



Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



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

December, 2012

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, click on subscribe, and it will be sent around the 1st of every month. Best of all; it's FREE! Susan Clark, Editor

Master Gardeners 2013 Gardening Calendar



The Ellis County Master Gardeners are proud to present our 7th annual gardening calendar. The goal this year is to provide you with information about Earth-Kind® practices that produce great results by wisely using and/or conserving our natural resources. Featured articles discuss "Conserving Water", "Composting", "Landscaping for Energy Conservation", "Improving Landscape Soil", and "Protecting Landscapes from Insect Pests". As always, the calendar will include month-by-month gardening information, soil preparation, and fertilizing timelines.

Your free copy will be available by **December 7th**, 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.



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Universal Outdoor Design

Waxahachie Civic Center
Waxahachie Daily Light



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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

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MG Photo Contest Entry

Container Gardens

The ancient Babylonians had some of the first known gardens in the world and created perhaps the most famous container garden of all time. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient world. Container gardens can be used for herbs, vegetables or simply ornamental plants. A container garden can be soothing with the planting of a single color or complementing colors that jump out demanding attention. Container gardens in Ellis County offer the advantages of limiting water usage by reducing the area that requires water. Another advantage is that for people with disabilities, container gardens raise the soil level that is easier on the back and knees. Container gardens also offer an alternative to mining through the caliche. The soil of a container is far easier to control than a patch of earth!

MG Photo Contest Entry

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.
- * Cut back dead foliage of asparagus and add some compost.
- * Apply a root stimulator such as liquid seaweed or a mild solution of water-soluble fertilizer to newly planted trees and shrubs.

Garden Watch

- * Protect tender vegetation from the cold with a lightweight freeze cloth that is available at most nurseries and garden centers.
- * Continue to water lawns and newly planted trees, shrubs and perennials if rainfall is insufficient.
- * Remove hoses from faucets to avoid freeze damage inside your house.

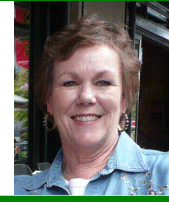
Odds and Ends

- * It is a good time to determine what plants did well in your landscape and needed less maintenance. Choose among an array of draught-tolerant, sustainable plants and those with EarthKind and Texas Superstar designations.
- * Use plants that attract birds, bees and butterflies to your landscape. They are some of our best pollinators.
- * Plan to keep a garden journal next year.



Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener*



Tropical Sage – Mint Family (Lamiaceae)

Salvia coccinia Buchoz ex Erlinger

Region: 1-8 (Ellis County is Region 4)

Size: 1 – 3 Feet

Blooms: March – December, Perennial

Tropical Sage is an upright, aromatic, hairy plant with square stems typical of the mint family. Bright red flowers are about an inch long and two-lipped, with the upper lip narrow and extended forward. The lower lip is broad and three-lobed. Flowers are in clusters of well-separated whorls that form a long, slender spike. Leaves are opposite and stalked, saw-toothed or scalloped on the margins. Other red *Salvias* in the state are *S. roemeriana*, usually found in shaded, rocky woods, with erect to reclining stems; *S. greggii*, a woody shrub of west Texas; *S. regla*, found in the Chisos Mountains and *S. penstemonoides*, a rare Edwards Plateau endemic. Their flowers attract many pollinators, especially hummingbirds. A long flowering season makes them a reliable source of nectar. As the name sage implies, *Salvia* can be used in condiments, or the leaves dried for tea. *Salvia* is represented in Texas by twenty-one species, six of which are shrubs.

ECMGA AMATEUR PHOTO CONTEST



The Ellis County Master Gardener Association announced its annual photo contest is under way, beginning September 1, 2012. **Last date for submissions is March 1, 2013.**

Grab your cameras and get out in your yard, garden, and Ellis County and take your best shot! **You can submit up to five photos**, so you may want to submit photos from different seasons, as well as, your personal favorite. Vegetables and summer garden pictures are great, but don't forget to include beautiful fall and winter photos, too. Please **do not include** people in your photos.

For contest details and submission of entries, go to **Photo Contest** at www.ecmga.com. There is **no cost to enter** the contest, and photographers can enter up to **five photographs per category**. Prizes will be awarded to first, second, and third place in each of two categories: "Single Specimen" and "In the Garden". Each winner will receive a gift certificate from one of the following businesses: Roland's Nursery or The Greenery in Waxahachie or EarthTones Greenery in Midlothian.

