



Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VIII, Issue Two

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

February, 2014

Welcome to the Ellis County Master Gardener's **E-Gardening** Newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to give you a month-by-month agenda of what you should be doing with your landscape. We will feature horticultural articles that we hope you will find interesting, and important dates where you can find the Master Gardeners speaking, demonstrating, and passing out information relative to your garden. If you would like to receive this newsletter monthly via your email address, log onto our website www.ECMGA.com, click on subscribe, and it will be sent around the 1st of every month. Best of all; it's FREE! Susan Clark, Editor

What's Happening in February

Friday, February 14, 12pm–6pm and Saturday, February 15, 9am–?, **Huge Auction at the Greenery.** The Greenery will be holding a two-day auction with Bar B-Q catering by Bill Kelley and snow cones. Two gift certificates will be given away. Preview days are Thursday, February 13 and Friday, February 14. The Greenery is located at 3671 N. Hwy. 77, Waxahachie. Phone: (972) 617-5459 Web: www.thegreenerytx.com

Saturday, February 15, 9am–12pm, Cedar Ridge Preserve—Conservation in Action Workday. Volunteers help remove non-native plants, restore trails, and work in the butterfly garden. Water, snacks, pruning shears, shovels, and work gloves provided. Contact: info_CRP@yahoo.com. Location: 7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas. www.audubondallas.org

Sunday, February 23, 1pm–2pm, Trout Lily Walk–Cedar Ridge Preserve. Master Naturalist Jim Varnum will conduct a short walk to observe CRP's trout lilies. It will last approximately one hour. Bring your camera and wear sturdy boots or shoes. Contact: jevarnum@aol.com or (214) 543-2055. RSVP appreciated, but not required.

Various dates in February, Garden Inspirations. Farmgirls Market Day and classes include Potatoes and Root Crops, Nutrition Program, Makeover your Medicine Cabinet. For complete details and to register, visit www.gardeninspirations-tx.com.



Texas Discovery Gardens

3601 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Dallas

TexasDiscoveryGardens.org

Saturday, February 8, 10am–12pm, Rose Pruning Workshop. Join Dr. Peter Schaar in the newly renovated Heirloom Rose Garden as he literally slashes through the heart of rose pruning myths. Learn the proper way to prune roses to have plentiful, gorgeous blooms come spring. As a bonus, you will also take home a new rose to add to your garden. \$25, \$20 for TDG Members. Register in advance.

Wednesday, February 12, 6:30pm–8:30pm, Evening Chat: Water Wiser (Drought Resistant Plants). Enjoy hors d'oeuvres and an evening chat. Learn about some common – and not so common – landscape plants that are tough enough to survive Stage Four Water Restrictions as you plan for your 2014 gardens. Led by Director of Horticulture Roger Sanderson. \$5; \$4 for TDG Members.

(Continued on page 9)

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION



Listen to KBEC

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

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

Melinda Kocian

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REDBUD

- ❖ The redbud tree is a small deciduous tree that reaches 15-20 feet at maturity. The redbud is one of the first signs of spring when it emerges covered in magenta pink flowers for two to three weeks in March or early April. Heart shaped green leaves replace the blooms until fall turns the leaves bright yellow. Redbuds grow in full sun or nestled under larger trees without much regard for soil or moisture, making it one of the easiest trees to grow.
- ❖ Texas is home to three native redbuds: eastern redbud (*Cersis canadensis* var. *canadensis*), Texas redbud (*C. Canadensis* var. *texensis*) and Mexican redbud (*C. Canadensis* var. *mexicana*). Of all the varieties, Mexican redbud is the most drought-tolerant, is compact and is distinguished with leaves that have ruffled edges. The variety 'Oklahoma' has darker blooms and 'Texas White' is a white blooming variety.

