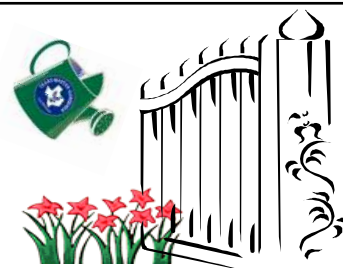




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VI, Issue 1

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

February, 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 to your landscape. We will be featuring horticulture articles that we hope you will find interesting, 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! Melinda Kocian, editor/Susan Clark, co-editor

What's Happening In February

Friday, February 17, 9 am, Ellis Co. Master Gardeners on rose trimming. **FREE** public demonstration - at the Midlothian Conference Center off Hwy. 287 bypass to see how to trim Knockout Roses. These very popular roses can grow to a good height so if you want to keep them clustered and low, just come and join us. Bring your shears and gloves and enjoy the day.



Friday through Sunday, February 17, (noon-6pm), 18 (9am-6pm), 19 (1:00-6:00) - The Greenery - Giant 3-day Auction; largest ever! The Greenery is moving across the street from their current location. "We would rather sell it than move it!" Preview Wednesday and Thursday, February 15th and 16th. Parking available at new location; shuttle available. More info call 972-617-5459.

Indian Trail Master Naturalists

Monday, February 27, 7:00 - Rainwater Harvesting at the First United Methodist Church in Waxahachie, 505 W. Marvin Ave. **The Indian Trail Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist** February, 2012 Meeting Program will be in the Banquet Hall Pam Daniel, a Rainwater Harvesting Specialist through the Texas AgriLife Extension, will present an informative program of how homeowners can capture, divert, store and distribute rainwater for later use. Pam is an accredited professional through the American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association and is an EcoBroker - certified real estate professional with Ebby Haliday Realtors. Pam has a 6,000 gallon rainwater collection system at her home in Midlothian. Indian Trail Chapter will hold a business meeting prior to the Program. The business meeting will be at 6:00 p.m. at the same location. For further information, contact Pam and Joe Mundo at pmundo@mundoandassociates.com or 214-773-0966.

Thursdays, April 12 - May 31 - The Indian Trail Master Naturalist Chapter will hold training classes on Thursdays from April 12 to May 31 at First United Methodist Church in Waxahachie. Deadline for completed applications is March 22. Applications are available online at <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/>. For more information and questions, please contact Paul Grindstaff at 972-291-2868. Applications may also be attained at the AgriLife Extension Service Office: 972-825-5175 or ellis-tx@tamu.edu.

Cedar Ridge Preserve
7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas
www.audubondallas.org

Saturday, February 25, 9-noon - Conservation in Action Workday. Trail work volunteers. For info, contact Dana Wilson dwilson@audubon.org.

Sunday, February 26, 1:00 - Geoffrey B. Stanford Trout Lily Walk - Trout lilies, or white dog-toothed violets, are the harbingers of spring in the plant world. These flowers in

(Continued on page 9)



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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Photo by Pam Daniel

It's February.... What Needs to be Done?

Planting

- Sow cool-season vegetable seeds directly into well prepared soil. Cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, kale and potatoes should be planted four weeks before the last average frost date which is March 15th in Ellis County. Lettuce, radishes, carrots, spinach, beets, chard, and turnips should be planted 2 to 4 weeks prior.
- Container and bare-root roses can be planted this month. When planting from a container use a two gallon or larger size. Texas A&M EarthKind® varieties are easy to maintain and will need less water, fertilizer and pesticides. Prepare the planting

beds by adding six inches of organic matter and tilling into the top 6 to 10 inches of existing soil.