Save The Date!
Saturday, March 16, 2013



Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



Herbs of The Christmas Season, Their Legend and Lore

The earliest herbal stories of Christmas come from the Holy Land, and begin with the wise men bearing gifts of gold, myrrh, and frankincense to the newborn child. Other holiday traditions, especially those of the Northern regions of Europe are passed down from earlier times when people survived the dark days of midwinter to celebrate the Winter Solstice and the hope of the rebirth of the Sun and Earth. Many of these stories and legends of miraculous herbs and plants were folded into the new Christmas stories, and all were passed down to us from mother to child, generation to generation, to form our own unique Christmas traditions. During the holidays, we enjoy decorating pine trees, hanging branches of mistletoe in strategic places, and enjoying aromatic incense, without giving much thought to how and why these herbal traditions started, or the very real medicinal benefits of these holiday herbs, plants, and oils.

Frankincense and myrrh were two of the gifts offered by the Magi to the Christ Child. Frankincense

and myrrh gum (pictured) are both scented plant materials which may be classified as herbs. Frankincense, (Olibanum) is a resin of small thorny trees called Boswellia

Thurifera, which grow in countries around the Red Sea. Frankincense has been used for centuries in religious rites and as a medicinal treatment for both internal and external ailments. The sap oozes from the trees, forming small white pod which harden upon contact with the air and turn yellow. These pods are then burned for their aroma. The oil of frankincense is calming and soothing and deepens breathing.



Myrrh gum was used by the Egyptians and Hebrews for incense, cosmetics, perfumes and medicines. It has also been used as an embalming tool. Like frankincense, myrrh was once considered to be a rare treasure. It is a resin and is derived from the shrub Commiphora, which is found in Arabia and Abyssinia.

Juniper (Juniperus communis) is known in legend and history as the plant of sanctuary. As the hunted travelers passed, the spiny branches opened and folded them under its needles, protecting the Holy Family from Herod's soldiers.

Rosemary (Rosmarinus officinalis) is the herb of remembrance and long associated with Mary. The story goes that the flower of the rosemary bush was originally white but Joseph spread Mary's blue cloak over the shrub as she slept. In the morning, the flowers had turned blue.

Traditional legends say that anyone catching the scent of rosemary on Christmas Eve will have happiness and good fortune.

Lavender (Lavandula officinalis) is the symbol of purity, lavender is said to have received its lovely scent as the drying rack for the Baby Jesus' swaddling clothes.

Costmary (Chrysanthemum balsamita), also called alecost, is dedicated to the Virgin Mary and is also associated with Mary Magdalene. Costmary exudes a wonderful balsam scent and is commonly called Bible leaf. In colonial times, it went to church as a marker for the Bible, and its pungent leaves were chewed during the long sermons as the minty flavor was sup-

posed to keep the listener awake. The legend is that Mary created a healing ointment from costmary for various ailments.

Rue (Ruta graveolens) is considered to be an herb of grace. The Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church used brushes fashioned from rue to sprinkle holy water during Mass. Grace is a very important part of Christmas and rue is still used in several countries to make Christmas crowns for celebrations.



Santolina (Santolina chamaecyparissus) (pictured above) also known as lavender cotton, is the herb of fair linen symbolizing swaddling cloth.

Thyme (Thymus vulgaris) is a manger herb signifying the courage and strength of Christ. The herb is used to fumigate and clean.

Pennyroyal (Mentha pulegium) is one of the manger herbs. Traditionally, it was planted around doorways and used in bedding and as a strewing herb. In addition to its pleasant aroma, it repels fleas and other insects.

Our Lady's Bedstraw (Rubiacae) (pictured left) is another manger herb long used as bedding and animal forage in the Middle East.



Enjoy these beautiful and useful traditional herbs during your Christmas season.

In the Vegetable Garden

With Ginger Cole

Ellis County Master Gardener



A Day Without An Onion

Would a day without an onion be like a day without sunshine? For my husband and I, it would be. We must be onion junkies. That's probably a good thing, since onions are very good sources of immune-supportive vitamin C. They are also a good source of enzyme-activating manganese and molybdenum, as well as, heart-healthy vitamin B6, fiber, folate, and potassium. Mostly, we eat lots of them because we love the taste.

