may rot during a rainy season. Heavy clay soils should be amended to allow good drainage and discourage fungal diseases.

FINAL TIPS AND LITTLE KNOWN FACTS

The Blackfoot daisy is heat and drought tolerant. It is a sturdy, mounding plant that will flourish in rock gardens. It grows well in sun to part shade. Good drainage is essential to its success. Rich soil and abundant water will likely produce many more flowers in the short-term, but may consequently shorten the lifespan.

Blackfoot daisies are easy to plant any time of the year and propagate from seed in the fall. In late winter, the older plants may be cut back halfway to keep them compact.



Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



White Pricklepoppy—Poppy Family (Papaveraceae)

Argemone squarrosa Greene

Region: 1 – 7 (Ellis County is Region 4)

Size: 3 - 4 feet

Blooms: April through October, Annual/Biennial

Pricklepoppy often colonizes several acres of abandoned fields or oversized land. Plants in this family, which include the opium poppy, are slightly poisonous. White pricklepoppy is easily recognized by its large, cup-shaped flowers with wrinkled petals. It is centered with a globe of numerous yellow or reddish stamens surrounding a purple stigma. Alternate leaves are stiff, stalkless, and bluish-green with conspicuous blue veins. They are deeply lobed and edged with spine-tipped

teeth. The plant has yellow or milky white sap.

Flowers and sap of related species vary in color. Flowers may be pale pink, white, lavender, or yellow and the sap can be red, orange, yellow, or milky white. Although avoided by livestock, pricklepoppy is very attractive to its insect pollinators. You can usually observe their feeding frenzy by taking a close look into the flower's center. Seeds of *Argemone* yield oil and are used for food. They can also be ground and applied to sores.

What's Happening (Continued from page 1)

so they can see the wildflowers as butterflies see them. There will be pollination activities along the walk. Free to the public. Bring drinking water. The walk will be canceled if raining. The park is located at 1361 Onward Road, at the corner of Mockingbird Lane and Onward Road in Midlothian. Info at: <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/> or email: Information@itmnc.com

Monday, August 25, 7pm. ITMN present “Native Plants...Ancient Solutions for Modern Problems”. Randy Johnson, Environmental/Organic Horticultural Consultant will discuss local native species and their vital roles in resource conservation. Water and air quality along with habitat diversity will be covered, as will design. The program is free and follows the 6 p.m. Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. Meeting location: First United Methodist Church, Family Life Center 505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie, TX. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email ellis-tx@tamu.edu

Cedar Ridge Preserve

7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas
www.audubondallas.org/cedarridge.html

Saturday, August 16, 8am–11am. Conservation in Action Workday. Work in the butterfly garden and on the trails. Water and snacks provided. For info, call Jim Varnum at (214) 543-2055 or email jvarnum@aol.com.

Monday, September 1, 8am–12pm. “Get back to Nature”. Labor Day Celebration with hayrides.

Texas Discovery Gardens

3601 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Dallas
TexasDiscoveryGardens.org

Saturday, August 2, 2pm–4pm. Canning Your Garden Veggies. Learn to can and preserve fruits and vegetables. Donelle and Marilyn Simmons with Garden Inspirations will demonstrate the equipment and procedures in canning and preserving food. \$25; \$20 for TDG Members. Register in advance.

Thursday, August 7, 11am. Stories and More! Title: *Grandpa's Garden* by Stella Fry & Sheila Moxley. Make crafts, read a book, meet special friends, and enjoy themed snacks! The programs end with the daily noon butterfly release and are geared for the under-five/stroller crowd. Adults pay regular admission. Advance: \$8/Child 3-11, \$6/Member; \$3/ Child 1-2, \$2/Member. At door: add \$2/child.

Saturday, August 9, 11am. Garden Explorers Walk: Five Senses Garden Tour. Take a garden tour with a garden docent and search for plants that stimulate all of the senses. The tour ends in time to catch the Butterfly Release talk at noon. Included with admission (\$8/ adults, \$6 for ages 60+, \$4 for ages 3-11).