- Plant blackberries, grapes and fruit and nut trees. After planting, cut off the top half of peach trees and all side branches to encourage new lateral branches. Contact Texas AgriLife Extension Service – Ellis County at 972-825-5175 for the best varieties.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- Prune bush roses on Valentine's Day, February 14th. Prune back to the ground, old, dead, and weak canes. Wear heavy-leather gloves to protect hands; use long-handled loppers to remove large and dead canes. Leave 4 to 8 vigorous canes, removing one-half of their growth above an outward-facing bud. Feed roses with a balanced fertilizer, compost or aged manure.
- Wait to prune climbing or leaning roses until after they bloom.
- Shrubs that only bloom in the spring should not be pruned in late winter. Prune after they bloom.
- Cut or mow old foliage of liriopse and monkey grass before tips of new growth emerge.
- Dead tops of ornamental grasses can be pruned to the ground or 4 to 6 inches from the ground. Dig and divide large clumps of warm-season ornamental grasses especially if the center of the grass has died. Mexican feather grass should be cut back only if needed.
- Cut back the tops of herbaceous perennials to the ground or to basal foliage. If they are hardy, new growth will emerge from the roots in the spring.
- Dig and divide fall-blooming perennials: asters, mums, Mexican bush sage, Mexican mint marigold, Maximilian sunflowers, and copper canyon daisies.

Garden Watch

- Begin controlling insects and diseases on fruit and nut trees. Spraying is essential for a successful harvest. Contact an Ellis County Master Gardener or the Texas AgriLife Extension Service – Ellis County for a copy of the *Homeowners Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule*.
- Watch for aphid and caterpillars on cool season vegetables. Control aphids with insecticidal soap and caterpillars with Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*).

Odds and Ends

- Plan to have color in your landscape year-round by using a mixture of annuals and perennials. Add some flowering trees and shrubs to your landscape such as Mexican buckeye, redbud, crepe myrtle, vitex, Mexican plum, butterfly bush, salvias, desert willow, flame acanthus and abelia.
- Install a system to collect rainwater. Visit the web site: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind> for more information.
- Turn the compost pile and keep it moist.



Photo by MG Photo Contest Entry

Bulbs

Success with spring bulbs will depend to a large extent on the selection of good, healthy, quality bulbs. Second-rate bulbs, or bargain bulbs, produce second-rate flowers, and often first-rate disappointment.

Planting spring bulbs in the fall is as natural as falling leaves and football games. It is an opportunity lost if the home gardener if he does not include some of the hardy, easy-to-grow spring beauties in the garden this fall. Bulbs are truly some of the simplest of flowers to grow, easy to care for, and inexpensive. All they ask is a fall planting, and they will reward you with weeks of early spring color, fragrance, and beauty.

Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



February 2012 – Herbal Blends

If you enjoy growing herbs you probably also enjoy cooking with them. It's great fun to snip a sprig of rosemary from your bush and drop it into a pot of soup, or gather a few sprigs of chives to chop into an omelet or cottage cheese. But it's even more rewarding to gather a variety of herbs and create a savory blend of your own. Don't be afraid to experiment just go carefully and add small amounts first. You can always add more but you can't take away if the taste is too strong. If you are not ready to venture out on your own here are some classics to try or adapt to your taste.

Bouquet garni simply means a bundle of herbs usually tied together with a string and used in soups, stock, and stews. The bouquet is cooked with the other ingredients and removed before serving. There is no generic recipe for bouquet garni, but most recipes include parsley, thyme, and bay leaf. Depending on the recipe, the bouquet garni may also include other herbs such as basil, rosemary and savory. Vegetables such as carrot, celery, leek, onion, and parsley root are sometimes included in the bouquet. Sometimes, the bouquet is not bound with string, and its ingredients are filled into a square of cheesecloth, a net, or even a tea strainer instead.



Green Bouquet Garni: Two celery pieces for the sandwich, a bay leaf, 2 sprigs parsley, one sprig thyme, and one sprig rosemary. Sandwich the herbs between the 2 pieces of celery; tie with kitchen string leaving a long tail so you can find it later. Toss this into soups, stews, green beans or vegetable dishes.



Herbes de Provence: The traditional Herbes de Provence includes 2 parts basil, 2 parts thyme, 1 part each savory, fennel, and lavender all herbs found in the Provence region of France. This blend is used to flavor meat, fish and vegetable dishes.

Fines Herbes is a combination of herbs that forms a mainstay of Mediterranean cuisine. The ingredients of Fines Herbes are used **fresh** and include parsley, chives, tarragon, and chervil. These "fine herbs" are not the pungent and resinous herbs that are found in other Italian blends that release their flavor in long cooking. Add Fines Herbes to soups, vegetables and stews during the last ten minutes of cooking. Or chop and add to omelets, cottage cheese, cream cheese or butter. Note: Since French tarragon is difficult to grow in Texas, I suggest using Mexican mint marigold as a substitute.

