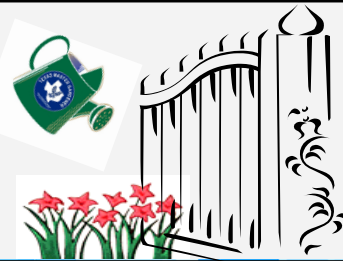




# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VIII, Issue 12

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

December, 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](http://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

## 10<sup>th</sup> Annual 2016 Master Gardener Calendar

The Ellis County Master Gardeners are proud to present our 10<sup>th</sup> annual gardening calendar. The goal this year is to provide you with information about Native Wildflowers in and around Ellis County.

We are especially proud that this year marks our 10<sup>th</sup> year to be producing this beautiful and informative calendar. As always, the calendar will include month-by-month gardening information, soil preparation and fertilizing timelines.

Your FREE copy is at one of our many calendar sponsors. Please thank them for sponsoring this year's gardening calendar! Without their sponsorship, there would be no calendar.



### 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



### Ennis

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### Waxahachie cont.

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Waxahachie Civic Center  
Waxahachie Daily Light

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### Spinach and Strawberry Salad By Susan Norvell

1 (7-oz.) pkg. baby spinach  
2 c. sliced strawberries  
½ c. crumbled feta cheese  
¼ c. pine nuts  
½ c. Craisins or dried cranberries  
1 T. balsamic vinegar  
3 T. extra virgin olive oil  
1 T. fresh basil leaves, chopped  
(or 1 tsp. dried, crushed)  
Salt and black pepper

Whisk vinegar and olive oil in small bowl; add basil and season with salt and pepper. Combine remaining ingredients in a large bowl and toss with the dressing. Mix to coat evenly with dressing. Serves four.

**Rosemary**—Tender Perennial: Prostrate or creeping to large upright evergreen shrub, rosemary's pungent pine flavor is especially good with foods high in fat such as lamb and pork. Add to rice and potatoes, also good in breads and stuffing.

Rosemary thrives in the Texas heat. Plant in full sun and give it plenty of room as it will become a very large evergreen bush. Rosemary is being used more and more in the home landscape as a hedge.

There is also a prostrate or creeping variety that will trail down over a wall or garden edge. Both have pretty blue to pink and white flowers beginning in late summer through winter.



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

### Planting

- \* Plant pre-chilled tulip and hyacinth bulbs promptly after removing them from the refrigerator. Plant berry-producing trees and shrubs to attract birds to your landscape and for winter color. Some good choices are possumhaw holly, yaupon holly, Carolina buckthorn, rusty blackhaw viburnum and American beautyberry. Select plants from the nursery with the berries on them to know what you are buying.
- \* Plant fruit and pecan trees.

### Fertilizing and Pruning

- \* Do not top crape myrtles or remove the central leader of any shade tree.
- \* Apply a root stimulator such as liquid seaweed or a mild solution of water-soluble fertilizer to newly planted trees and shrubs.
- \* Apply two to three inches of mulch around perennial flowers and newly planted trees, shrubs and vines. It protects against winter freeze damage, conserves moisture and moderates soil temperatures.
- \* Keep a spray can of pruning paint handy to immediately paint any wound on your oak trees. To help prevent oak wilt 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.

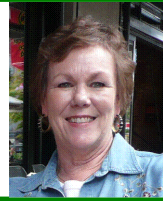
### Garden Watch

- \* Protect tender vegetation from the cold with a lightweight freeze cloth available at most nurseries and garden centers.
- \* Continue to water lawns and newly planted trees, shrubs and perennials if rainfall is insufficient.
- \* Turn and keep feeding the compost pile with leaves, other yard clippings and raw kitchen scraps through the winter. Water if needed.



## Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



**White Aster *A. ericoides*, Aster spp.  
Sunflower Family (Asteraceae)**

Range: 1-5, 7 (Ellis County is range 4)

Size: 1-4 feet

Blooms: August through December, perennial

Identifying wild asters by species may be baffling to the amateur naturalist, and it often challenges the professional. One authority states that Texas has forty-five species. There are at least six wild blue asters, ranging from blue-white, blue, violet and lavender to purple.