TIPS AND LITTLE KNOWN FACTS

Blooms of the Redbud cover the limbs and sometimes the trunk of the tree in early spring. Fruit is a thin bean with several, dark, hard seeds inside. Mexican Redbud is shorter with smaller leaves and is more drought tolerant than the Texas Redbud. The city of Denton, TX celebrates Arbor Day annually with the Annual Redbud Festival that dates back to the 1930's.

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

Planting

- ❖ Plant cool-season vegetable seeds such as lettuce, radishes, carrots, spinach, and beets mid-February directly into well prepared soil. Cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, kale, and potatoes should be planted two to four weeks before the last average frost date which is March 15th in Ellis County.
- ❖ 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 till into the top six to ten inches of existing soil.
- ❖ Plant blackberries, grapes, 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. Leave four to eight 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.
- ❖ Dead tops of ornamental grasses can be pruned four to six inches from the ground. Dig and divide large clumps of warm-season ornamental grasses especially if the center of the grass has died.
- ❖ 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.

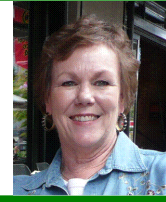
Garden Watch

- ❖ 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*).



Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener*



Scrambled Eggs—Fumitory Family (Fumariaceae)

Corydalis spp.

Region: 1–10 (Ellis County is Region 4)

Size: 2 feet

Blooms: February–September, Annual/Biennial

Scrambled eggs takes its name from its color and the fact that the blossoms at the top of each stem are so irregularly placed that they look stirred. The upper petal has a spur, so the flower seems not to be attached. Alternate leaves are three to six inches long, divided into five to seven segments, and then divided twice more.

It grows in sandy or rocky areas, prairies, fields or woods and along streams or roadsides, especially in disturbed areas. *Corydalis* is still used in medicine. Plants are poisonous to sheep and are suspected of being poisonous to horses.

Garden Tips to be Spring Ready

*With Susan Norvell
Ellis County Master Gardener*



February is here, which means the spring gardening season is just around the corner. Here are some gardening tips to help you get started.

Since January was a dry month, don't neglect your landscape plants. We tend to feel that dormant plants do not need water. It is true they need less water, but they do still need to be watered, so keep an eye on them.

February is a good month to plan and prepare your gardens for this spring and summer's plantings. Decide what you want to plant, and then order any supplies needed if you purchase from gardening catalogues. This would also be a good time to assess any damage that may have occurred to your landscape due to summer heat and freezing temperatures.

If you've been procrastinating, it's 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 really busy around the first week of March.

Thinking of getting started with a vegetable garden? Soil conditions throughout much of this area of Texas



are not ideal for growing vegetables and a raised bed may be your best option for success. If you haven't already done so, till your garden and get it ready. 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. If you want to grow onions, get them in now. If planting asparagus, use two to three year old roots and plant them in well prepared, permanent locations in your garden. Remember, don't harvest any of the shoots the first year.

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.

You can also sow lettuce, radishes, carrots, spinach, beets, chard, turnips, and cucumbers in your 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.

For your perennial gardens, consider using native and adapted plants, as

(Continued on page 6)

Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



February 2014 Herb of the Month – Cool Season Edible Flowers

February is a good time to garden vicariously from my kitchen window looking out over the herb beds and perennial garden, but today is forecasted to be the last of the balmy weather with tomorrow bringing north winds and freezing temperatures.

So this is an opportunity to get out, do some cleaning up, pruning of late summer bloomers (do not prune spring or early summer blooming plants now), and if I feel really energetic, maybe even get some compost spread. My three bins are piled high with rich, black organic matter. A one-half inch coat will protect the tender seedlings of chervil, dill, cilantro, and chives that are beginning to emerge.

With our mild climate, there is much to enjoy in the February herb garden. Some of my favorite treats



are the edible flowers blooming now. Pansies, sweet violets, and viola tricolor or Johnny-jump-ups are adding color to the landscape. Also, the flowering quince is blooming.