Herb Salt Seasoning Blend: One tablespoon coarse salt, 1 tbs. chopped onion, 1 garlic clove, 2 tbs. fresh flat parsley leaves, 2 tbs. fresh basil leaves and 1 tsp. fresh thyme leaves. Pulse ingredients until smooth. Mixture may be used immediately or stored in the refrigerator for up to one week. Makes about 1/4 cup. Mixed with a little olive oil, it's a great seasoning on meats.

Italian Herb Blend: Herbs to include with tomato sauce and served over pasta are basil, marjoram, oregano, rosemary, and thyme.

Pizza Herb Blend: Use 4 or 5 sage leaves, 3 Italian parsley sprigs, one sprig marjoram, one sprig oregano chopped and sprinkled over pizza before baking.



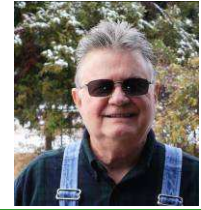
Interested in becoming a
2012 Expo Sponsor Or
Expo Exhibitor?

Contact James Kocian at
expo.ecmga@yahoo.com

Reserve the date: March 31, 2012!

Vegetable Gardening

By Robert Shugart
Ellis County Master Gardener



TIME TO PLANT POTATOES

Everyone should experience introducing children to the fun of gardening. Most folks start with radishes because of the quick production. I prefer Red "New" Potatoes because of the mystery of digging into the fresh soil to harvest the potato and the discussions that will invariably follow. Who has found the most, the biggest, the smallest and so on until we take the whole bunch to show to their grandmother Oma; she is always amazed and very complimentary of the young farmer's prize.

Potatoes take 90 to 120 days from planting to harvest and we usually have several investigations by digging carefully into the mounds around the bushes to check the size some have produced before the initial harvest. Oma makes sure to include the new crop in today's menu; usually with some fresh green beans.

Potatoes originally came from South America and were introduced into Europe in the 1500s. In the following years it became Ireland's most important food crop. They greatly improved the quality. Credit is given to the Irish for introducing the potato to the United States. Everyone has heard the term Irish Potato. My source tells me that each Texan consumes about 120 pounds of potatoes per year.

Potatoes are not widely grown in this part of Texas because yields are sometimes disappointing. Our clay soils need to be amended with liberal amounts of organic matter to loosen them so that the tubers can develop. Fertilize the soil before planting by adding 3 lbs. of commercial fertilizer per 100 sq. ft. The addition of barnyard manure is not recommended as it is alkaline. Little benefit is gained by side dressing.

We have found LaSoda or Pontiac provide the best production of the red skinned varieties. You should always use seed potatoes and select the ones with many eyes. The potatoes should be cut into several pieces, each with at least one eye but preferably 2 to 3 eyes. Cut them 5 to 7 days before you plan to plant them and let them cure. I have treated the pieces with sulphur to deter soil-related disease problems. (Put them in a paper bag with sulphur and shake them). Lay them out on a newspaper to cure. Plant your seed potato pieces about 3 inches deep and 8 to 12 inches apart in raised rows. Leave 30 inches of space between your rows. I set up the rows ahead of time. When the children are ready, I dig the individual holes for the pieces.



The Grandchildren perature, the plants drop the pieces in the holes, cover and tamp them in. In 3 to 4 weeks, depending on soil temperature, the plants will emerge. When the plants are about 6 inches high it's time to dirt them. That is to use a hoe to pull 3 to 4 inches of soil to the base of each plant. Your goal is to eventually have the seed piece 6 to 8 inches below the soil. The reason you don't plant them that deep initially is because of soil temperature. They may not sprout if you plant them deeper where the soil isn't warm enough. And, don't let the soil get too dry. Depending on conditions you may need to water every 5 to 7 days.

Potatoes like to be mulched. Mulching conserves moisture and keeps the soil cooler. There is no correlation between flowering and potato production. The flowers can produce seed but the seed won't produce reliable plants. Harvesting can begin in about 90 days after planting but definitely when the plants begin to yellow. Any time after about 60 days the youngsters can begin to carefully dig into the edges of the mounds to get a preview of their harvest.....Happy Gardening !



Save The Date!