The many-petaled flowers range in size from a half-inch to two inches. Center disks are yellow. Flowers on the upper stems are profuse. Most asters are fall-blooming and an important source of late-season nectar for butterflies. A tea made from cured roots of the plant was used by Indians to stop diarrhea. Asters can be seen along edges of woods, on prairies and along fence rows, where they grow in clay, sand, or gravelly soils.

## HOW LOVELY ARE YOUR BRANCHES Caring for a live Christmas Tree

A few simple care tips will keep your Christmas tree fresh and fragrant throughout the holiday season. For the freshest tree possible, consider going to a tree farm to pick and cut your own "Texas Grown." If buying a precut tree, buy early for the best selection and to ensure it receives proper care.

Before leaving home, measure the height and width of the spot where the tree will be placed. When selecting a cut tree, look for one with a healthy deep green color. Check for needles that are flexible, not brittle. Bump the trunk on the ground. It's normal for some needles to fall but if they're still dropping heavily after two or three bumps, the tree is too dry. Needles should spring back when bent.

When you bring the tree home, cut one or two inches off the base of the trunk. Stand the tree in a pail of water until you're ready to decorate. Place the tree in a stand that holds at least one quart of water; one gallon stands are even better. Remember, trees are very thirsty, especially within the first two weeks of being cut. Check the stand daily and add water as needed. Avoid letting the tree go completely dry.

Choose varieties known for great needle retention and fragrance such as Balsam, Concolor, Douglas and Fraser fir. Fraser fir is my favorite because the bristles are soft, which makes it easier to put on ornaments. Scotch and White Pine are options also, as they hold their needles longer. Norway and White Spruce are not the best options and should be avoided.

Decorate with small lights, which give off little heat. Also, be sure to keep the tree a safe distance from any flame or heat sources such as fireplaces or portable heaters. This not only protects the tree from drying out, but also lessens the possibility of a house fire. The most important thing is to keep your family safe during the holidays, so don't take any chances.

After the holidays, recycle your tree by placing it outdoors in the yard for wintering birds to enjoy. It can, also, be submerged in a pond or lake to create a fish habitat. Branches can be chipped for use as mulch in the garden, but be sure to add extra nitrogen to the soil. Some cities will pick up live trees and recycle them for you. Check with your local government.

With a little planning and light maintenance, you can stretch out the life and beauty of your Christmas tree, enjoying it all the way to New Year's if you like! You spend so much time and effort decorating, so you might as well enjoy the season for as long as you can. Following these simple steps can enable you to do that, while keeping your loved ones safe and snug in their beds.

*Compiled by Susan Clark, with excerpts from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. <http://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu/2014/07/16/christmas-trees-2/>*





## Mistletoe—The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

By Arlene Hamilton

Ellis County Master Gardener



Mistletoe is the common name for hemi-parasitic plants (providing some photosynthesis) that invade a host

tree or shrub, attach to and within the branches and feed off its nutrients. European mistletoe (*Viscum album*) was believed to cure many illnesses, encourage fertility, banish evil spirits, promote peace and serve as an antidote to poisons. North American Eastern mistletoe (*Phoradendron spp.*) has been used by herbalists to treat cholera, hysteria, heart problems and nervous conditions.

The plants and berries are poisonous and can cause acute gastrointestinal problems in both people and pets. Death may occur within twelve hours. Cattle usually avoid the plant, but have died from browsing on the foliage. However, both European mistletoe and the North American species are commercially harvested for Christmas decorations.

Mistletoe plants grow on a wide range of host trees and commonly reduce their growth, but a heavy infestation can kill the tree. In Texas, our native pecan, hackberry, mesquite, ash, oak and cottonwood are common hosts.

Birds and a broad array of animals depend on mistletoe for food, consuming the leaves and young shoots, transferring pollen between plants and dispersing the seeds. The seeds are coated with a sticky material called viscin which hardens and attaches the seed firmly to its future host. Part of the mystique of mistletoe is that the berries ripen in late autumn and thrive through the winter.

Mistletoe frequently becomes so abundant in trees that control measures become necessary. For temporary removal of mistletoe, the parasite can merely be broken off. In due time, however, it will grow back. More lasting control can be obtained by removing the limbs on which the parasite is grow-

ing. No chemical is presently available to successfully control mistletoe without doing excessive harm to the host plant.