Saturday, August 9, 2:30pm–4:30pm. Garden to Table: Organic Food 101. Learn the value of eating fresh-from-the-garden vegetables. Discover recipes to use with the vegetables that grow best in Texas. Workshop presenters Marilyn and Donelle Simmons are garden educators and own Garden Inspirations. \$25; \$20 for TDG Members. Register in advance.

Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



Herb of the Month – Basil

Basil, (*Ocimum basilicum*), this wonderful herb of summer in its many varieties (there are more than 200 and counting) is loved by the gardener and the cook. Basil loves Texas heat, full sun, and is a happy companion plant with tomatoes, both in the garden and in the kitchen.

Native to Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and tropical South America, basil arrived in Europe about 2,000 years ago, and was found in the Massachusetts Bay Colony by 1621.

Basil is one of the easiest herbs to grow and summer foods require the use of fresh leaves from your garden. Basil does well with hot-weather vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants. Rapid growth occurs during periods when night temperatures are above 60 degrees so planting should begin in May and June.

Like most herbs, basil is adaptable. Although it likes full sun, it will subsist on as little as four hours of direct sunlight. The plant will grow best in well-drained, loamy soil that is rich in nutrients. Regular and deep watering as well as good air circulation are necessary.

Basil plants are desperate to reproduce. Their flowers come quickly. The cook's objective is the harvesting of leaves, therefore frequent pruning is necessary. To regenerate green growth basil stems must be cut deeply.



CINNAMON

When harvesting remove enough of the stem to leave only four to six leaves. Scissors or a sharp knife work best. Pruned in this manner, within three or four weeks the plant will have two to four new branches ready for harvesting.

Basil, like tomatoes should not be refrigerated. To store, simply place freshly cut stems in a glass of water and set in the kitchen window. The basil will keep for several days if you change the



DARK OPAL

water daily. Use the leaves from the bottom up so that the leaves are not submerged in water.

Following are a few of the many varieties every adventure-some cook should have in the garden.

✎ 'Sweet Basil' is the most common of the plant and generally called for in pesto, tomato dishes, and sauces. It has large green leaves with a flavor of mint, spice, citrus, and anise.

✎ 'Cinnamon' was introduced to Texas and the rest of the USA by Texas herbalist Madalene Hill. The plant originated in Mexico, and has a clean cinnamon aroma with a sweet

grass and mint trace. It can be used in salad dressing, vinegars and fruit salads.

✎ 'Dark Opal, Purple Ruffles, and Red Rubin' are purple leafed varieties, adding color to the garden and table. Flavor and aroma vary but the color adds a wonderful blush to herbal vinegars.

✎ 'True Thai' grows wild in Thailand and has a radiant purple, cone-headed flower cluster and makes a beautiful ornamental plant. Its leaves are used to flavor Asian dishes.

✎ 'Spicy Globe' is a compact plant with a small round shape, suitable for use as a fragrant border or as a container plant in a patio garden.

Here is a basil pasta salad that is perfect for summer as it travels well and is best served at room temperature.

Pasta with Basil, Tomatoes, and Mozzarella

- 4 large, very ripe tomatoes, cubed
- 1 pound Mozzarella, Brie, or other soft, mild cheese, cut into small pieces
- 1 cup washed and dried basil leaves, torn into small pieces
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 cup good quality



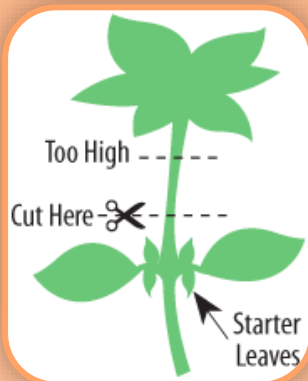
TRUE THAI

extra virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

Combine all in a large bowl, cover and let rest for two hours or more.

