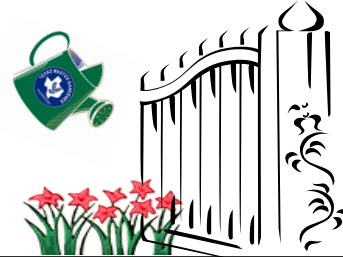




# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume IX, Issue Two

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

February, 2016

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

## What's Happening in February?

### Ellis County Master Gardeners-No Program in February

The Master Gardeners are in the midst of training interns all through the month so there will not be a program in February.



### Indian Trail Master Naturalists Events

Join the **Indian Trail Master Naturalists** at their monthly meeting on **Monday, February 22**. The program for the evening is entitled **"Science of Archeology"**. The program presenter, Eileen Berger, has been a member of ITMN since 2010. Eileen has had an interest in archaeology since childhood. In recent years, she joined the Tex-

as Archaeological Society and attended three academies and participated in two summer field schools sponsored by the Society. Eileen's program will consist of a short overview of the science of archaeology, an explanation and demonstration of the activity kit that she developed to teach children about the subject and will end with a display of stone tools found in Texas during the 1950's and 60's by her family.

The program is free and follows the 6 p.m. Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. Meeting location: First United Methodist Church, Family Life Center 505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email [ellis-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:ellis-tx@tamu.edu)

### Auction at The Greenery



Huge two day auction, Friday, February 12 from noon to 6pm and Saturday, February 13 from 9am to ????. Trees, shrubs, palms, rocks, fountains, and more. No minimum bid. Snacks and drinks will be available Friday. Lunch will be provided Saturday with drinks and snacks. Preview items Wednesday, Feb 10 and Thursday, Feb. 11. The Greenery is located at 3671 N. Hwy 77, Waxahachie. Phone: (972) 617-5459.



### Listen to KBEC

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

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

Melinda Kocian

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Lawn & Garden Expo



### 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!**



**Prairie Flax** (*Linum lewisii*) Prairie flax grows 18-20 inches tall and rarely stands straight up, but rather leans at an angle. Flowers are pale blue with five petals about one to one and a half inches across, veined in darker blue. Leaves are narrow and about 3/4-inch long. Blooms April to September.

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

### Planting

♥ Cool-season vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale and potatoes should be planted mid-month or about four weeks prior to the last average freeze date (March 15 in Ellis County). Beets, carrots, lettuce, radishes, spinach, Swiss chard and "greens" (collard, mustard and turnip) should be planted two to four weeks prior to the last average freeze date.

♥ Plant asparagus crowns in 10-12 inches of soil. When buying crowns, look for two-year old root systems that have a healthy, vigorous and well-developed mass of roots. Since asparagus is a perennial crop, consideration should be given to its location in the garden.

♥ 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 Earth-Kind® varieties are easy to maintain and will need less water, fertilizer and pesticides. Prepare the planting beds by adding a layer of three inches of organic matter and three inches of expanded shale and tilling into the top six to ten inches of existing soil.

♥ Dig and divide warm-season perennials, such as cannas, cone-flowers, perennial salvia, mums and fall asters before they break dormancy.

### Fertilizing and Pruning

♥ Prune bush roses around Valentine's Day, February 14th. Prune old, dead and weak canes back to the ground. Leave four to eight vigorous canes, removing one-half of their growth above an outward-facing bud. It is okay to prune errant canes at any time to maintain desired shape. Feed roses with a balanced fertilizer, compost or aged manure. Wait to prune climbing or leaning roses until after they bloom.

♥ Dead tops of ornamental grasses can be pruned to six inches above the ground. Mexican feather grass should be cut back only if needed.

♥ Dig and divide large clumps of warm-season ornamental grasses especially if the center plant has died.

♥ Cut back the tops of herbaceous perennials to the ground or to basal foliage. If the plants are hardy, new growth will emerge from the roots in the spring.

♥ Cut or mow lirioppe before new growth emerges from the ground. Asian jasmine may be trimmed back to four or five inches at this time.