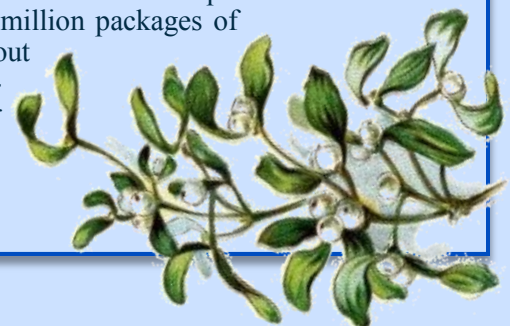
Mistletoe is frequently included in dye books and is said to provide a brown color when chrome or copper is used as a mordant. American Indians used mistletoe to treat toothaches, measles and dog bites. A galactoside-specific lectin found in mistletoe, has been used by German researchers in controlled medical experiments with cancer patients who were undergoing other conventional treatments, such as chemotherapy. These studies suggest that the lectin when used as a complementary treatment can improve the quality of life.

In ancient mythology, the sun god Balder was killed by a dart made of mistletoe. The Druids believed the plant was neither an herb nor a tree, but grew in midair suspended over the sacred oak, thus a gift from the gods. Mistletoe was given into the keeping of the goddess of love, and it was ordained that all who came under it should exchange a kiss of peace and reconciliation.

By Victorian times, the tradition had evolved into the ritual of the Christmas kiss. The custom is described in 1820 by author Washington Irving in his, "The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon".

Mistletoe is the state floral emblem for the state of Oklahoma. The state did not have an official flower, leaving mistletoe as the assumed state flower until the Oklahoma Rose was designated as such in 2004.

Goldthwaith, in the Texas hill country, is considered "the mistletoe capital of the world" because more than a million packages of mistletoe are sent out each Christmas season to cities all over North America.



## Have you ever considered becoming a Master Gardener?

Ellis County Master Gardeners will hold training classes from 8:30am until 4:30pm each Tuesday and Thursday throughout the month of February 2016. If you are interested in the Master Gardener Program and would like an application, please contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office in Ellis County at (972) 825-5175, e-mail [Ellis-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:Ellis-tx@tamu.edu) or find the application on the Master Gardener website, [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com). **Applications will be mailed upon request and must be returned no later than December 18, 2015**, at which time you will be called to set up an interview.

Check the Ellis County Master Gardeners website at [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com) 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 telephone call or email if you leave a message at (972) 825-5175.

### What is a Master Gardener?

The Texas Master Gardener program is an educational volunteer program conducted by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service of the Texas A&M University System. Master Gardeners are members of the local community who take an active interest in their lawns, trees, shrubs, flower and vegetable gardens. They are enthusiastic, willing to learn and help others, and able to communicate with diverse groups of people. What really sets Master Gardeners apart from other home gardeners is their special training in horticulture. In exchange for their training, persons who become Master Gardeners contribute time as volunteers, working through their county's Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office to provide horticultural-related information to their communities.

### Is the Master Gardener program for me?

To help you decide if you should apply to be a Master Gardener, ask yourself these questions:

- ☒ Do I want to learn more about the culture and maintenance of many types of plants?
- ☒ Am I eager to participate in a practical and intense training program?
- ☒ Do I enjoy sharing your knowledge with people?
- ☒ Do I have enough time to attend training and complete volunteer service hour requirements?
- ☒ Do I have special interests that could benefit the community or an interest in developing one? (e.g., bird or butterfly knowledge, native gardens, wildflowers, etc.)
- ☒ Do I have a sincere interest in nature or gardening?

### Training

If accepted into the Master Gardener Program, you will attend a training course which offers a minimum of 56 hours of instruction that covers topics including: lawn care, ornamental trees and shrubs, insects, disease and weed management, soil and plant nutrition, vegetable gardening, home fruit production, garden flowers and herbs, plant propagation, and water conservation. These courses are taught by specialists in their specific areas. The cost for the course is \$225 which covers the cost of speakers, study materials and lunch each day.

### Volunteer Commitment

In exchange for the training, participants are asked to volunteer at least 75 hours of service by November 30<sup>th</sup> to earn the title of "Texas Master Gardener". The volunteer time will take place during the normal work week with the exception of the Annual Lawn & Garden Expo, which is held on a Saturday in the spring.