Because we eat so many onions, last year I paid more attention to planning my onion crop and had better success. Here in Ellis County, the recommended planting dates for onions sets are from January 15th through February 10th. That makes December the right time to start preparing your planting beds and looking for onions set varieties that grow well here. If you wanted to plant onions from seed, that should have been done back in October.

Did you know that onions come in short, intermediate, and long day varieties? Short day onions are recommended for our area. There is a new variety out this year, Texas Legend. I plan to try some of these. Other short day varieties are 1015 Texas Supersweet, Texas Early White, Hybrid Southern Belle Red, Yellow Granex, White Bermuda (pictured right), and Red Creole. Last year I tried



some intermediate day varieties and had pretty good success with Borettana Cipolini and Red Marble Cipolini. The Red Torpedo Tropea did not do very well, but alas, I will try again this year

because they are such cute little gourmet onions with wonderful flavor.

Onions are pretty easy to grow if you select the right varieties and plant them in a location with good drainage and plenty of sunshine. Last year we planted onions in three different locations; raised beds in the garden, along the property line in our "row crop" area, and in the berm in front of the house as a part of our edible landscape. Since on-

ions benefit from reliable and consistent moisture (not soggy or wet), the onions in our raised beds with a drip irrigation system were the most robust. Our onions in "row crops" and in the berm also did well. All of these planting sites are raised at least four inches, which provides the onions good drainage. Since we do not irrigate two of the areas, we used wood mulch about two inches deep to help these areas retain moisture. We did water all of the onions when we planted them, but only consistently watered the ones in our garden raised bed area. In addition to adding lots of compost to the soil prior to planting, we side dressed the onions with organic fertilizer with a high nitrogen content at planting and then every three weeks.

Onions are susceptible to foliar diseases that can cause rotting during storage. These types of diseases are not noticeable during the growing season, but may be prevented by spraying the plants with a fungicide approved for use on food crops every couple of weeks. If you use a fun-

gicide, be sure to follow the directions on the product label.

Now is the time to start preparing your planting beds for a successful onion crop. Just remember these tips. Your site selection should be sunny and well drained. Soil preparation should include lots of compost. Plant onion varieties recommended for our area. Spacing between onions should be about four inches. Water and fertilize onions sets when planted. Drip irrigation works best for onions. If you can feel moisture in the soil when you stick your finger into the ground up to your first knuckle, then the onions are properly watered. Water only when the soil has dried out. Fertilize with a high source of nitrogen, e.g. 21-0-0, every three weeks and use a fungicide every couple of weeks. Use a mulch to conserve moisture and reduce weeds.

Onions are fully mature approximately 110 days after planting onion sets. A visual cue that your onions have matured is the tops will fall over. To harvest, lift the onions



out of the ground and allow them to dry on the ground in the sun. I actually use an old trampoline as a drying rack for onions and garlic. Once the onions have dried so the outer layer of skin is papery, trim the roots from the bulb and cut back the dried foliage. Store the onions in a cool, dry, well-ventilated location.

Whether you are a novice gardener or an onion junkie trying to save money on your onion habit, with just a little planning, onions can be a rewarding crop. They are easy to grow, easy to harvest, and easy to store. For more information on growing onions, visit <http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/publications/onions/oniongro.html>

What Else?

By Carolyn Foster
Ellis County Master Gardener



Another year is coming to a close. We can breathe easier for a while and just chill and relax. But there are still some things we need to do. Some perennials have started to fade and others are going to seed. Now is a great time to collect the seeds, label them, pass them on to friends, or save for potting in the spring. We need to clean the beds of faded flower and plants. Prune out any dead, damaged, or diseased material from perennials, shrubs, trees, roses, and any other plants. Any cuts 2" or larger, I seal. Continue to clean up any fruit tree fallings. We can also take cuttings for our greenhouses.

Remember to continue to water even though it's winter. You may not have to water as often, but deeply and infrequently is still the rule of thumb.

Now is a great time to catch up on the gardening housekeeping. Wash, clean, disinfect, and stack pots. To disinfect, use one part bleach to ten parts water. Tools used for cutting should be cleaned between each cut. Tool maintenance is a must to stop the spread of diseases. Now is a great time to clean shovels, hoes, and all gardening tools. Lubricate well and store. If

storing power tools run tanks dry; if not, add a fuel stabilizer to gas. This prevents corrosion, gumming, and moisture build up.