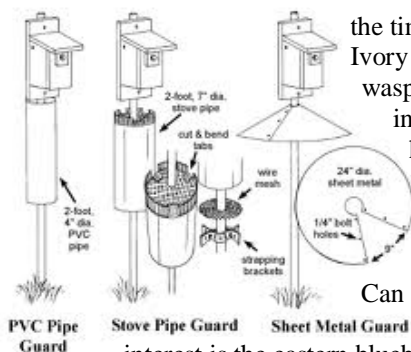
Saturday, March 31, 2012

Songbird Nesting Boxes

By Jean Wammack, Ellis County Master Gardener

It's time to clean out and repair nesting boxes. I have already found eggs in my bluebird nests.

Predator Guard Recommendations



We have been promoting nesting boxes for the songbirds. Now is the time of year to check your boxes. Clean them out; rub a dry bar of Ivory soap inside the box to discourage wasps from building nests. If a wasp should build inside the box the birds will depart even leaving eggs in the nest. If a squirrel or woodpecker has enlarged the entrance hole, place a new front on the box lining up the 1½ inch hole right over the old hole. We are trying to be better stewards by placing a predator guard under the nesting box on the steel pole. You may purchase them or make the guards from stovepipe or PVC. The guards will prevent snakes, raccoons, and squirrels from reaching the eggs or baby birds.

Can you be successful attracting song birds? If you live on acreage, you may be able to attract songbirds; wrens, titmice, chickadees, and bluebirds by adding nesting boxes. My special interest is the eastern bluebird, a shy member of the thrush family.

Nesting pairs will readily accept man-made boxes. Buy or make a box that opens from the side or front so it is easily monitored and cleaned. Boxes should be placed in an open field on a steel post about five feet above the ground and facing a tree within 50 feet. The tree will provide a perch for the young birds as they begin to fly. Boxes should be placed well away from buildings and deep shade. It is helpful if water is in the area.



Eastern Bluebird

If possible, add a birdbath.

The male and female bluebird will build the nest and the female starts to lay eggs, generally five. She will incubate the eggs for 12-14 days. After they hatch, the hatchlings are fed in the nest for two weeks. When the young birds fledge, or leave the box, clean the old nest and make sure it is dry and ant-free by lifting it up and scraping out the debris that has collected in the bottom of the box. Then replace the nest. A lot of energy goes into nest building, so the birds will be happy to re-use one. Hopefully the pair will soon start a second clutch, and perhaps a third! With each clutch, the number of eggs is fewer.



The bluebird's diet is insects, especially grasshoppers! They add berries to their diet during the winter.



Master Gardener Scholarships

One of the primary missions of the Ellis County Master Gardeners is to build partnerships with the Ellis County community to expand horticultural education and opportunities.



In keeping with this mission, the Ellis County Master Gardeners Association will again make scholarship funds available in 2012 to deserving Ellis County high school seniors pursuing studies in horticulture-related fields.

To qualify, the applicant must be a current resident of Ellis County, have an elected academic major in a horticulture-related field that includes, but is not limited to: horticulture, agriculture, environmental science, forestry, botany or entomology, and be able to provide proof of acceptance at an accredited institution of higher learning.

The organization will offer two \$2,000 scholarships to qualifying students this year. Completed applications must be received by April 1, 2012 to be considered for the scholarship award.

Additional information on these scholarships, the application and award process can be obtained by contacting the Texas AgriLife Extension Office, 701 S. I-35, Suite 3, Waxahachie, TX., 75165 or by calling 972-825-5175. The website is www.ecmga.com.



STARTING PLANTS FROM SEEDS

By Pat Dockins

Master Gardeners have been busy lately preparing for the upcoming 2012 Lawn & Garden Expo that will be held on Saturday, March 31 at the Waxahachie Civic Center, from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.



Tomato and pepper seeds were planted the week of January 16th, since our last average spring frost date is around March 18. It takes 7-14 days for the tomato seeds to germinate and 16-20 days for the pepper seeds.