The type of service done by Master Gardeners varies according to community needs and the abilities and interests of the Master Gardener. Some Master Gardeners answer telephone requests for information related to gardening. Others staff plant clinics or displays in shopping malls, farmers markets or community centers. Master Gardeners may speak to local groups and conduct workshops. They may help establish school and community garden projects, work with 4-H youth or assist their agent with news or radio releases related to gardening. The Master Gardener Coordinator in the county Extension office decides how volunteer time can best be used.

### Certification

Participants become certified Master Gardeners after they have completed the training course and fulfilled their volunteer commitment.

**Note:** Master Gardeners are representatives of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. In all volunteer work related to the program, Master Gardeners follow the research-based recommendations of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. The title "Texas Master Gardener" can be used by volunteers only when engaged in Extension-sponsored activities.

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



## Winterizing Your Lawn: Help for a Summer-Stressed Lawn

By: Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener



Following our long, hot, dry summer, homeowners are asking what they can do to ensure their lawns will survive the cold weather ahead. Predictions are we are in for a colder and wetter winter than normal. How well you manage your lawn in late fall and early winter will have a tremendous influence on its survival. It will be especially true this year as we went without rain for roughly two months and many lawns are under stress and need all the help they can get.

Four basic management practices for lawn care will help you through until spring.

To rake or not to rake. Most trees begin losing their leaves after the first frost, which normally occurs mid-to-late November. A light blanket of leaves on the lawn can actually be beneficial to help protect the turfgrass from extreme cold. A thick layer of leaves can create problems by reducing oxygen availability to the plants. While turfgrasses may be dormant, they're still live plant tissues and require oxygen.



There are areas where the wind can blow leaves causing them to pile up and form a thick layer. These piles need to be removed with a rake. Or, forget the manual labor of raking and try mowing fallen leaves. Use a mulching mower and you can let leaf pieces lie. Or, attach the grass catcher to collect chopped leaves for the compost pile or mulching planting beds. Leaves mow best when they're dry. You can also rake leaves out from around shrubs onto the lawn so they're accessible for mowing.

Another concern with allowing tree leaves to remain on turfgrass is how this affects the application of pre-emergent herbicide for winter weed control. You should have made your first application of a pre-emergent herbicide in September. However, some homeowners and lawn care service companies make a second application in late November and December. If a blanket of leaves is on the lawn, it will be difficult to properly water the herbicide into the soil to control emerging weeds.

Watering is a must. Proper irrigation is one of the most important cultural practices at this time of year (Although Mother Nature may provide sufficient water this winter.) The number one reason for losing turfgrass in Texas is desiccation, not low temperature kill.



Desiccation is death from drying. Again, while your turfgrass plants may be dormant (brown), they're still alive and require moisture to survive. Water is a good insulator against temperature change in the soil.

If a freeze occurs, the temperature of a dry soil will drop more than the temperature of a moist soil. The root systems of your turfgrass plants are the most sensitive parts to low temperatures. Generally, you should give your landscape one inch of water every 30 days if it's not getting adequate rainfall.

Cool-season grasses need nutrition. If you have tall fescue or have overseeded with perennial rye, late November to early December is prime-time for fertilization. While a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio fertilizer will work fine, all you really need to apply at this time to cool-season lawns is a nitrogen only fertilizer such as urea or ammonium sulfate.

### ***Quick Tip: Weed Control***

***Late November is the time to apply a broadleaf weedkiller (2,4-D) spray to eliminate existing young plants of henbit, chickweed, dandelions and clover. Read and follow label directions carefully.***

*Taken from an article by Dr. James McAfee, who passed away earlier this year. Dr. McAfee worked for 40 years in the turfgrass industry as an associate professor and turfgrass specialist with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. We Master Gardeners had the privilege of Dr. McAfee teaching many of our training classes and he will be sorely missed.*



## Thinking About A Live Christmas Tree This Year?

By Dr. William C. Welch, Professor and Landscape Horticulturist

The boughs of holly have been used to deck the halls, and sprigs of mistletoe hang over every door, but the one plant that Christmas would not be complete without has yet to be brought in -- the Christmas tree. The kids are anxious; they want to decorate the tree NOW! But this year, for something new and longer-lasting, a living tree was what you wanted. Now what?