Sort through those "found objects" and make some "one of a kind" birdhouses or garden art to use for decoration or give to friends.

Now let's talk about pests. We must remain vigilant; inspecting, and monitoring plants and gardens for proper pest and insect control.

Insect pests that attack house plants include spider mites, mealy-bugs, and scale. They are easy to detect and treat if found early. Mild soap and water; insecticidal sprays, or alcohol and Q tips can control these. But over-watering is the worst culprit. Garden insect pest include moths, loopers, beetles, grubs, and fleas. These can be controlled by organic, manual, and chemical treat-

ments.

The worst pest is cool season weeds, often called "winter weeds". They will germinate in the fall, grow all winter, produce seed, and die in late spring. They can be annual or perennial. Some

are dandelion, chickweed, henbit and burweed. Weeds are controlled by pre-emergents (they prevent growth) and post-emergents (kill after weeds come up), but always follow the instructions on the label.

A mixture of one Tbsp. of orange oil to one gallon of water to drench house plants will kill most insects. Do this be-

fore you bring them in for the winter.

Finally, mulch is just as important this time of the year. Protect roses and shrubs from winter damage by mounding up about 6" of soil or mulch before the ground freezes. Another layer after the freeze will help insulate plants.

To wake up Amaryllis bulbs, water once, then place in a bright spot and wait for them to respond. If they don't in about two weeks, water again, but too much water on an unresponsive bulb may rot it.

Transplant bare root and container grown roses, shrubs, trees, ground covers, and vines so they get established before warm weather arrives next summer.

Well, this month we've covered a lot, but keep learning and keep "growing smart".



Pansies, Cyclamen, and Spinach

By: Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener



Now that cool weather has finally arrived and our 90 degree days are over, it's time to plant some of our most spectacular winter bloomers. Pansies and cyclamen respond poorly to high temperatures. They react to hot temperatures by declining quickly.

Pansies are the most popular winter annual. They provide blue, yellow, white, purple, and orange blooms everyday through the end of May if they are planted in full sun now. They have more cold tolerance than petunias, dianthus, calendula, stocks, and even snapdragons, so there is usually no cold-weather break in blooming in January like the others experience.

Pansies are available in several varieties based on bloom size and color pattern. The most common selections are the monkey-faced pansies. They have a black center within the colored flower. The monkey-faced varieties offer blooms that are half-dollar sized. The Majestic Beauty variety offers a monkey-faced pansy that has a larger bloom, nearly twice as large.

Clear-faced pansies have become more and more popular in area gardens. Their blooms are also about half-dollar sized and you get more blooms per plant.

Gardeners who want a smaller bloom size can grow the pansy cousins Johnny jump-ups and violas. Johnny jump-ups have nickel-sized blooms of yellow or violet. Violas have quarter-sized blooms. I find violas and Johnny jump-ups maintain their blooms longer going into the heat of the summer.

Grow pansies in full sun (at least six hours) in beds or containers. Mixed-color beds are the norm, but single-color beds

are more showy. Pansies work well as a border planted around taller winter annuals. They are susceptible to slug and snail damage, so protect them with slug and snail bait. Fertilize with a water soluble fertilizer every couple of weeks.

Cyclamen have been used for years as an indoor plant. They are often given to patients in hospitals to distract and cheer them up. The plants, at first glance, look almost artificial with their dark green, waxy heart-shaped leaves that are decorated with silver etchings. The leaves are attractive and provide a perfect background for the spectacular blooms. The flowers are orchid-like in very pure colors of white, red, pink, purple, lavender, and rose.

Cyclamen are surprisingly hardy as outdoor winter plants. The foliage is very cold tolerant. To maintain the blooms check out the "planket" freeze-protection product at the nursery, or have your blankets and agricultural fiber (Insulate and others) on hand if the forecast calls for temperatures under 30°F.

Grow them in deep shade and they will decorate your landscape with blooms every day until May when they decline with the heat. Use them in containers or beds in deep shade. Single-color plantings or drifts of single colors are the usual way to use cyclamen, but a bed of mixed white and another color is

decorative.