If you would like to start your own seeds at home here are some easy tips:

- **Containers** – Either some you've saved or new pots or flats. Used containers should be cleaned and disinfected by soaking in bleach water at a 1:10 ratio – 1 part bleach to 10 parts water
- **Potting Mix** – You will have fewer problems if you will buy a commercial mix just for starting seeds.
- **Seeds** – You choose.
- **Labels** – Helps you remember when you planted and what variety.
- **Plastic wrap or plastic bags** – Helps keep the soil moist.
- **Water**
- **Light Source** – Either a bright window or some kind of florescent or high density plant light.



Billy Crawford

Moisten the potting mix and gently press into your container. For tomato and pepper seeds use a pointed stick or pencil to poke a hole in the soil about ¼ inches deep. (Generally the larger the seed the deeper the hole, i.e. lettuce seeds drop on top of soil and barely cover with extra soil.). Drop a seed or two in the hole and lightly cover it with more moist potting mix and gently press down. After you have planted the seeds water with a fine mist so you don't wash out or uncover the seeds. Or water from the bottom by placing your container in a tray and pour water on the tray.

Be sure to label with variety and date planted. (I use old Venetian blind slats cut to size and a Sharpie pen.)

Place plastic wrap on top of the tray or insert container in a plastic bag.



Dan Smith

Check daily. When you see the seedlings pop up remove the cover or take them out of the bag and move them to a sunny spot. Watch the seedling stems carefully. Keep the soil moist but not wet. If some of them fall down, turning brown at the base and collapsing even though the leaves still look good, this may indicate "dampening off". This is caused by soil that is too wet and poor ventilation. Reduce watering and increase ventilation.

When your seedlings have developed the first set of true leaves it's time to move them to a larger pot so there is room for the roots to develop. We use quart size pots. Fertilize with a weak solution of liquid fertilizer after 3 or 4 weeks. We use Miracle-Gro.

About a week before the average last frost begin to harden off your plants by gradually introducing them to the outdoors a few hours at a time. When all chances of frost are past you can transplant your new plants. If you transplant them too early all they will do is just sit there and not grow. They need night temperatures of at least 50° degrees regularly.

In the garden, space your tomato plants 30 to 42" apart and at least 18" apart for the peppers.

The varieties of tomatoes we will be selling this year at the Expo will be: Better Boy, Brandywine, Celebrity, Cherokee Purple, Early Girl, Grapette, Large Red Cherry, Marcellino, Ravello, Solar Fire, Giant Yellow Belgium, and Juliet. We will also have Tomatillos also.

The peppers we will have are Jalapeño, Goliath, Banana, Bell Boy, Big Bertha, Cherry Pick, Pimento, and Habanero Orange.

Come visit the Lawn & Garden Expo March 31st at the Waxahachie Convention Center and stop by the Ellis County Master Gardeners Plant Sales and let us sell you some of our tomatoes, pepper and perennial plants.

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children or groups of kids. Master Gardeners have taught classrooms of children how to grow a pizza garden and butterfly gardens using the bucket method. Leafy green plants such as spinach, kale, cilantro, or Swiss chard can also be grown in containers using a high nitrogen organic soil mix. This is most useful when the temperatures are dropping and the container is light enough to take indoors until temperatures climb again.

Methods are as varied as gardeners. There is one for every plant and one for every season.

Onion Gardening 101....Using an Organic Approach

by James Kocian, Ellis County Master Gardener



Soil Prep and Growing...

Amend the bed with 2" layer of expanded shale and 2-3" of compost. Make a 2" deep trench to place the onion slips in; rows 4" apart. Line the trench with a heavy dusting of soft rock phosphate and worm castings. Place the onion slips into the trench and cover so they are about 1-2" deep and about 4" apart—They need this space to become **big onions**. Or you can plant them every 2" and as they grow you can pull every other one to use as green onions; the others would then have the space they need to grow big. Mulch well with cedar or hardwood mulch and water in with liquid seaweed to get them going. I'll be planting mine on Saturday, February 11 and Sunday, February 12 this year, according to favorable moon signs.



They also love extra nitrogen. So 3 weeks after planting, apply a good dusting of Alfalfa Meal, and repeat every 3 weeks up to mid-April. The stalks of an onion are very important; each stalk represents a layer of onion. If the tips of the stalks turn yellow or dry out, it is a sign that they are not receiving the moisture they need. Onions require full sun, good drainage and regular water to do well.

Harvesting and Drying Onions...