If you are organic and have not applied synthetic pesticides to your garden, these colorful petals are a culinary treat. Scatter them in salads or sprinkle them over cottage cheese, steamed vegetables, and soups. Sugared petals add a special treat to pas-

tries. Other edible bloomers found in the winter garden include rosemary petals, redbud, dianthus (pinks), grape hyacinth, dandelion, mustard, and tulips.

Flower Butter: Combine one cup of pesticide-free, chopped flower petals with one stick of room temperature butter and one teaspoon lemon juice. Mix well, cover and refrigerate. Use on biscuits, bread, vegetables, etc.

Sugared Violet and Pansy Petals: Pick clean, pesticide-free violets and pansies. Beat egg-



white substitute or the white of one pasteurized egg just to blend. With a small artist's brush, coat the flowers with the egg white. Sprinkle the flowers with ultra-fine sugar and place on a wax-paper covered tray. Set aside at room temperature to dry for several days. After completely dry, flowers may be stored between paper towels in a plastic container in your freezer. They will keep for several months.

Tulip bowls: Leave a small piece of the stem; remove the pistil and stamen and any little critters hiding inside. Then fill the flower with your favorite chicken, seafood or egg salad. Serve on a bed of lettuce or parsley with a slice of herb buttered bread for a beautiful lunch plate.

Before you eat any flower, do your homework to make sure it is edible and safe. Here are some guidelines to remember before you pick and eat flowers.

☼ Always consult a good reference book to be sure the flower you have selected is edible. Remember if it is not listed as edible DO NOT EAT.

☼ Eat only flowers that have not been

pesticides.

☼ Do not eat flowers from florists, nurseries or those picked from the side of the road.

☼ Eat only the flower petals. Remove pistils and stamens.

☼ Wash all flowers before eating. Best to spray with a gentle mist in the garden the day before picking.

☼ Use small quantities, one species at a time.

☼ If you have allergies, introduce edible flowers gradually.

Be sure to mark your calendar for Saturday, March 29 and plan to attend the Ellis County Master Gardener Lawn and Garden Expo at the Waxahachie Civic Center. For more information visit our website at www.ECMGA.com.





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



Monday, February 24, 6:00–7:30 Vegetable Gardening. So you want to grow some of your own food, but just don't quite know where to begin. This will be an informative class covering the basics of vegetable gardening. We will cover types of gardens, site selection, soil amendments, what to plant, how to plant, and how to care for your vegetable garden. Also find out what varieties of vegetables are recommended for our area. **Instructor:** Susan Norvell Cost: \$12.00

Thursdays, February 27 & March 6, 6:00–7:30 Landscape Design. To have success in landscaping and gardening, one must know the plants and their needs. This will be a two session class. In the first class, we will discuss the basics of landscape, plant materials, and design elements. There will be homework assigned involving measuring, sun tracts, and a very simple drawing. In session two, we will cover landscape styles such as drought tolerant, low maintenance, and theme gardens. Using your drawing, we will work on the design plan together in class. **Instructor:** Marilyn Simmons Cost: \$12.00

Monday, March 3, 6:00–7:30 Backyard Chickens. Learn from an experienced chicken owner how to successfully raise a healthy flock. Subjects covered will include selecting breeds for egg layers or just some pretty "yard art" pets, how to protect them from predators, and what it takes to care for them. Local regulations and HMO restrictions will also be discussed. **Instructor:** Carolyn Ross Cost: \$12.00

Monday, March 24, 6:00–7:30 Mosquito Mitigation In Your Landscape. Learn about the "enemy" mosquitoes and how to thwart them. Do all mosquitoes carry diseases? Can my landscape and yard art harbor mosquitoes? What plants can I grow that may repel mosquitoes? Is there really such a thing as mosquito repellent made from plant based constituents? Come on a mosquito safari and learn how you can have a more pleasant outdoor life with a minimum of mosquitoes. **Instructor:** Ginger Cole Cost: \$12.00