The first thing to do is pick out a tree. Consider the following: Aleppo Pine, Japanese Black Pine, Japanese Yew, Loblolly Pine, Deodar Cedar, Juniper, or other coniferous evergreens. Perhaps you prefer a broad-leaved tree; possibilities include: American Holly, Burford Holly, Compact Cherry Laurel or Yaupon. Or you might decide on a tubbed plant to remain inside after the Christmas season? The Norfolk Island Pine, kumquats, calamondins or Yews would be good choices.

Once the tree is chosen (if it isn't tubbed), a container must be chosen as well. If the tree roots are balled and burlapped, a container must be used that will allow at least an inch of peat moss, potting soil or compost around the ball to prevent drying out.

If the plant has been grown in a container, it can be made much more attractive by placing it in a redwood tub, ceramic or clay pot, or even a wooden box lined with a polyethylene film liner. All containers should be well drained to prevent damage to the roots caused by excess moisture. A pan underneath the container will also prevent floor damage.

Now that the tree is in the container and in the house, you can start to give the kids a little leeway. All you have to do now is

find a good place for the tree that is not in the stream of heat or near a stove or radiator. When not occupied, the room should be kept as cool as possible, and the plant should be watered when dry. A simple way to tell when the plant needs water is to push a sharpened pencil into the soil. If the pencil comes out dry and clean, the plant needs water; otherwise, wait until the next day.

After Christmas, it is best to plant the tree in the landscape as soon as possible. The selected site for the tree should fit into the landscape design, and allow sufficient room for growth and development. The pit dug for the tree should be large enough to allow three to four inches of soil on all sides of the soil ball. It should be planted at the same depth it was planted at the nursery or in the container.

For the backfill, add one part peat moss, pine bark or compost to two parts soil and pack this mixture firmly around the ball. When the pit is three-fourths full, the tree should be watered thoroughly, and then filled the rest of the way. If the plant was balled and burlapped, the burlap should be loosened before completely filling the hole.

### *Live choices include Leyland cypress and Rosemary*

The tree is now a permanent part of your landscape. To keep it healthy while it is adapting to its new environment, here are some tips:

- \*\* Water it regularly, but allow the soil to dry a little between waterings.
- \*\* Mulch the surface with some kind of organic matter, to reduce weeds and conserve moisture.
- \*\* Avoid fertilization until June or July following planting.
- \*\* Keep weeds and grass down, to prevent competition.

The tree can be used to serve another purpose -- the beautification of your yard. Planted into your landscape, these trees can add a nice touch in the spring, summer, and fall, and can even serve as an outdoor Christmas tree next time Christmas rolls around.

Reprinted from [http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/newsletters/hortupdate/hortupdate\\_archives/2003/nov03/LiveChrtr.html](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/newsletters/hortupdate/hortupdate_archives/2003/nov03/LiveChrtr.html)



### **Interested in becoming a 2016 Expo Sponsor Or Expo Exhibitor?**

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

**Reserve the date: March 19, 2016!**



## Garden Getaways

*With Sheila Cloonen  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



### The Key West Butterfly and Nature Conservatory

Your first impression of this indoor garden and nature habitat is simply, "Wow!" The moment you walk in you are surrounded by butterflies floating through the air and along with an impressive collection of flowering and tropical plants. It's only when you catch your breath that you realize that there are also many colorful birds perched among the branches of trees and bushes or running along the paths. You can't help but feel like a child in a magical secret garden.

Located on Duval Street in Key West Florida, this conservatory houses some 50 to 60 species of butterflies from around the world, along with over 20 exotic bird species, all under a climate-controlled, glass habitat. Of course, it would not be complete without the numerous trees, shrubs and blooms that are the host plants for

these beautiful "flowers of the sky".

The conservatory is a comfortable 85 degrees with around 80 percent humidity. Perfect growing conditions for both butterflies and tropical flora. Two impressive trees, a Yellow Trumpet tree and a Yellow Elder tree, grow almost to the top of the greenhouse and are the favorite perches for some of the many birds. The flowering plants include mostly pentas, but also portweeds, ixoras, jatrophas, dwarf powderpuffs and Lantanas. The non-flowering plants are many of those that we consider house plants and include palms, caladiums, orchids, ficus, ferns, elephant ears, dieffenbachia, schefflera and ivy. All of these together create the perfect tropical environment for the thousand or so butterflies that inhabit this beautiful oasis.

Three hundred chrysalises are received weekly from some six different butterfly farms. These are sent from Africa, Asia, and, Central and South America. Of those, 175 are Blue Morpho butterflies, which are a favorite of the owners and staff. They are also the most active of the butterflies and are the first to greet you when you walk in the door.