You'll harvest when the necks begin to soften and the tops begin to fall over at a rate of 70-90%. May is generally harvesting time. If they begin to send up a flower stalk because we've gotten hot fast I would harvest them. If allowed to bloom you won't get good onions.

When digging them out, do your best to leave the tops, skins and roots intact; they bruise easily, so be gentle. Leave roots and tops on while drying. Lay them out on an elevated old screen, out of direct light, and away from moisture. A fan can help dry as well. Allow 8-15 days to dry, then remove roots and cut off tops leaving at least 1" of neck.



To store them, avoid heaping them in piles. Remember they bruise easily. You can use a cardboard box with some holes cut out, laundry baskets, etc.



Gardening Alternatives

By Jackie Wilhite, Ellis County Master Gardener

Winter months are the perfect time to consider new gardening methods especially if your landscaping needs have changed. Conventional gardening methods have a timeline that must be followed to obtain optimum results. Such components as first frost date and last frost date become very important. No one wants to put a lot of work into a new garden or landscape addition only to see a late frost destroy the plants. Careful planning will make implementation a lot more fun.

Gardeners are typically pouring over seed catalogs as soon as they arrive in early January, selecting familiar tried and proven varieties as well as a few new or fun ones. Sunny days would be spent working organic material into the new beds to create that just right mix and waiting for the seeds or plants to arrive. The last frost date for our area is usually around March 15. This means that unless winter hangs around longer than usual, we can safely put those plants in the ground after this date. There would be less chance of losing them to a late frost.

To extend the growing seasons, we have incorporated growing in raised beds, containers, window boxes, and mini greenhouses. These methods allow us more freedom to plant smaller areas, in a quicker time frame. Selecting the best growing method depends on the plants and the end result desired. Take herbs for instance, we can grow herbs seasonally in a conventional garden with little maintenance. But if more of a certain herb is needed year round, then an alternate growing method is needed. It can be grown in a raised bed with full sun and row cover for frigid nights, in a mini greenhouse with controlled atmosphere or in a container on the window sill for easy access. All methods work adequately. The choice is merely a gardener's preference.



One method that has resurfaced is gardening by the square inch. This sounds like something that only an apartment dweller would consider. But, the truth about this method is that it merely makes the most out of every square inch of space that you have to work with. It is taking the raised bed method, cutting the space into sections, and using plants that complement one another which results in a garden space that grows a lot of produce in a small space.

Plants that complement each other is also a good basis for planting in containers or buckets. This is an especially good project for

(Continued on page 6)



February - Such a Busy Time!

By Susan Norvell, Ellis County Master Gardener

This is a good month to think about, plan and prepare your gardens for this spring and summer plantings. Plan ahead and decide what you want to plant, and then order any supplies needed, if you are purchase from gardening catalogues. This would also be a good time to begin to assess any damage that may have occurred to your landscape due to freezing temperatures and last summer's extremely dry conditions. Remember to keep watering your planting areas.



For you vegetable gardeners, if you haven't already done so, now is time to till your garden and get it ready. Please, please remember never till wet soil; it will bind up your nutrients and form clods that will be impossible to break up.



It's getting close to past time to get your onion sets in the ground so if you want to grow onions, get your sets in now. If planting asparagus, use two-to three-year old roots and plant them in well-prepared, permanent locations in your garden. And remember; don't harvest any of the shoots the first year.

For your perennial gardens, consider using native and adapted plants, as they will reduce or eliminate the need for pesticide spraying and heavy fertilization. Native plants are also more able to tolerate our hot, dry summer conditions. Plants labeled EarthKind® have been tested and proven under all growing conditions, and are very hardy.

For you vegetable gardener's, around the 2nd week in February is the time to sow cool season vegetables seeds directly into your garden soil. Cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli and potatoes should be planted four weeks before the last average frost date, which is March 15th in Ellis County.

In Ellis County, roses need to be pruned by mid-month. Different types of roses require different types of pruning, so if you need assistance, contact your Ellis County Master Gardener rose experts for advice. Generally speaking, cut out dead, dying and weak canes. Leave 4-8 healthy canes, while removing about one half of the canes growth above an outward-facing bud. Don't prune when rain is forecasted; wait until fair weather for the next couple of days. Wait until after the spring bloom to prune climbing and "once blooming" roses. Local nurseries should have a wide variety of roses in stock now, so it's time to pay them a visit if you want to add new roses to your landscape. A good rose to consider adding is the Drift Rose. The 2012 calendar has a very informative article on the drift roses.