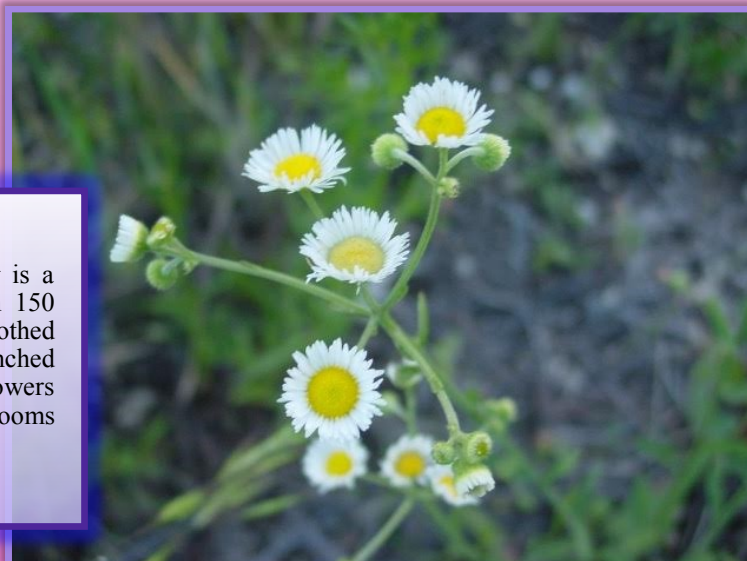
### Garden Watch

♥ 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 aphids and caterpillars on vegetables. Control aphids with insecticidal soap and caterpillars with Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*).

♥ Check for scale insects adhering to the trunk, branches and leaves of hollies, euonymus, shade trees, pecans, fruit trees and other woody plants. Apply horticultural oil (often referred to as "dormant" oil) to control these and other overwintering insects.

**Fleabane Daisy** (*Erigeron philadelphicus*) The fleabane daisy is a perennial that grows one to three feet high. It has more than 150 threadlike, white ray flowers. The center disk flowers are five-toothed and yellow, and there are many flower heads to each much-branched stem. The yellow center with the large number of very fine ray flowers is the best identification. Flower heads are 1/2-3/4 inch across. Blooms March to August.





## Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener*

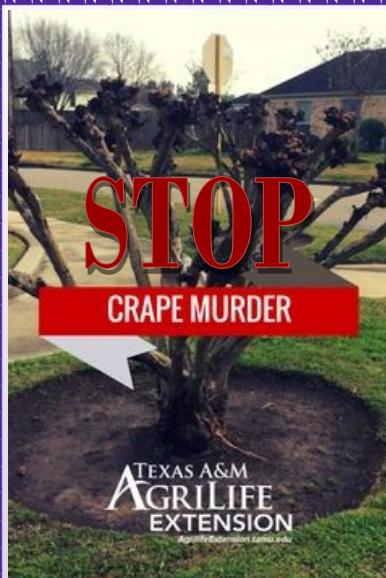


### Missouri Violet—Violet Family (Violaceae) *Viola missouriensis* Greene

**Region:** 1 – 8, 10 (Ellis County is Region 4)  
**Size:** 1 – 10 inches  
**Blooms:** February – April, Perennial

Members of the violet family are not hard to identify as a group. Common features are a flat, lower petal that frequently is lined to attract and direct insects to the nectar, two side petals and two upper petals. Identification by species is almost impossible, however, as they hybridize freely in nature.

Missouri violet has the largest range of the nineteen Texas species and is the one most likely to be seen. Flower color varies from pale to dark blue. Twenty to thirty leaves spread from a single crown. They are long-stalked and somewhat heart-shaped. Missouri violet is usually found growing in forested or riparian woodland areas, in partial shade. Most other species found in the state are restricted to east Texas.



Lopping off the tops of crape myrtles is a common ritual during early spring. Proponents of this method cite increased blooms and control of tree size as their primary reasons for such severe pruning.

The down side is that it destroys the natural beauty of the tree. Crape myrtles do not require major pruning to bloom. Flowers are produced, without any pruning, on new growth. Some of the most spectacular floral displays can be seen on old, unpruned crape myrtles along roadsides. Flower clusters are usually smaller on unpruned crape myrtles, but the number of flower clusters is greater. Therefore, the overall floral impact of the plant is not reduced.

The crape myrtle, with its distinctive smooth bark and graceful limbs, requires only minor pruning to maintain its natural shape. Dead or broken branches may be pruned at any time of the year. You may need to prune branches that rub against each other or those that are infringing on your house.

In early spring, you should remove the new suckers that grow from the trunks or in the ground around the base of the tree. Trimming off the seedpods after blooming will encourage more blooms in the summer, but will not affect the blooms for next year, as crape myrtles bloom on new wood.