The main complaint about cyclamen is the cost. A hundred cyclamen in a bed in the shade in front of the house are very showy, but at \$6 per plant, you may have to refinance the house to afford them.

Cyclamen will live and bloom in the house for years, but they are hard to over-summer outside. Even if you can keep the foliage alive by storing them in containers in a corner of the yard, they are slow to re-bloom. The beautiful plants offered by your favorite nursery each winter are grown in Colorado or other cold-weather location.

Spinach is not a blooming plant, but has the same negative reaction to hot spells that affects pansies and cyclamen. Plant spinach transplants in the vegetable garden now to provide leaves for salads and vegetable dishes into May.

Spinach does not grow as fast as collards, chard, and several of the other winter hardy greens, so you usually need several plants to provide production for winter-long harvest. Winter greens such as Swiss chard and curly-leaf parsley make attractive borders in your flower beds.

My rule of thumb is to plant six spinach plants for each person in the household. They can be planted one foot apart in full sun. Fertilize with slow-release or winterizer lawn fertilizer every three weeks after planting (one cup per six plants).

Harvest spinach leaf by leaf as you need it, without ever taking more than one third of the foliage.

(Taken from articles by Calvin R. Finch, Ph.D., Horticulturist and Director Texas A&M Water Conservation and Technology Center.)

Cyclamen



Matrix Pansy



Living Christmas Trees

By Marilyn Simmons
Ellis County Master Gardener Intern



Many Ellis County residents are transplants from other areas of the country. Employed by a local nursery for 15 years, homesick patrons inquired and would want to plant pines and other evergreens to remind them of their native land. There is some difficulty to explain that just east of us pine trees flourish and just west of us pine trees thrive. However, in Ellis County some varieties of pine thrive and some tolerate the soil.

So, if one is determined to plant a pine tree in our area, the availability is often limited. However, living Christmas trees are available from November to December. The investment would have a dual purpose. The tree first serving as the family Christmas tree and then in January, it could be planted as a landscape specimen. This is a sustainable practice that can be a win-win situation.

The living Christmas tree collections usually include Deodar Pine, Austrian Pine, Eldarica Pine, Leyland Cypress, and possible others. It is very wise to make a plan before purchasing trees. Research the mature size of the tree, conditions needed for the tree, and expected longevity of the tree. Walk around the property and carefully consider how this tree will perform in your landscape. Are you looking for color, texture, height or do you need to block an undesirable scene? Avoid overcrowding by using a tape measure. If the tree at maturity will be 40 feet wide, measuring the area will assure the size and space is available. Be sure to come out far enough from a structure. If a tree is 50 feet in diameter at maturity then it would need to be planted at least 25 feet out from a structure. Consider mature height and thinking through if there are any high line wires that would obstruct

full growth?

Varieties to consider:

Deodar Pine (*Cedrus deodara*) Zone 7. Large pyramidal tree, 40 to 50 feet tall, 25 to 35 feet across at base. This gorgeous evergreen spreads far and wide. Moderate growth rate. Foliage is an attractive blue-green.

This tree can show iron deficiency symptoms in rocky, alkaline soils. Bagworms, borers, and cotton root rot are occasional problems.

Austrian Pine (*Pinus Nigra*) is a slow-growing, thickly foliaged pine tree. It keeps its foliage all the way to the ground unless it is pruned away. The thick branching creates a mounded appearance.

It is an easy to grow pine tree in most of Texas, even in the black alkaline soils, as long as the drainage is good. It responds well to fertilization and needs moderate amounts of water.



This evergreen tree is more symmetrical and has more twisted or curved needles. It grows 30 to 40 feet in height and 20 to 30 feet in width. Final spacing of this tree would be 15 to 20 feet.

This tree occasionally suffers from Chlorosis.

Leyland Cypress (*C. ocyvaris leylandii*) (pictured left) is a pyramidal tree, grows 30-40 feet tall and 25 to 30 feet wide. Moderate to rapid growth.

Leyland is an introduced cypress. It grows well in a variety of soils and is relatively well-adapted in Texas. It can be used as a background, a tall screen, or evergreen specimen.

The Leyland cypress has a graceful habit of growth. Allow ample room to allow symmetry in growth.