If you've been procrastinating, mid-February is the time to get your garden tools ready to go for this year. Unless you do it yourself, get your power tools to your local repair shop for a tune up. If you wait much longer, it might take you a while to get them back, as they get real busy around the first week of March.

Now is the time to complete any unfinished pruning of shade, ornamental and fruit trees. Be sure to remove that pesky mistletoe from your trees. Left unchecked, it will enlarge and cause distorted limb growth and weaken your trees. Birds will spread it by eating the berries.

The later part of February vegetable gardeners can start sowing lettuce, radishes, carrots, spinach, beets, chard, turnips and cucumbers in the garden. If you need recommendations on the best vegetable varieties for Ellis County, stop by or contact the Agri-Life Extension Office for a complete listing.

Water wise tip for February; plan your flowerbeds so that plants with similar water needs are planted together, thus eliminating over- and under-watering of some plants. Rainwater Harvesting is a great way to save water. The Ellis County Master Gardeners have information on how to catch rain and save it for future watering needs. We also offer classes on rainwater harvesting. Stay tuned for details on when and where these classes will be offered.



Speaking of classes, be sure and mark your calendar for our annual Master Gardener Lawn and Garden Expo on March 31st. Come and hear many of your local Master Gardener Experts speak on many exciting gardening topics.

For additional information or questions, contact the Ellis County Master Gardener office at 972-825-5175, or visit us on the web at www.ecmga.com. And please always remember to water responsibly as we still have drought conditions here in Ellis County.

(Continued from page 1)

the lily family bloom from just mid-February to mid-March. **Details:** Master Naturalist and long-time CRP volunteer Jim Varnum will conduct a short walk to observe trout lilies. The walk last approximately 1 hour. Bring your camera. Wear sturdy boots or shoes with good ankle support. Join Jim for a nature walk afterwards. Contact Jim Varnum at jvarnum@aol.com or 214-543-2055. **RSVP is not needed.**

Saturday, March 3, 10:00 - Geoffrey B. Stanford Trout Lily Walk (see info above)

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**Dogwood Audubon Center**

1206 W. FM 1382

Cedar Hill

**February 2, 9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m., First Thursday — Native Plants for Landscaping.** FREE admission all day and join us throughout the day for guided hikes, animal encounters, and children's arts & crafts activities.

**7:00 p.m.** Native Plants for Landscaping Presentation and Panel Discussion. Learn more about our beautiful and hardy native plants and how they can enhance your home. **Panelists:** Chip Clint, Diane Richards, John Snowden <http://tx.audubon.org/Dogwood.html>.

**Saturday, February 25 - 9-noon - Fourth Saturdays Volunteer Mornings.**

Volunteers are invited to join our "Fourth Saturday" trail-building and habitat management activities on the fourth Saturday of each month. For more information, please contact Dana Wilson, Volunteer Coordinator.

**Lighthouse for Learning**

(with the Ellis County Master Gardeners)

For reservations: call Melissa Cobb at 972-923-4631



**Monday, February 27, 6:00 - 7:30 - Vegetable Gardening 101.** Learn how and when to start your own vegetable garden. The class includes creating the space, adding all the necessary amendments for our Ellis County's soil, planting, caring for and finally harvesting your bounty. **Instructors:** Melinda and James Kocian. Cost: \$12.00

**Monday, March 5, 6:00-7:30 - Vermi-Composting 101.** Worm your way into composting by using worms to eat your food scraps! Vermi-composting, or worm composting, is an easy way to recycle your kitchen waste and produce rich compost to use in your garden and house plants. This class will teach you the basics of vermi-composting. You also will assemble your own worm bin to take home. **Instructor:** Susan Clark Cost: \$12.00 + \$10.00 materials fee.

**Monday, March 26, 6:00-7:30 - Rainwater Harvesting.** Efficient water use is increasingly important to Texas. Learn how to capture, divert, store and distribute rainwater for later use. This can be as simple as using a rain barrel or creating a rain garden to collecting and using for in home use. **Instructor:** Pam Daniel, Cost: \$12.00.