The best way to manage the size of the crape myrtle and ensure its health is to first choose the right one for your landscape. Select a crape myrtle that will fit the space you have for it.

There are many varieties, from ground covers to semi-dwarfs to trees 30 feet or more in height. The best way to keep a crape myrtle at a manageable height and at a particular size is to plant a known cultivar that will mature at the desired height and spread and then don't prune it! Powdery mildew-resistant varieties are also available.

Crape myrtles should be planted in full sun, allowing for good air circulation. An application of balanced fertilizer in the spring is all that is needed. Natural rainfall is generally sufficient to maintain the crape myrtle; however, during extended periods of dry weather, the tree should be thoroughly watered along its root zone.

Reprinted from [http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/weekly\\_Q&A/t&s\\_3.htm](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/weekly_Q&A/t&s_3.htm)

**For proper pruning techniques, see diagram on page seven.**



### Light House for Learning

(With the Ellis County Master Gardeners)

For reservations, call Melissa Cobb at (972) 923-4631.

Register online at [http://www.wisd.org/default.aspx?name=CO\\_LighthouseforLearning](http://www.wisd.org/default.aspx?name=CO_LighthouseforLearning)



Join Ellis County Master Gardeners and Ellis County Extension Agency in a variety of classes to prepare your gardens and yards for spring.

**Monday, Feb. 29, 6:00pm–7:30pm. Vegetable Gardening.** Growing your own food can be such a valuable and rewarding experience. There's nothing like serving a salad or side dish and being able to say you just picked it fresh from your garden. In this class, we will discuss soil preparation, proper planting techniques, care and maintenance of plants, disease and pest control and harvesting. The most popular vegetables for Texas and the best varieties for the area will be covered. Home vegetable gardening is doable with any size plot and this class will give you the information you need to be successful. Handouts will be provided. Instructor: Susan Clark. Cost: \$12.00

**Monday, March 7, 6:00pm–7:30pm. Landscape Design.** This class will include design, analysis and installation of plants best suited to Ellis county and your particular property needs. Learn proper maintenance techniques such as mowing, weed eating, pruning and trimming. Learn best practices and how to get the most out of your landscape investment. Find out what to look for and where to purchase the best plants. Pictures or drawings of your landscape area are welcomed. Instructor: Scott Rigsby. Cost: \$12.00

**Monday March 28, 6:00pm–7:30pm. Perennials for All Seasons.** Learn about perennial plants that will return winter, spring, summer and fall. We will cover soil prep, types of plants and the pros and cons to planting perennials. Slideshow presentation of perennials will be shown and live plants will be available for attendees. Instructor: Pam Davis Young. Cost: \$12.00

**Monday, April 11, 6:00pm–7:30pm. Culinary Herbs for North Texas.** Herbs are some of the easiest plants to grow. They will grow almost anywhere, don't like a lot of fertilizer and generally prefer minimal watering, but they reward you with an abundance of flavor year round. What more could the casual gardener want! Learn which herbs grow best in Texas, which love our hot summers and those that prefer the cooler seasons. We will discuss container gardens, harvesting tips and preserving. There will be lots to smell, sample and perhaps some plants to share. Instructor: Arlene Hamilton. Cost: \$12.00

**Mondays, April 18 & April 25, 6:00pm–7:30pm. Irrigation Installation in the Home Landscape (with hands on learning).** You can have a green lawn or irrigated garden without spending much money. This is a two-part class with the first session in the classroom at WHS. The second session will be at the Horticultural Learning Garden in Getzender Park where the class will assist in installing a drip irrigation system in one of the garden beds. Participants will learn about installation and maintenance of different types of sprinkler systems and what is best for your needs. Learn about the importance of a backflow valve, how to test water pressure and how to winterize the system. Instructor: Alan Paxton & Jim Derstler. Cost: \$24.00

**Monday, May 2, 6:00pm–7:30pm. Good Bugs in the Garden.** It's common for gardeners to go out with chemicals and try to kill all the insects. But wait!! Not all insects are bad – in fact, most have a very important place in the food chain and can be used to your advantage. When you spray, you kill the good as well as the bad. This class will help you identify some of the common good and bad insects. You will also get some non-chemical ideas on how to keep them from taking over your plantings. Bring insect samples if you want. Instructor: Susan Gilliland. Cost: \$12.00