Eldarica Pine (*pinus eldarica*) Common Names : Mondell Pine (pictured left) or

Afghan Pine. This evergreen grows 30 to 40 feet tall and has a 15 to 20 foot spread. The final spacing is 12 to 20 feet. This is a desert tree, native to southern Russia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. This tree will grow for years in a wide range of soils in Texas if the drainage is good. Higher rainfalls can cause this tree to die out. This pine is upright and fast growing with medium green needles. It grows fairly fast in the first five to 10 years. Then it is possible to see a



decline.

After selecting a living Christmas Tree, be sure to keep it evenly watered while using it as decoration. Remove it from the house quickly after the holidays and plant. When planting, dig the hole wider not deeper. Do not dig a perfectly round hole. Leave it a little jagged so the roots will not start growing in a circle.

It is better to raise the tree and the root flare a little higher, than to plant too deep. Use mushroom compost for fertilizer for the first year. Water deep the first week every day, second week every other day, and then one to two times a week through the hot summer months. Cut water back for winter months.

Information and facts derived from the following resources: Garrett, Howard. *Howard Garrett's Texas Trees*. Lanham: Lone Star Books, 2002. Print. Sperry, Neil. *Neil Sperry's Complete Guide To Texas Gardening*. Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1991. Print.



Landscape Gardening

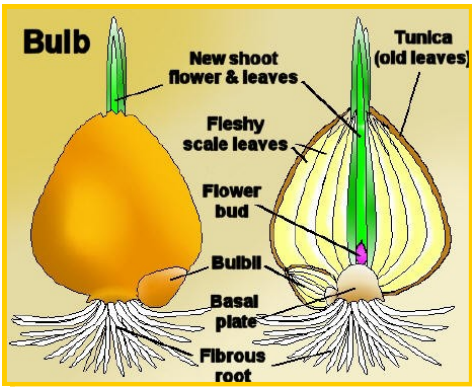
From: Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener

Ellis County Master Gardeners have a website at 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.

Bulbs in Containers

Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Bring a little springtime into your home during the winter this year by growing some bulbs inside in containers. Indoor displays are relatively inexpensive, and some choices may be planted afterwards in the flower bed permanently.



Except for the coldest portions of Texas, tulips and hyacinths will not re-bloom another year successfully, but Roman hyacinths, grape hyacinths, muscari, certain narcissus and daffodils, and Neapolitan onions often do well outside for many years, and can also be grown indoors.

Tulips, crocuses, scillas, and hyacinths, along with those daffodils and narcissus with labels stating they must have more cold exposure than your climate zone allows, must have at least six, and preferably eight weeks, of pre-chilling before planting. Do this by placing them in paper bags (not plastic) in the hydrator of the refrigerator where the temperature should remain around 42 degrees F.

The bulbs then need to be planted in containers and allowed time to build up a supply of roots before sprouting or flowering. Set pots under the protection of shrubs or in a partially darkened shed or garage during this period. Bring them out into the light after several weeks. If the

pot is large, place bulbs at the suggested depth, give them a chance to root, then finish off the top of the container with your additional choice of pansies, violas, or alyssum in white, lavender, or purple shades to provide more color and "filler."

It's sometimes possible to purchase specially made small glass containers with a bulbous top, for growing a single hyacinth. The plant rests on the top part of the container, and the roots soon crowd the water-filled base.

Earthenware bowls with drainage holes at the bottom, resting on a saucer, are probably the most suitable for growing bulbs in the home. Highly glazed pots do not allow as much air circulation or passage of water. Use a good quality potting medium and water with rainwater rather than tap water, if possible. Water cautiously. If plants do not receive enough water, they will give less of a show, but if there is too much undrained water, the leaves will yellow and the bulb may decay.

Certain kinds such as the 'Paperwhites' or 'Soleil d'Or' may be flowered in shallow, glazed containers by resting them among large pebbles, and cautiously watering up to the basal plate. The pots can be placed on the windowsill immediately, but do not allow the water level to drop at any time. As the roots

begin to grow, they may be able to anchor the leaves and flower stem, but often thin, green-dyed sticks are used as props. The 'Paperwhites' are some of the best for this

kind of indoor forcing, as well as narcissus such as 'Erlicheer,' (pictured left) (a double form of the old favorite 'Grand Primo'), 'Cheerfulness,' 'Yellow Cheerfulness,' and 'Winston Churchill.' These bulbs can be recycled outside after flowering indoors.