**Monday, April 2, 6:00-7:30 - Turf Grasses for Ellis County.** This class will cover the following topics: turf grass selections for Ellis Co., preparing the soil for planting, spring and summer lawn care, proper watering in dry times, disease control in lawns and weed control. There will be a question and answer session and handouts. **Instructor:** Jim Tachias, Cost: \$12.00

**Monday, April 9, 5:30 – 8:00 - Plant Propagation.** Students will learn the basics of plant propagation, increasing and multiplying plants for the house, landscape and garden. After a short presentation in the classroom, students will have hands-on experience in the WISD High School greenhouse. **Instructors:** Walt Friis & Maureen Nitkowski, Cost: \$12.00.

**Monday, April 16, 6:00-7:30 - Earth-Kind® Gardening.** EarthKind® urban landscape practices are based on proven research techniques which protect the environment. This class will focus on plant selection and best planting methods.

**Instructors:** Maureen Nitkowski and Jackie Wilhite, Cost: \$12.00.

**Monday, April 23, 6:00 – 7:30 - Tough Texas Plants.** Come see a power point presentation on selected ornamental plants that have been designated "flameproof" and have made the "North Texas Winners Circle" in the trial gardens at the Dallas Arboretum.

**Instructor:** Shirley Campbell, Cost: \$12.00.

**Master Gardener Photo Contest**

The Ellis County Master Gardeners announces that its annual photo contest is under way, with the deadline for entries has been extended until March 1.

Grab your cameras and get out in your yard; "Show Ellis County what you do best. Vegetables and summer garden pictures are great, but don't forget to include those great fall and winter photos too."

Photographers can submit their entries online at [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com).

There is no cost to enter the contest - and photographers can enter up to

five photographs.

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: The Greenery in Waxahachie, Roland's Nursery in Waxahachie and EarthTones Greenery in Midlothian.





### Don't have your calendar yet?

There are some still out there!  
Highlighted in **red asterisk** are the sponsors that still have calendars to be picked up - **FREE!**

Please thank and support these sponsors —  
The calendar would not be possible without them!!

#### Ennis

- \*Action Powersports
- \*Tex-Scapes Greenery
- \*Ennis Chamber of Commerce

#### Midlothian

- \*EarthTones Greenery
- \*Midlothian Conference Center

#### Maypearl

- \*The Cowboy Bank of Texas
- \*Maypearl Insurance

#### Red Oak

Keith ACE Hardware

#### Waxahachie

- Annie's Health Food Center & Market
- ARK Country Store
- Boyce Feed & Grain
- \*CNB Bank of Texas - all facilities

#### Carlisle Chevrolet Cadillac

- \*Carrington Insurance, Agent Nita Wilson

City of Waxahachie

- \*College Street Restaurant & Pub

Creative Quilts of Ellis County

Garden Inspirations

Gingerbread Press

Larken Farms Orchard

- \*Master Gardeners & Extension Service

Pam Daniel, Ebby Halliday

Living Magazine

- \*Roland's Nursery & Landscape

Stone River Landscaping

- \*Travis Equipment

The Dove's Nest

The Greenery

- \*The Rock Pile

- \*Waxahachie Civic Center

Waxahachie Daily Light



### Interested in becoming a 2012 Expo Sponsor Or Expo Exhibitor?

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

**Reserve the date: March 31, 2012!**

# 2012 Lawn & Garden Expo



Presented by the Ellis County Master Gardeners Association  
972-825-5175 [www.ECMGA.com](http://www.ECMGA.com)



## 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. March 31, 2012

### Waxahachie Civic Center

2000 Civic Center Lane, Waxahachie, TX

#### Guest Speakers

10:00 a.m. Steve Woodward, Wild Bird Center

1:00 p.m. Steven Chamblee, Chandor Gardens

2:30 p.m. Steve Houser, Arborillogical Services, Inc.

Over 100 Exhibit Booths

Children's Workshop

Cooking With Herbs & Edible Flower Demonstrations

Free tickets will be available from our Expo sponsors after March 1st.

Hurry to get free tickets while they last!

Check our website [www.ECMGA.com](http://www.ECMGA.com) for a list of Expo Sponsors or  
to sign up for our e-gardening newsletter.

Adult admission is \$5 at the door, children under 12 are free.