**Tuesdays, April 19–May 10 (four classes), 6:00pm–8:00pm. Beginning Farmer/Rancher.** If you are a landowner or have newly acquired a farm or ranchland and are seeking information for the best way to utilize your property, join this experienced instructor for advice. You will cover topics: soils and soil fertility, soil testing, pasture management, basic livestock productions and pond management. This class will be held at the Ellis County Texas A&M Agri Life Extension Office at 701 S. I-35E, Suite 3 in Waxahachie. Instructor: Mark Arnold, County Extension Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources. Cost: \$22.00



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



## Planting Trees and Shrubs: Proper Methods and Techniques

By: Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener



Now is prime time for planting trees and shrubs. Most bare-root or packaged plants should be planted now. Plants planted now have more time for the root system to become established before the onset of summer heat. However, many containerized plants can be planted any time of year, if handled properly. Following are guidelines that will increase your chances of success.

**Preparing the Hole** Most soils in Ellis County are Blackland clay. A poorly drained clay soil is either too wet or too dry for all but the most durable trees and shrubs. Soil drainage, compaction and building debris problems must be resolved before planting is done. The easiest way to help a young tree or shrub survive is to dig the planting hole much wider than is normally done. In fact, it is much better to dig an entire bed area for shrubs, rather than individual holes.

When preparing individual holes, dig the planting hole two to three times the diameter of the tree or shrub's root ball and no deeper than the root ball itself. Plant trees and shrubs one to two inches above grade. Planting above grade leaves roots susceptible to desiccation; therefore, it's imperative to immediately mulch above ground plantings.

**Planting Bare Root Trees and Shrubs** Trees and shrubs should be planted at the same depth at which they were growing in the container or field nursery. Planting too deep is a major cause of plant failure, especially in poorly drained clay soil. Look for the texture and color change between the trunk or stem and the roots.

Thoroughly water B&B (balled and burlapped), container and bare-root plants before planting. A dry root ball may not get thoroughly wet at planting. Never leave roots exposed to air. Very fine root hairs, which are not visible to the naked eye, are responsible for moisture and nutrient uptake and are killed when exposed to dry air for even a very short period. Keep the roots damp and covered while preparing the planting hole.

Holes for bare-root plants should be dug large enough to accommodate the roots without crowding or twisting. The hole should be no deeper than the original root depth and at least twice the spread of roots. Broken and badly damaged roots should be removed. A mound or cone may be made in the center of the hole to accommodate the spread of roots and allow the tree or shrub to rest at the proper depth while backfilling the hole.

**Backfilling the Planting Hole** Studies have shown that in most cases it is not beneficial to apply amendments to the backfill. Do not put crushed stone or gravel in the bottom of the hole! Gravel placed in the bottom of the hole will hinder water movement, thus creating soggy conditions in the bottom of the hole. The best backfill around a new tree or shrub is native soil.

Work the soil under and around the roots to remove air pockets. Firm the soil while filling until the hole is three quarters full, and then fill the hole with water. This will settle soil

around the roots. After the water has soaked in, finish filling the hole with soil and water again. If the soil around the plant settles, bring it back up to grade with additional soil.

**Fertilizing** A new tree or shrub has a very limited capacity for utilizing fertilizer until it becomes established. Excessive fertilizer in the root zone can be damaging, so do not add fertilizer to the backfill or dump it into the bottom of the hole. If fertilizer is used at planting or in the first growing season, consider a controlled release or diluted liquid fertilizer on the soil surface. Ideally, young trees and shrubs may be fertilized from March through July.

**Watering** Newly planted trees and shrubs should be watered well at the time of planting. Natural rainfall is usually not adequate. Generally, young plantings need an equivalent of one inch or more of rain per week. Newly planted trees and shrubs may need to be watered two or three times a week in extremely hot, dry, windy weather because their root systems cannot take up the amount of water needed to replenish the water lost through leaves.

Feeling or probing in the soil around the root ball is a way to monitor soil moisture. Apply water slowly at the base of newly installed plants. This is especially important for container grown plants as their soilless mixes can dry or shed water while the bed or surrounding soil remains damp.

**Mulching** Keep a four to six foot, grass-free circle around young trees and shrubs the first two to three years. Benefits of mulching to create a weed and turf-free area include reduced plant competition for water and nutrients and even soil temperature and moisture. Keep the grass-free circle filled with two to four inches of organic mulch, such as leaf mold, compost, bark, grass clippings or straw.