Cook 1½ pounds linguine or suitable pasta in six quarts boiling salted water until tender, but chewy. Drain and toss with tomato-cheese mixture. Sprinkle with some parmesan cheese just before serving.

Serves six as a main dish or eight to ten as a side.



2014 Fourth of July Parade Float



WIMBISH TREE FARM
Providing the Highest Quality Products

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING LOCAL NURSERIES
FOR DONATING THE PLANT MATERIAL TO DECORATE
OUR 2014 PARADE FLOAT.
WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU!



Farmers Market Plant of the Month

There will not be one specific Plant of the Month for August. Instead, Master Gardeners will be featuring plants from their own gardens. Each weekend in August, some of the Master Gardeners will bring potted plants that grow in their gardens. We will be snipping and digging out of our gardens to bring you plants we have tried and tested. We will discuss how the plant grows in our garden and how to make them succeed in yours.



Stop by our booth at the Farmers Market.
We love to talk plants and hear your gardening stories.

Ornamental Grasses in Ellis County Landscapes

With Micki Rourke
Ellis County Master Gardener



Don't we all want a year-round, beautiful, low-maintenance landscape to enjoy around our home? Well, probably most of us want that. So, first we have to consider the environment in which we live. In Ellis County, we live in the ecoregion described as **Blackland Prairie**. Our rainfall is between 30-40 inches per year and annual temperatures can occur between about five degrees to over 100 degrees. This information puts us in **Hardiness Zone 7B-8A**.



Carex 'texensis'

erant, and not very tasty to wildlife. How much more valuable could a plant be?

Grasses perform best in either the cool season or warm season of the year. Consider your personal needs and preferences when choosing an ornamental grass for your own landscape. Below are the more popular and easier to locate perennial grasses offered in our part of Texas. Most can also be ordered from gardening websites on the internet.

Small grasses, under two feet tall:

Carex sedge—the 'texensis' variety is a native that stands five inches tall, has evergreen foliage, and prefers partial shade. It can spread from 12-30 inches and grows in a clump.

Sweetflag (*Acorus gramineus*) is an evergreen plant that can be used as a filler in containers or spread as a groundcover when planted in mass. It prefers partial shade in Texas.

Mondo grass (*Ophiopogon japonicus*) and Liriope (*Liriope muscari*) look very similar, but only Liriope blooms. Mondo grass is also smaller, only two to six inches tall. Liriope grows 18-24 inches tall. Both are used as beautiful borders and groundcovers. Both prefer afternoon shade.

Medium grasses, two to three feet tall:

Hameln grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln') is a wonderful grass for our area. It displays golden, caterpillar-like blooms throughout the growing season. The windier, the showier for this grass! It grows two to three feet tall and loves the sun.

Inland Sea Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) is a native Texas

grass. It is clump-forming and has leaves that resemble bamboo foliage. It produces flat, tan, chevron-shaped seed

heads that droop and move with the wind. It also needs shade and can spread easily in difficult areas.

Gulf Muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) is one of the showiest native grasses in fall. It produces fabulous clouds of airy pink or mauve plumes that turn tan and persist during the winter. It grows two to three feet tall and needs to be planted in full sun.



Gulf Muhly

As a prairie, our area used to be primarily covered with many types of grasses, a true tall-grass prairie. Thus, grasses grow and survive extremely well in Ellis County. In this article, turf grass will not be discussed because it is such a water hog and needs constant attention. Ornamental grasses, both native and adapted will be the focus.

It is hard to imagine designing any landscape in our part of Texas without using ornamental grasses in the plan. They provide texture and form, movement and sound, and an array of colorful inflorescences ("flowers") that can last from eight to ten weeks.

Grasses are also drought tolerant, not fussy about soil conditions, disease tol-

Mexican Feather grass (*Nasella tenuissima*) is a native that undulates in the breeze like slow motion waves! It is beautiful and very soft to the touch. A green grass during the cool weather of spring, then turns golden as straw when it goes dormant in the middle of summer. It stands two to three feet tall and needs full sun.

Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) is a beautiful native grass that grows two to four feet tall. It was one of the most abundant grasses growing on the Blackland Prairie. It's color ranges from a cool blue-green in summer to copper-colored from October to March. It is a true clumping grass and clearly recognizable along Texas roads.

Large grasses (over three feet tall)

Karl Foerster feather reed grass (*Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster') is a tall, slender, cool-season grass, usually four to six feet tall when in bloom. It blooms very early in the spring and stays in bloom until winter. Karl Foer-

(Continued on page 7)

Ornamental Grasses (Continued from page 6)

ster is easy to grow in full sun.

Lindheimer's Muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia lindheimeri*) is one of the very best grasses grown in North Central Texas landscapes. This elegant giant, native grass is blue-green in color and can grow five feet tall and five feet wide. It prefers full sun and blooms from May through November.

Lowland Switch grass (*Panicum virgatum*) is a Texas native that turns a cinnamon color in the winter. It may reach eight feet tall, but waves magnificently in the wind. As most grasses, it needs full sun.

Maiden grass (*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Adagio') is an adapted grass that grows

three to four feet tall in full sun. It's long green leaves have a light colored stripe down the center that makes this grass appear silver in color. It is also

very showy with its inflorescences that appear as waving flags.

Ornamental grasses do appear dramatic when used in landscapes. So, consider looking around for any of these show-stoppers when you are out shopping for your favorite perennials.



Save The Date!
Saturday, March 28, 2015



TOMATO REMINDER!

Your determinate tomatoes are probably spent, and now is the time to replant.

Your indeterminates are probably slowing down, so...as difficult as it is, it is time to prune them back to about half their size. Fertilize, mulch, and keep them watered. Don't give up—you will be rewarded with a second healthy tomato crop.

Texas Water Facts

Water is a big topic these days and we have to be creative about getting new sources. We aren't making any more, we aren't getting rain, and some of the water out there is not suitable for drinking. That water is called brackish water and it has too much salt content for regular treatment systems. To make this water drinkable, it must go through desalination.

Desalination is the process of removing the salt from brackish water or seawater, which turns the water into fresh drinking water. Texas currently has an estimated total municipal desalination capacity of about 123 million gallons per day, which includes 73 million gallons per day of brackish *groundwater* desalination and 50 million gallons per day of brackish *surface* water desalination.

Look for TX Water Facts monthly from Susan Gilliland, Ellis County Master Gardener and help conserve water!

For more information, visit <http://www.twdb.state.tx.us> or <http://www.twdb.state.tx.us>

Pumpkin Adventures for Gardeners and Children Alike

By: Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener



Well...I've almost done it again! Letting the time slip by and not planting my pumpkin seeds in time to have pumpkins for Halloween. I buy my pumpkin for cooking from Libby's®, but I do enjoy growing the small ornamental pumpkins to give to my teachers in the family. They like to take them to school to give to their students and of course they are cute for decorating, place cards, etc.



But there's still time to grow the moderate size pumpkin varieties in our region of Texas. Early August is the best time to plant.

For any gardener with a little space to spare, growing pumpkins can be an enjoyable project to try, especially for children. They enjoy growing pumpkins because the seeds are large and easy to handle, germinate quickly, and make large, noticeable plants with fruit suitable for holiday decorations.

Pumpkins make good filler for empty areas of the garden after spring crops have been harvested. They may also be used to quickly provide a cover of thick green leaves over a fence or arbor, if the stems are tied in place and support is provided for the fruit.

It is also a great temptation to place the hill in the middle of the compost pile, once it has reached capacity with winter leaves and spring grass clippings and the composting process has begun to slow



down. In my yard the pumpkins will be planted atop a hill of ground native tree clippings several years old. Living in the woods, I'm always removing trees that have uprooted in the wind or are threatening the house.