Varieties to plant outside after flowering:

* Narcissus: Tazettas, Erlicheer, Cheerfulness,

Yellow Cheerfulness, Winston Churchill, Hawera, Tete a Tete, Cragford, Ice Follies, Golden Dawn, Geranium,

* Paperwhites: 'Papyraceus' is the reliable old-fashioned paperwhite that does well in South Texas and coastal areas.

* Summer Snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*) (pictured left) will survive the heat and relatively mild winters of Texas, but the Spring Snowflake (*Leucojum vernum*) is much more difficult to grow and re-flower here.

Look for some of the strains that originated in Israel. These are bred for hot climates.

Garden Checklist for December

* Don't get in a hurry to prune woody plants. Late December through February is usually the best time to prune them.

* Reduce the fertilization of indoor plants from late October to mid-March. An exception would be plants in an atrium or a well lighted window.

* Drain gasoline from power tools and run the engine until fuel in the carburetor is used up.

* Drain and store garden hoses and watering equipment in a readily accessible



What's Happening in December



The Market is extended through December 15th!

*** Market open 10am—3pm/ MG Booth open 10am-12pm**

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

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

Tex-Scapes Greenery

2705 S. Kaufman, Ennis, Phone: (972) 875-1716

<http://texscapesgreenery.com/index.html>

December 6—21, Helping Hands Canned Food Drive. Receive 20% off your entire purchase when you bring five canned goods for Helping Hands!

Thursday, December 6, Business After Hours. Come "kick-off" the Christmas Open House with great sales, fellowship, and refreshments!

Friday, December 7 & Saturday, December 8, Christmas Open House Sale. Christmas shop at Tex-Scapes! GREAT sales on everything!

Cedar Ridge Preserve

7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas,

www.audubondallas.org

Saturday, December 15, 9am—12pm. Conservation in Action Workday. Wear sturdy boots or shoes with good ankle support and bring gloves. People are welcome to come and leave early if they can't stay. For info, email info_CRP@yahoo.com

Tuesday, January 1, Christmas Bird Count, Indian Trail Master Naturalists. Bird counts will take place at Cedar Ridge Preserve, Cedar Hill State Park, Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center, Joe Pool Lake, and the cities of Cedar Hill, Duncanville, DeSoto, and Midlothian. Birders of all levels of expertise are welcome and needed. RSVP for a team assignment and details. Please contact Tania Homayoun at thomayoun@audubon.org or 469-526-1986 to register. **There will be no Indian Trail Master Naturalist December, 2012 Meeting. Meetings will resume in January.**

Thursday, December 6, 4pm—5:15pm, National Wildlife Federation Webinar - "The Path to Healthier, Happier, Smarter Kids in Texas: The School-yard Classroom". This webinar will focus on the key elements of successfully connecting children to nature while improving their educational experience. For info and to RSVP: visit <http://online.nwf.org/site/Calendar?id=106521&view=Detail>

(Continued from page 9)

location. The lawn and plants may need water during a prolonged dry spell.

* Use good pruning practices when selecting Christmas greenery from landscape plants. Don't destroy the natural form and beauty of the plant.

* Prolong the life of holiday-season gift plants by providing proper care. Check to see if the pot wrap has plugged up the bottom drainage. Don't overwater. Keep out of drafts from heating vents and opening doorways. Fertilizer is seldom needed the first few months.

* Don't forget tulip and hyacinth bulbs in the refrigerator. They can be planted any time in December if they have received 60 or more days of chilling.



* Want to start cuttings of your favorite Christmas cactus? As soon as it has finished blooming, select a cutting with four or five joints, break or cut it off, and insert the basal end into a pot of moderately moist soil. Place it on a windowsill or other brightly lit area. The cuttings should be rooted within three to four weeks.

* Don't spare the pruning shears when

transplanting bare-rooted woody plants. Cut the tops back at least one-third to one-half, to compensate for the roots lost when digging the plant.

* Take advantage of bad weather and holiday time to study seed and nursery catalogs as well as good gardening books.



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Roland's Nursery & Landscape
Tex-Scapes Greenery



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Contact James Kocian at
expo.ecmga@yahoo.com

Reserve the date: March 16, 2013!