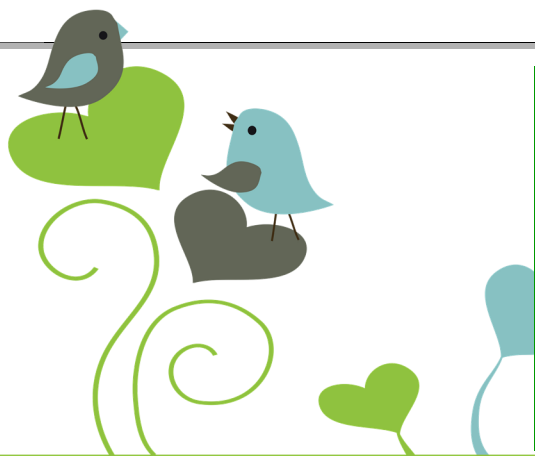
Monday, April 7, 6:00–7:30, All About Iris. All about Iris is an evening of visual presentations of the Iris Flower, grown locally in the yard of David and Pat Smith and a discussion of the Iris competition held in Florence Italy. In addition, a Master Gardener volunteer will be on hand to instruct the planting and care of the Iris plant. **Instructors:** David Smith and Shirley Campbell Cost: \$12.00

Monday, April 14, 6:00–7:30 Seed Saving. Learn to harvest, clean, and store seeds for successful germination. Learn how to save heirloom vegetables and perennial flowers. Determine what plants are best for seed saving and when to propagate from existing plants. **Instructor:** Monica Nyenhuis Cost: \$12.00

Monday, April 21, 6:00–7:30 Earth-Kind® Roses and Companion Plants. The Earth-Kind® program provides plant choices for the gardener, which have been field tested in Texas and proven to be less susceptible to pests, diseases and other problems. Recommended rose varieties come as dwarf, small, and medium shrubs as well as climbers, which will meet the needs of the home gardener. An assortment of companion plants for the roses that are equally durable will also be discussed. **Instructor:** Maureen Nitkowski Cost: \$12.00

Monday, April 28, 6:00–7:30 Container Gardening. Imagine walking out on your own deck or patio and harvesting vine-ripened tomatoes, fresh herbs, or crisp cucumbers. Growing vegetables in containers is not difficult. Let us show you how to bring the farmers market to your own back door. **Instructor:** Robin Smith Cost: \$12.00

Tuesdays, April 8–29, four classes, 6:00–8:00 "Ag 101"—Beginning Farmer/Rancher. Join this experienced instructor as you cover these 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 AgriLife Extension Office at 701 S. I-35E, Suite 3 in Waxahachie. **Instructor:** Mark Arnold, County Extension Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources Cost: \$22.00



**Interested in becoming a
2014 Expo Sponsor Or
Expo Exhibitor?**

Contact James Kocian at
expo.ecmga@yahoo.com

Reserve the date: March 29, 2014!



Garden Tips (Continued from page 3)

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 Earth-Kind® have been tested and proven under all growing conditions, and are very hardy.

Start planting your gladiolus corms and Dahlia tubers. Fall-flowering perennials such as mums, and Mexican bush sage should be dug and divided before spring growth gets in the way.

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 ECMGA rose experts for advice. Generally speaking, cut out dead, dying, and weak canes. Leave four to eight healthy canes, while removing about one half of the canes growth above an outward-facing bud. Don't prune when rain is forecast; wait until fair weather is forecast 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 (pictured).

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 and birds will spread it by eating the berries.

Don't fertilize newly set out trees or shrubs until after they have started to grow, and then only very lightly the first year. It is an excellent time to transplant mature or established trees and shrubs while they are dormant.

Check junipers and other narrow-leaf evergreens for bagworm pouches. The insect eggs overwinter in the pouch, and start the cycle again by emerging in the spring to begin feeding on the foliage. Hand removal and burning of the pouches are ways of reducing the potential damage in spring.

Water wise tip of the month: plan your flowerbeds so that plants with similar water needs are planted together, thus eliminating over and un-

der watering of some plants. Rainwater harvesting is a great way to save water. The Ellis County Master Gard-

deners 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.