Mini-pumpkins are not just very small varieties of ordinary pumpkins, but were bred from small-sized Asiatic forms. The earliest kinds were more like gourds, resembling pumpkins in shape, but they had no true "meat" and were dried with a thin, hard shell.

Further breeding programs resulted in the creation of edible small types such as 'Jack-be-Little' and 'Munchkin' which are popular baked whole. Small ornamentals which combine well with Indian corn for fall decorations

are the varieties 'Baby Boo', 'Munchkin', or 'Lumina'. These will be able to mature in a much shorter time span; it is important to remember that, as fall days become cooler, vegetables will take longer to mature.

Ordinary pie pumpkins, which are grown in the United States usually weigh between ten and twenty pounds and are orange in color. The most common of these is 'Connecticut Field'. But pumpkins may be white, grey, tan, or yellow. The color of 'Rouge d' Etamps' (pictured below left), a flattened, ribbed antique French strain that was the model for illustrations of Cinderella's carriage, is almost red.

Dr. Frank Dainello, Extension Horticulturist, Texas A&M University, recommends 'Small Sugar', 'Triple Treat', and 'Spookie' in the Small (six to ten pound category), and 'Jack O'Lantern', 'Autumn Gold', and 'Funny Face' in the Medium (10-16 pound category). For the Large category (16-30 pounds), he lists 'Howden', 'Happy Jack', and 'Ghost Rider', and for the Mammoth (50-200 pounds and up), 'Atlantic Giant', 'Big Max', and 'Big Mac'.



A hill will need at least 10 x 10 square feet of ground, in full sun. A soil pH range between six and seven is best. Sow pumpkin seed one to two inches deep, and plant more than will be needed. The extras may be thinned down to two or three vigorous ones per hill when the plants begin to become established.

When the weather is warm they will germinate in six to eight days. In the spring, pumpkins may be planted from one to four weeks after the last expected frost date. Smaller types destined to be fall decorations may be planted up to twelve or fourteen weeks

before the last killing frost.

Pumpkins will be ripe when the skin is hard and the stem dried. Plenty of leaf cover will ensure that pumpkins do not get sunscald as they ripen. Many growers place a board or shingle under the growing fruit to discourage rotting and insects. Store cut pumpkins in a dry area out of the sun to continue curing.

Pumpkins will fall victim to all the diseases that affect squash plants. Keep careful watch for insects and disease problems, and treat them in a timely and appropriate manner. Remove and destroy leaves that become infected with mildew before trouble spreads throughout the hill.

Let the kiddos have some fun. Let them carefully etch their names on the pumpkins while they are small. It will be theirs alone and they can watch their name grow.

If you fail to produce pumpkins but produce lots of foliage, then go to the grocery store and purchase pumpkins. Place them in your pumpkin patch and the children will never know. It's magic...like the tooth fairy.

August Gardening Tips

With Susan Norvell

Ellis County Master Gardener



Well, it's August in Texas and we all know what that means—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, drink plenty of water, and stay hydrated. You need the water just as much and probably more than your plants!

Please remember to be water-wise. We are still significantly behind in rainfall for the year. Our lawns and landscape plants need the equivalent of one inch of water per week. Make sure your beds are thoroughly mulched to conserve moisture and prevent weeds.

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. You can also sow kale, butterhead lettuce, and spinach and turnip seeds in late August. Remember to keep the seedbeds moist until your new plants germinate.



It's time to set out broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and cauliflower transplants. If possible, position new plants in the shade of existing plants, to protect them from the late afternoon sun. Come on by the farmers market each and every Saturday morning and stock up on locally grown produce. Help support local growers who consume less energy getting their products to market, as they don't have to be shipped cross country.

Refer to the "Homeowner's Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule" for the timing of spray applications to control pecan weevils and hickory shuck worms on pecan trees and

peach tree borers on peach and plum trees. It is available at the Agri-Life Extension Office or online at <https://insects.tamu.edu/extension/bulletins/b-5041.html>.

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.

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.

Prune 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.