DO NOT use plastic under the mulch to prevent weeds. Roots are drawn to the surface and may be damaged by summer heat and winter cold. Do not mound mulch up against the trunk. Keep the mulch two to four inches away from the trunk. Excessive mulch against a trunk may also result in an environment favorable to disease and insect attack.

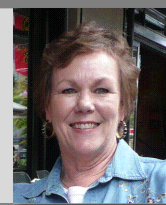
**Pruning the New Tree** Avoid overpruning new trees. Do not top or cut back shade trees at planting. It does not benefit the plant and often causes an undesirable fork in the main trunk. Do not prune top growth when planting in an attempt to compensate for root loss for either trees or shrubs.

Excessive pruning at planting reduces leaf area causing a decrease in the amount of plant energy generated, which is needed to create a healthy root system. The only necessary pruning is the removal of broken or damaged branches. Leave lower limbs intact if possible for the first few seasons. Small lower limbs will provide shade to thin-barked species thus protecting them from sunscald injury.

If you follow good practices in the beginning, you will find yourself enjoying the investment in your trees and shrubs for a long time to come.

## Asparagus (*Asparagus officinalis*)

Written by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener



One of the first foods that signal the start of spring is the appearance of fresh asparagus at local farmers' markets and grocery stores. According to the AgriLife Extension Service, in Ellis County the ideal time to plant crowns (spring only) is between February 12 and February 27. The recommended vegetable cultivars for Ellis County and North Central Texas are Jersey Giant or UC 157. For more info, visit: [www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu](http://www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu).

In one cup of asparagus, the calories are 27, 5% fat, 69% carbs and 26% protein. Asparagus has many age- and disease-fighting abilities. It's loaded with nutrients. Asparagus is a very good source of fiber, folate, vitamins A, C, E and K, as well as chromium, a trace mineral that enhances the ability of insulin to transport glucose from the bloodstream into cells.

Asparagus is an herbaceous plant that is a particularly rich source of glutathione, a detoxifying compound that helps break down carcinogens and other harmful compounds like free radicals. This is why eating asparagus may help protect against and fight certain forms of cancer, such as bone, breast, colon, larynx and lung cancers.

Asparagus is packed with antioxidants, ranking among the top fruits and vegetables for its ability to neutralize cell-damaging free radicals. This, according to preliminary research, may help slow the aging process.

Another anti-aging property of this delicious spring vegetable is that it may help our brains fight cognitive decline. Like leafy greens, asparagus delivers folate, which works with vitamin B12, found in fish, poultry, meat and dairy, to help prevent cognitive impairment. In a study from Tufts University, older adults with healthy levels of folate and B12 performed better on a test of response speed and mental flexibility. (If you're 50-plus, be sure you're getting enough B12: your ability to absorb it decreases with age.)

One more benefit of asparagus: it contains high levels of the amino acid asparagine, which serves as a natural diuretic. Increased urination not only releases fluid, but helps rid the body of excess salts. This is especially beneficial for people who suffer from edema (an accumulation of fluids in the body's tissues) and those who have high blood pressure or other heart-related diseases.



Many people question why eating asparagus causes a strong urinary odor. Asparagus contains a unique compound that, when metabolized, gives off a distinctive smell in the urine. Young asparagus contains higher concentrations of the compound so the odor is stronger after eating these vernal shoots. There are, however, no harmful effects, either from the sulfuric compounds or the odor! (On a personal note, we've noticed when we eat our home grown asparagus this is especially true; not so much with store bought). While it is believed that most people produce these odorous compounds after eating asparagus, few people have the ability to detect the smell.



Asparagus is a tasty, versatile vegetable that can be cooked in a myriad ways or enjoyed raw in salads. Roast, grill or stir-fry your asparagus. These quick-cooking, waterless methods will preserve the fabulous nutritional content and antioxidant power of asparagus.