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. Have a great spring season!



Save The Date!
Saturday, March 29, 2014



Cutting the Greens

By Marilyn Simmons
Ellis County Master Gardener Intern

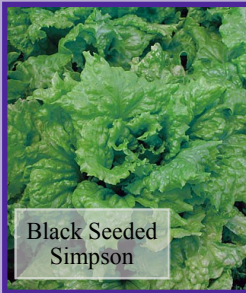


Lettuce, spinach, collards, kale, Swiss chard, and mustard greens are all abundant in harvest during the cooler portions of the year in Texas. Many varieties of lettuce grow well here in the spring and the fall. Freckles, Black Seeded Simpson, Red Sails and Romaine are beautiful in the garden and tasty in the salads.

The tiny seeds of lettuce need to be thinly planted at the top of the soil and lightly covered with soil. Lettuce is planted late February/early March for spring harvest. When harvesting the young, plants carefully cut from the outside in. More mature plants can be sheared to the ground and the plant will continue to grow until the heat comes on. When cutting lettuce, if a milky substance comes out, the lettuce may be bitter.

Spinach can be tricky to germinate. The seed can be directly planted in the soil or transplants can be purchased and planted. If you are sowing seeds directly, soaking them in water and storing in the refrigerator for 24 hours will encourage germination.

To have an extended harvest of spinach, plant in succession plantings. Starting in



Black Seeded Simpson



Bright Lights

February, plant the variety called Bloomsdale Long. In a few weeks, plant the variety called Melody, then follow that planting with a variety that will withstand the warmer temperatures called Tyee. The last planting for the summer is a climbing variety that is not a true spinach, but really grows well in the summer heat called Malibar spinach. Harvest the spinach leaves from the outside in and on a regular schedule. Radical harvesting, plucking most of the leaves from the Malibar spinach, seems to make it more prolific.

Collards are very productive in Ellis County. Many varieties grow well here. Georgia Collards are my favorite. This can be planted by seed or by transplant. Allow 1½ feet spacing and plant in late February. This vegetable is high in nutrition, popular for juicing, and a favorite in southern cooking. Harvest leaves from the outside in. Collards are a cool weather plant that can linger in the garden for extended harvesting.

Kale is the biggest bang for your buck to be planted in the garden; high in nutrition, prolific, and very easy to grow in our area. Kale can be planted in October and still be producing in late spring. It

grows well in containers, flower beds, and gardens. Harvest leaves from the outside in. Kale chips, juicing, kale salad, and many tasty dishes are made from this plant.

Plant Bright Lights swiss chard and bring color to the table. This beautiful biennial comes in red, yellow, and orange. This leafy vegetable can be planted by seed or transplant in late February and harvested often year round. Harvest leaves from



Tyee spinach

outside in. Swiss chard can be used any way spinach is used in salads, greens, veggie wraps, and chips.

Mustard greens can be grown and harvested from the tops of turnips, such as Red Globe, or turnip greens can be found that do not produce the root

crop. Plant turnips in February from seed. The seed is tiny and thinning will probably be necessary.

After the cutting of the greens, it is very important to triple wash each crop. Swirling the greens with some agitation to clean thoroughly. We use a salad spinner filled with water and spin three times in water and one time without. I hope you enjoy many delicious salads and dishes from the bounty of your garden.

ECMGA AMATEUR PHOTO CONTEST

The Ellis County Master Gardener Association announces its annual photo contest is under way beginning September 1, 2013. **Last date for submissions is March 1, 2014.**

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.



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.

Horticultural Oils

Cynthia W. Mueller, Master Gardener, Galveston County

Now is a good time to control scale insects on evergreen shrubs and trees such as camellias, hollies, bay laurel, myrtle, enonymus, citrus, photinias, and boxwood through use of a horticultural oil spray. Fruit trees may be sprayed at this time of year in order to control insect eggs that may have been laid in bark and twig crevices.