Be sure and set enough time aside for this incredible experience if you have an opportunity to visit Key West. It is truly a must see. And while you're there, say hello to the two resident flamingos – Scarlet and Rhett. They only add to an already impressive show.

For more information, visit the Key West Butterfly and Nature Conservatory website at [www.keywestbutterfly.com](http://www.keywestbutterfly.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 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.

### **LAWN CARE IN WINTER II** **Winter Overseeding of Lawns**

Now that winter is just around the corner, many Texans are wondering what they can do to maintain a green lawn all year long. For most people, winter is a time of rest from the weekly job of mowing. But for others, the desire to have a green landscape year round is too great.

Their best remedy is to overseed their warm season lawns with a cool season grass. The practice of overseeding is not new. Golf courses and athletic fields have been overseeding for years to increase both aesthetic quality and playability.

Winter overseeding is relatively simple to do, and can add significant beauty to a landscape. However, it can also cause problems for the warm season lawn the following spring. The process of winter overseeding involves seeding a cool season grass into an existing warm season lawn. Planting of the cool season grass is done in the fall when soil temperatures at a four-inch depth average 74 degrees F.

Annual ryegrass is the most commonly used grass for overseeding home lawns. Perennial ryegrass, *Poa trivialis* (rough stalk bluegrass) and creeping bentgrass are used for overseeding in intensively managed turf, such as golf course greens and athletic fields. However, these grass species are not usually recommended for use on home lawns.

A proper seeding rate for annual ryegrass in a home lawn setting should range from four to six pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet of turf. Very little site preparation or cultivation is required for overseeding. A homeowner should get an acceptable stand of winter grass by simply spreading the annual ryegrass seed over the existing lawn.

Lowering the mowing heights on the warm season lawn in the fall, after the grass has significantly slowed its growth, will help ensure a good stand. Care should be taken to not cut off too much of the warm season grass (i.e., scalp the lawn to the dirt). For Bermuda grass and Zoysia grasses, a mowing height of three quarters to one inch is acceptable, while two inches is low enough for St. Augustine grass. Remove any extra clip-

pings, and then broadcast the annual ryegrass seed. Be careful to avoid spreading grass seed into planting beds and mulched areas.

A broadcast spreader works well for large open areas of the lawn, but a drop spreader should be used to seed near landscape plantings or any other areas where you do not want weeds in the future. Once you have spread the seed, enhance the seed-to-soil contact by lightly raking with a leaf rake or dragging a flexible mat over the lawn (a small section of old carpet or chain link fence works well). Then, lightly water daily for five to seven days.

After the newly planted seed has sprouted, fertilize with one half to one pound of readily available nitrogen per 1000 square feet of turf. A fertilizer with a 3-1-2 ratio, like 15-5-10, applied at rate of 3.0 to 6.0 pounds per 1,000 square feet of turf, will provide the seedlings with the nitrogen and phosphorous they need during establishment.

Once the Annual ryegrass is established, apply ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) every 45 days, at a rate of two and a half to five pounds of fertilizer per 1,000 square feet of turf, to maintain actively growing grass. Mowing should

be on an as-needed basis throughout the winter, and should follow the one third rule: never remove more than one third of the leaf blade in a single mowing. A sharp mower blade will help to maintain an even green color. A dull blade will tear and shred the grass blades, leaving the lawn with a dull brown color on the leaf tips.

While not usually a problem in home lawns, overseeded grass can compete with the warm season grass in the spring for light, water and nutrients. This extra competition for the warm season grass may slow the spring green-up of the lawn.

Overseeding can be a good choice for keeping a green lawn all winter long, but consider your options since no lawn is maintenance free. In Texas, gardening is most often a year-round affair.

*The key is to mow often enough so that no more than one-third of the leaf blade is removed at any one time. For example, if the lawn is being mowed at a two inch height, then once it reaches a three inch height, it is time to mow, according to Texas AgriLife Extension Service specialists. (Texas AgriLife Extension Service photo by Dr. Brent Bean)*







Ellis County Master Gardeners are on Facebook and we'd love to have you join us. 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! You'll find us at the link below, 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.

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



**Save The Date!**  
**Saturday, March 19, 2016**



## Thank You All!!

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