Now is the time to sow seeds in flats of plants that may be hard to find later in the fall such as calendulas. 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 ½ inch deep. The soil should be free from

weeds and grass and the surface should be acid treated to facilitate germination. You can 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.



Plant fall flowering bulbs such as spider lilies, naked ladies (pictured left), rain lilies, fall crocus, and oxblood lilies. Put them in the ground at a depth that is

twice as deep as their diameter. And remember, these bulbs may not bloom the first year they are planted.

Many insects are prevalent at this time of year. Identify the insect first and use pesticide 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 (pictured below), butterfly bush, flame acanthus, ornamental grasses and many others.

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.

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.

Call the Master Gardener Office for recommendations of proper pest control or any other gardening questions at (972) 825-5175. Or visit us on the web at www.ecmga.com.



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

Pesticide Questions? Find Answers!

by Dr. Douglas F. Welsh, Extension Horticulturist, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX

Questions about pesticides and the use of insect repellents to thwart mosquitoes carrying such diseases as West Nile Virus, may be answered by checking with the National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC).

The organization, which is housed in the Department of Environmental and Molecular Toxicology at Oregon State University, has free informational brochures, which may be ordered by calling (800) 858-7378. Included material covers many topics such as:

-  will chemicals in treated wood contaminate a vegetable garden?
-  how long will it take a pesticide to break down in the soil?
-  should I apply both DEET and sunscreen to children simultaneously?
-  where can I learn more about West Nile Virus-carrying mosquitoes?

One of the most user-friendly features of the NPIC is the toll-free telephone number which may be utilized to discuss pesticide concerns with "live personnel" from 10am to 2pm, Monday through Friday, except for holidays.

NPIC provides pesticide information to the general public, health care providers, physicians, veterinarians, local, state and federal agencies, and school districts.



August Farmers Market Events

August 2nd is the annual Master Gardeners Grill Fest! The farmers donate locally grown vegetables and fruits. Then our County Extension

Agent and his crew grill them up and Master Gardeners pass them out to all who are shopping the market. You're invited to come by to sample some of the yummiest tasting fruits and veggies.

August 9th is the second Saturday of the month and that means it's Kids Day. Members of the Master Wellness group will be on hand to talk about healthy snacks for back-to-school as well as lunch box safety. Plus there will be an activity for the kids so be sure to stop by...it will be located next to the Master Gardener booth.

August 16th the theme is Honey & Bees. A couple local Master Gardeners will be on hand to talk about bees and harvesting honey. They'll also have a locally made bee box. So be sure to stop by and bring your questions.

August 23rd is Rain Barrel & Soap Suds. The Master Gardeners will demonstrate how to make a rain barrel and talk about rainwater catchment. Come by the booth and learn how easy it is to capture rain for your garden.

August 30th is Baked Goods & Butters. Come on down to the market and sample some yummy baked goods made locally along with some flavored butters. Learn how easy it is to boost the flavor of both sweet and savory dishes. Also there will be a demonstration on grinding grains into flour. Be sure to come by...the demo will be next to the Master Gardeners booth.



BEAT THE SUMMER HEAT

HANGING BASKETS

With the summer's heat, this is the time of year hanging baskets and container planters may be looking a little droopy. It's a good time to spiff them up so they'll provide another burst of color. Obviously you want to take out anything that didn't make it. Deadhead any spent blooms.

You can also trim up to 1/2 of the plants. This gives them a bit of a rest then they are ready to burst into color again. By now the soil may be somewhat compact so a couple handfuls of new soil is a good pick me up as is a slow release fertilizer. Remember they dry out fast so daily watering is most often needed.

In the Vegetable Garden
With Susan Knapp
Ellis County Master Gardener



When I think of growing okra, I think of my Dad's vegetable garden years ago. If it didn't get moisture from above, it did without. Because of that, by the time the dog days of summer came around, everything was scorched except the okra. I remember picking a lot of okra on hot afternoons and then enjoying Mama's golden fried okra later in the day. Okra was the humble workhorse in the garden.