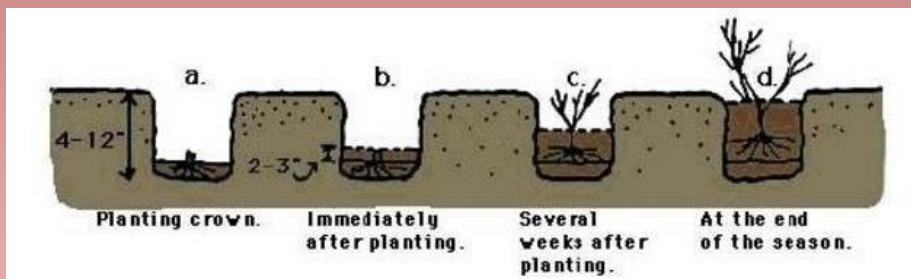
To prepare a planting bed, dig out unsuitable soil and replace it with an organic mixture of 1/3 sand, 1/3 soil and 1/3 sphagnum moss, compost or potting soil. Plant the asparagus 18

to 24 inches apart in a trench with the crown (buds) six inches below the ground level, but with only a thin layer of earth over them. As the growing season progresses, gradually fill in the trench.

Asparagus can be harvested from one-year-old crowns (the recommended manner). Harvest can begin to a limited degree the second year. Harvesting new plants too early will drastically reduce yield as well as quality of homegrown asparagus.

Most home gardeners in Texas harvest asparagus too long in the spring. Length of harvest will depend a great deal on location within the state, but generally the harvest should extend four to six weeks from the first harvest in early spring. Complete harvest in early spring followed by selective harvest allowing a few spears to develop into ferns is recommended.

During the rest of the year, allow the spears to fully develop into ferns. An occasional selective trimming or pruning can reduce the amount of top growth. Occasional light fertilizing and adequate moisture will help the plant develop sufficient top growth for good spear production.



(Continued on page 7)



## Children Are Natural Gardeners

With Ruth Spurr  
Ellis County Master Gardener



Children are naturally curious. They love to learn by doing and they love to play in the dirt. Working in a garden, a child can experience the satisfaction that comes from caring for something over time while observing the cycle of life firsthand. Gardening is a great way to teach environmental awareness by exploring the workings of nature.

There are many reasons children should garden. Here are a few. It fosters a sense of responsibility. Being invested and involved in a garden means the associated weeding and watering chores are welcome, and children learn that they are responsible for the care of what's theirs. It provides physical exercise, promotes self-confidence, and develops a sense of patience and an appreciation for delayed gratification.

Gardening also encourages children to eat produce! They grow it and want to eat it. When considering what things to plant for children, choose options that are relatively easy to grow, have short growing seasons and are fun to harvest. These include: sunflowers, lettuce, radishes, snow peas, cherry tomatoes, bush beans, carrots, potatoes and pumpkins. Other crops with mixed results are corn, green onions, zucchini, strawberries and watermelon. Give children gloves, real tools (not plastic kiddy toys) and engage them in the entire process from seed to table. The rewards for all can be amazing!

(Pictured is Ruth's grandson, Phillip Hallett with produce from his garden.)



## HOT TO PRUNE A CRAPE MYRTLE

### PROPER METHOD OF PRUNING CRAPE MYRTLE



This plant, pictured before pruning, needs to have all weak and dead stems removed.



Same shrub after removal of weak and interfering wood and base sucker growth.



Results of proper pruning are graceful, vigorous growth with distinctive shape.

### IMPROPER METHOD OF PRUNING CRAPE MYRTLE



Cutting at the dotted line is the usual course taken by those who prune shrubs.



The same plant after bad pruning, as indicated above. The sucker growth remains.



Results: the lovely natural shape of the shrub is lost, and bloom will be sparse.

Asparagus (Continued from page 6)

### Cream of Asparagus Soup

1½ cups chicken broth (or 1½ or 2 tsp chicken bouillon paste)  
½ cups chopped onion  
2 cups fresh asparagus (cut into 1" pieces)  
1 tsp lemon juice  
2 T butter  
2 T flour  
Salt/pepper to taste  
1 cup milk

In a saucepan, combine chicken broth, chopped onion and asparagus. Bring mixture to a boil, reduce heat; cover and simmer for 8 minutes or until asparagus is tender. Place half of the mixture in a blender. Cover and blend for 30-60 seconds or until smooth. Pour into a bowl and repeat with remaining mixture; set all aside.

In the same sauce pan, melt the butter. Stir in flour and cook for a few minutes. Add lemon juice, salt, pepper and milk all at once. Cook and stir until mixture is thickened and bubbly. Stir in the blended asparagus mixture. Continue cooking; stirring until the soup is heated thoroughly. Taste and if necessary, add additional salt and pepper. Yield: four cups. \*NOTE: I like to double the recipe. It's so good the next day!