Usually, the oil treatment will need to be applied only once a year, and is an excellent way to smother a pest that is difficult to eradicate.

At times, even live oaks fall prey to scale, but due to difficulties of size, these plants are much harder to work with. Horticultural oils also have the benefit of being less environmentally harsh than pesticides.

Trees and shrubs are often unable to withstand the continual drain of sap from these sucking insects, and may ultimately be killed. Treatment consists of thoroughly spraying with horticultural oil according to directions, from every direction over the leaves and twigs.



There are several thousand species of "Scale insects". Armored scale insects are capable of navigating to fresh feeding grounds when very small, but then live and feed under a protective hard, waxy shield as adults.

Tea scales, oyster scales, eunonymous scales, and

wax scales are examples of these. Control sprays work best at a time when the young, unprotected 'crawlers' are present on twigs and bark and can also aid in protection against aphids, white flies, and spider mites.

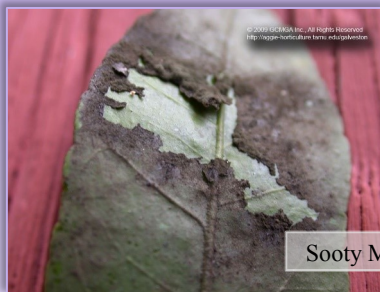
Scales often secrete "honeydew", a sweet solution that is soon invaded by fungus, creating a darkened, sticky appearance on leaves and even on other nearby plants known as



"sooty mold". After scale insects have been killed, the bodies will still stick in place and the blackened, sooty mold effect has to wear off the leaves over time.

Other species of scale present a more cottony appearance. Some, such as Mealy bugs (*Pseudococcidae*), are able to move about on plants throughout their lives, and may be found down inside bulbs as well as in clusters over plants, or concealed in debris such as fallen leaves nearby.

For successful spraying, look for a period in the early spring that will be relatively warm, but without a forecast of rain for at least two days (45 - 70 degrees F). Carefully follow the label directions in order to apply the correct dilution formula, especially if you plan to spray fruit trees beginning



Sooty Mold



break dormancy. If there are any doubts, spray a small area and wait a few days to check the results.



After a few weeks, check to see if spraying has killed most of the scale present. Pry off a domed scale with a thumbnail and press. If the shell is dried, the treatment has worked. If there is still yellow, orange or white viscid material, the scales are still living.

What's Happening (Continued from page 1)

Friday, February 14, 6 pm–8 pm, Butterfly Kisses. Stroll through our romantic Butterfly House as the sun sets and release lady bugs with your special someone. Enjoy hors d'oeuvres featuring chocolate covered insects. Our evening ends with Entomologist John Watts' talk on bug love, or insect reproduction. \$35; \$50/couple. \$28/TDG Member; \$40/Member couple. Register in advance.

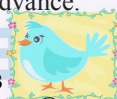
Saturday, February 15, 2pm–4pm, Make your Own Herbal Tea Garden. Join Marilyn Simmons, host of The FarmGirls Organic Gardening Radio Show, as she teaches you how to create your own tea garden with herbs. From roses, rose hips, lemon verbena, and more – you will leave with knowledge of what to plant to create your own herbal tea blend! \$25; \$20 for TDG Members. Register in advance.

Saturday, March 1, 10 am–12pm, Save the Rain (Rainwater Collection Class). Discover the basics of rainwater harvesting, how to calculate how much rainwater can be collected, and see examples of collection containers. Learn how to build your own simple system. Fee: \$60, \$48 for TDG Members. Register in advance.

Indian Trail Master Naturalists

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

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



Monday, February 24, 7pm, ITMN present "Wildlife Rehabilitation" by Kathy Rogers. The program is free and follows the 6 p.m. Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. Meeting Location—First United Methodist Church, Family Life Center 505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie, TX. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email ellis-tx@tamu.edu

Saturday, February 22, 10am, Winter Walk. Members of the ITMN will lead a refreshing walk through Mockingbird Nature Park with nature activity stations. 1361 Onward Rd, Midlothian. To register, email parksandrec@midlothian.tx.us or call (972) 775-7177.