A few years ago, I attended a garden party in an exclusive area of Dallas. There in the middle of immaculate flower beds were stately stalks of okra with their beautiful yellow and white Hibiscus-like flowers complimenting the other perennials and roses. I gained a new appreciation for okra and my flower gardens have rarely been without it since that time.

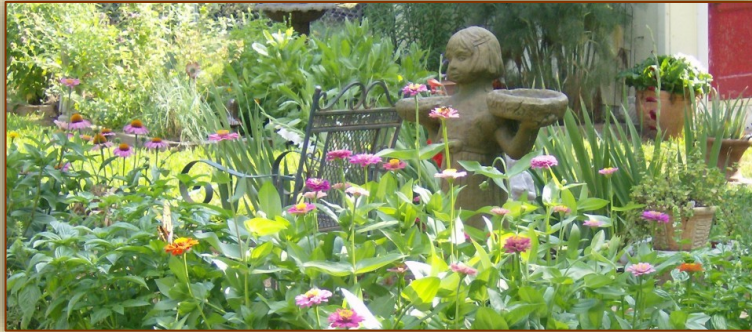
We live in the right place to cultivate okra! It's very easy to grow, tastes good, is rich in Vitamin A, and even compliments the ornamental garden. If planted by the first week of August, you might even get a good fall crop. It's important to keep in mind that it takes at least 60 days for okra to mature and it loves the hot weather.

Okra is a member of the mallow family, botanical name *Abelmoschus esculentus*. As a relative of the Hibiscus, okra has a beautiful soft yellow or white bloom that will produce an okra pod in about four days after blooming. Be sure to harvest okra as soon as it is two to three inches long, while it is still tender, otherwise it will become too tough to use.

PLANTING

Like all vegetables, okra needs to be planted in fertile soil that has been amended with

compost. Okra is not as particular as some of the other vegetables that require heavy feeding, but it will do much better and produce better in fertile soil. A side dressing of 10-10-10 fertilizer, compost, or manure is



suggested when planting. I always plant okra by direct seeding rather than buy plants at the nursery. It's much more cost effective and okra has a tap root that must remain intact when planting. If damaged the plant will not survive. When planting okra in the spring be sure the soil has warmed to a temperature of at least 65, but preferably 75 degrees. Okra loves the heat. Thin the plants and leave one to two feet between plants; with three to four feet between rows.

CARE

Okra is easy to care for. Eliminate weeds when plants are young and mulch well. In spite of what my Dad did, okra needs an inch of water every seven to ten days. After the first harvest, pull the lower leaves from the plant and that will improve production.

HARVEST

Finally, about 60 days after planting you will be harvesting your first okra. Wear gloves and long sleeves when cutting the okra because most varieties are covered with tiny spines that will irritate the skin. I even have a problem with the Clemson Spineless variety. Use a sharp knife and cut the okra just above the cap when har-

vesting. If the okra is difficult to cut, it's probably too old.

There are many wonderful ways to prepare okra—fried, pickled, stewed, or in gumbos, just to name a few. Okra will keep in the refrigerator for three to five days after harvesting. It can be frozen whole, uncooked and uncut in freezer bags and prepared any way you prefer later.

PROBLEMS

Okra is fairly problem free, but watch for aphids and stinkbugs. It is also slightly susceptible to fusarium wilt, a common plant fungal disease.

VARIETIES

Some common varieties grown in our area are Clemson Spineless, Emerald, or Louisiana Green Velvet.



IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- ❖ Cut okra early when pods are two to three inches long, before it gets tough
- ❖ Protect hands and arms with gloves when harvesting
- ❖ Okra seed is easily saved for the next season by leaving some of the last pods on the plant until they get very large. Remove them and allow them to dry. The seeds will shell easily from the pods.
- ❖ At the end of the season, plant material such as leaves and stems can be put in a compost pile.



Thank You All!!

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Ellis County Master Gardeners' Lawn & Garden Expo
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