Salad Burnet  
With Carolyn Ross  
Ellis County Master Gardener



Salad Burnet (*Poterium sanguisorba*, aka *Sanguisorba minor*) is a hardy perennial with pinnately compound leaves and apetalous flowers. The young leaves are sometimes added to salads. It is from the family Rosacea and a native of the Mediterranean where it was historically used as a tonic tea and to flavor wines. In England, it is often planted in the Tudor knot garden. It was also taken to America by the Pilgrims and became naturalized here. In America, it is not popular to use in cuisine, however Europeans use it frequently. In Elizabethan times, the herb was used to float in a glass of wine. Salad Burnet indicated to them a merry mood and pleasure.

Sir Frances Bacon planted it along his garden paths for the scent released when it was walked upon. The leaves and flowers can be dried for potpourri. In summer, it becomes more bitter and tough, but still edible. It is evergreen and can be harvested even in winter. As published in 1551, salad burnet is said to have medicinal properties even claiming to cure bubonic plague. The species name sanguisorba or blood drink alludes to traditional use to stop internal

hemorrhaging. Soldiers would drink a tea made from it before going into battle. It was believed to prevent fatal blood loss from wounds. Thomas Jefferson used it as food for livestock and to halt erosion.

It does require very well-drained soil and needs to be planted just outside the edge of a tree or shrubs where it gets good light, but protection from the heat. It will get tall and leggy if the flowers are allowed to go to seed. Salad burnet flourishes in poor soil and even tolerates alkalinity. Trimming allows it to produce more harvestable tender leaves. Those tender leaves can be used for herb vinegars, teas, spreads and sauces. Salad burnet is an herb used from as far back as the Han dynasty (206BC–23AD). This longevity and popularity are apparent because of its many uses. The Dutch call it “God’s little Bird” to show their fondness for it and the way the leaves fold up for rain or cloudy days.



## Ellis County Master Gardener Scholarship 2016



In 2003, ECMGA decided to make scholarships available to graduating high school seniors residing in Ellis County. We wanted to provide opportunities to these students that chose college studies in horticulture and/or life sciences disciplines. Since then, we have awarded 32 high school students with college scholarships totaling \$55,500.

One of the objectives of the ECMGA is to build partnerships with the Ellis County community to expand horticultural education and opportunities. In keeping with this objective, the ECMGA will again make scholarship funds available in 2016 to deserving high school seniors pursuing studies in horticulture-related fields.

To qualify, the applicant must be a graduating high school senior residing in Ellis County from an Ellis County High School, Ellis County Charter High School or Ellis County Home School Program. The applicant must have an elected academic major in a horticulture-related field that includes, but is not limited to horticulture, agriculture, environmental science, forestry, botany, biology (e.g., plant genetics, plant physiology), landscape design or entomology. Other horticulture-related fields of studies are outlined in the scholarship application package available on the ECMGA website. Applicants must be able to provide proof of acceptance at an accredited institution of higher education.

In addition, this year the ECMGA has decided to allow former ECMGA College Scholarship Awardees currently enrolled in horticulture programs/degree plans to also apply for a 2016 scholarship to continue their college/university studies. ECMGA college scholarships awarded to qualifying students in 2016 will be up to \$3,000. Students applying for the ECMGA Scholarship are invited to visit <http://www.ecmga.com> to download the application package found under the “What’s Happening” tab. The completed application may be submitted by registered mail (return receipt requested) or in person to the Texas AgriLife Extension Service office located at 701 South I-35, Suite 3, Waxahachie, TX 75165. If additional information is needed regarding the ECMGA Scholarship, please call (972) 825-5175. All scholarship applications must be received no later than 4:00pm on March 18, 2016.





## 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.

### Winter Honeysuckle—For Highly Fragrant Winter Flowers

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

Winter honeysuckle (*Lonicera fragrantissima*) is no newcomer to Texas gardens. It can be found growing unattended in old cemeteries and homesites, where few other ornamental plants survive. The two most common names are winter honeysuckle and standing honeysuckle, both of which provide useful insight into the landscape character of the plant. Robert Fortune, the great plant explorer from Scotland, found *L. fragrantissima* in China and introduced it to Europe in 1845. Soon thereafter, it appeared in American gardens.