Dogwood Canyon

1206 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill

<http://tx.audubon.org/dogwood-canyon-audubon-center>

Saturday, February 15, 9am–3pm, The Great Backyard Bird Count. Free admission. For details, go to <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

Saturday, February 22, 9am–12pm, Dogwood Canyon—Fourth Saturday Workday. Located at 1206 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill. For more info, contact Julie Collins at jcollins@audubon.org.

Saturday, February 22, 9:00am–11am, Trout Lily Walk & Talk. Learn about the unique Trout Lily that blooms in the canyon every spring. Drop in to discover this exceptional plant and stay for guided bird hikes and much more. Free for members; \$25 for non-members.

And in March...



Saturday, March 1, 9am–5pm, Fort Worth Botanical Gardens Butterflies in the Garden Opening Day and Orchid Society Sale. Located at 3220 Botanic Garden Blvd, Fort Worth. For details and admission prices, visit <http://fwbg.org/> or call (817) 392-5510.

Saturday, March 1, 10am–2pm, BRIT First Saturday. Enjoy tours, children's activities, vendors and booths, and a special program. March's program is **Bees! Bats! Butterflies!** See it all at BRIT and learn why we are a "Pollen Nation!" Free butterfly posters to the first 300 visitors! Activities will include: family scavenger hunt, plant ID station, bee workshop, bat workshop and more! Bella's Story Time at 10:30—Isabel's House of Butterflies. For more info, visit <http://www.brit.org/events/more-children-families>.



Save The Date!
Saturday, March 29, 2014

February, the Heart Month

By Susan Gilliland
Ellis County Master Gardener



In February, roses tend to get all the attention—either sending roses for Valentine's Day or cutting back your garden roses mid-month. Let me draw your attention to two other spectacular plants that should be discussed in February, the heart month.

Purple Heart (*Setcreasea pallida*) – one of the most rewarding and interesting plants that will serve as a bedding plant, ground cover, in containers or even indoors. It grows best in full sun and will sprawl (love that word) to 12 inches tall with an 18-inch spread.



The purple leaf color is stunning and the little pink flowers that show up from time to time make for great garden interest. Plant red, yellow and orange companions to create a dazzling contrast. It can cascade over rocks or grow next to your pool and not make a mess.

Purple Heart dies back when it freezes and looks ugly, but it's easy to pull away because it's a fleshy plant. Just cover the area with mulch and it will be back to please in the spring. It requires very little care once established and is drought resistant.

Pinch or snip off the shoot tips every few weeks to encourage branching. The pieces take root easily, so you

can use the trimmed-off stem tips to start lots of new plants. Mine is already peeping out of the mulch, so I keep building the mulch over the plant for protection on these cold nights.

No shade garden should be without the charming pink or white flowers of the **Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra spectabilis*)** in the spring. They can be planted this month from roots that are on the shelves now. A curious plant in that once the blooming is finished, approximately 30 days, it is exhausted and dies back. I always mark the location so I don't accidentally plant something on top of it while it is dormant.

Three or four Bleeding Heart perennials around the base of a large tree are a precious sight, or mix them with your favorite hostas and ferns for a more naturalized look. They also make a great cut flower display that



will become a conversation piece at your Easter table. I've noticed that some on-line nurseries are now offering red. They can be planted this month from roots that are on the

shelves now.

General planting tips:

Read carefully the spacing directions for your perennials and garden vegetables. Not only is it expensive



to over-plant perennials, you will be dividing them sooner and that is more work. And, for garden vegetables, they just need the space. If you have ever planted zucchini or greens too close, you know what I mean. A simple way to measure in the garden is to carry a pre-knotted short rope in your bucket. Pre-knotted at six inches, 18 inches or whatever distance is appropriate.



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