The flowers are small and creamy white. They appear during midwinter and, although not outstanding in appearance, are highly fragrant. Foliage is rounded and bluish-green in color. In all but far South Texas, *L. fragrantissima* is deciduous and the flowers occur on bare branches. It is unusually well-adapted and can be found in far North as well as South Texas. Any good garden soil is sufficient with quality specimens being found in either moderately alkaline or acid soils.

Maximum height is about eight feet with an arching form to the branches. Red fruit in spring will often follow the winter flowers. Landscape uses include specimens, background plantings or hedges. Winter honeysuckle is very cold- and drought-tolerant. Propagation is from seed, cutting, or division of older clumps.

Availability on a national scale is fairly good. *L. fragrantissima* is often sold as a packaged deciduous shrub during winter. Although not a spectacular plant, the form is nice. Its winter flowers and fragrance are welcome, and its hardy character is a real asset. Early Texans often placed a specimen of winter honeysuckle near a frequently-used gate to the garden so that the fragrance and flowers could be easily enjoyed.

Stems are also nice to cut and bring into the home where partially-open buds continue to open. Like many of the plants

popular in the last century, *L. fragrantissima* is enjoying a renewal of popularity. Few plants will thrive in Texas gardens with less attention.

### Garden Checklist for February

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

- ♥ If you have deciduous fruit trees, look for scale on the limbs this month. It is much easier to spot scale on the branches after the trees have dropped their leaves. Flag the infested branches with fluorescent survey tape so you can find them later in February when they need to be sprayed for best control.
- ♥ Don't fertilize newly set out trees or shrubs until after they have started to grow, and then only very lightly the first year.



- ♥ When buying plants, the biggest is not always the best, especially with bare-rooted plants. The medium to small sized (four to six feet) usually become established faster and will become effective in the landscape more quickly than the large sizes.

- ♥ Complete the bare-root planting of woody landscape plants this month. Container and ball-and-burlapped plants are in good supply and can be set out most any time. Winter and early spring planting provides an opportunity for good establishment before hot weather comes.

- ♥ Prune roses during February except in the Panhandle and far North Texas, where roses are pruned in March or April. Use good shears that will make clean cuts. Remove dead, dying and weak canes. Leave four to eight healthy canes and remove approximately one-half of the top growth along the height of the plant.

- ♥ Now is an excellent time to select and plant container-grown roses to fill in bare spots in your rose garden.

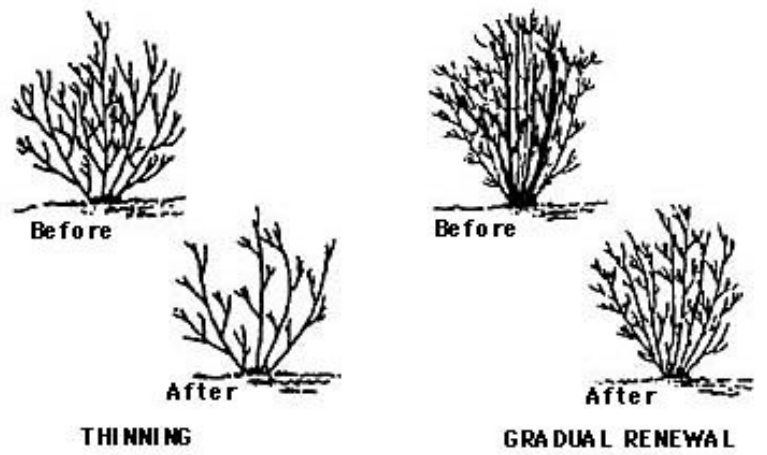
- ♥ Wait until after they finish flowering before pruning spring-flowering shrubs such as quince, azalea, forsythia and spiraea.



(Continued on page 10)

Landscape Gardening(Continued from page 9)

- ♥ When pruning shrubs, follow these steps: (1) prune out any dead or damaged branches first; (2) thin out by removing about one-third of the canes or stems at ground level, removing the oldest canes only; (3) shape the rest of the plant, but do not cut everything back to the same height.



- ♥ Plant dahlia tubers in late February and early March. Plant gladiolus corms; space planting dates at two-week intervals to extend flowering season.

- ♥ Fertilize pansies once again for continued flowering. Don't forget to water when needed.

- ♥ A potted plant, tree, shrub or cut flowers make excellent Valentine's gifts for loved ones and shut-ins.

Happy  
Valentine's  
Day





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