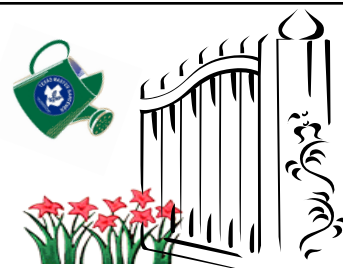




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VIII, Issue

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

, 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 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 July

IT'S BACK! Every Saturday from April to October from 8am-1pm.

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



- Useful gardening tips
- Plants and herbs for sale
- Free handouts...Some items for a fee
- Tell a friend to sign up for the **E-Garden Newsletter**... it's **FREE!**
- **NEW! Look for the plant of the month on sale-see page 10.**

Join us at the Fourth of July Parade in Waxahachie—Friday at 10am!

Camps for Kids! Get your kids involved with nature by exploring the many opportunities available in our area. Check the websites for BRIT, Discovery Gardens, Dallas Arboretum, and Garden Inspirations to learn more.

Saturdays from now until October 25, 8am-1pm, Ennis Farmers Market. Local vendors featuring baked good and produce, activities for the family, and more. Information at <https://www.facebook.com/ennisxfarmersmarket>. Located at N. Dallas St. in Downtown Ennis.

Friday, July 4th, 9am-5pm, Fourth of July at the Arboretum. Enjoy music, discounts, and children's activities including a scavenger hunt, story time, plant exhibits/talks, and \$1 hot dogs and popcorn. Visit <http://www.dallasarboretum.org/> for complete details.

Saturday, July 5, 7am-10am, Walk and Talk Bird Tour at the John Bunker Sands Wetland Center. Binoculars and field guides are available for use. Cost: \$10.00, includes admission. \$5.00 for members. Visit <http://www.wetlandcenter.com/> for directions and a map. For info, call (972) 474-9100 or email contact@wetlandcenter.com.

Saturday, July 5, 8am-1pm, BRIT First Saturday-Dive In at BRIT. Join in as BRIT makes a splash and dives into the wonder of all things water. Explore how BRIT is conserving water during scheduled activities. Also, enjoy an art show, tours, children's activities, vendors and a farmers market! Bella's Story Time for children will highlight the book, "Where does the butterfly go when it rains?" For complete details, visit <http://www.brit.org/node/438>.

Monday, July 7, 7pm-9pm, Kaufman County Master Gardeners present "Where have all the Asters gone? Changing Plant Names" with MN Jim Varnum at their monthly meeting. Learn about some of the new science discoveries that are changing how we identify plants. The event is free and the public is welcome. Light refreshments will be served. Location: First Community Church, 103 S. Main St., Crandall. Visit <http://www.kcmga.org/> for info.

Friday, July 18 and Saturday, July 19, 10am-5pm, Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County presents Down on the Ranch 2014 Quilt Show. For more information, go to <http://www.elliscountyquilters.com>. Location: Midlothian Conference Center

Saturday, July 19, 8am-11pm, Conservation in Action Workday at Cedar Ridge Preserve. Work in the butterfly garden and on the trails. Water and snacks provided. For info, call Jim Varnum at (214) 543-2055 or email jvarnum@aol.com.

Saturday, July 26, 9am-12pm, Dogwood Canyon—Fourth Saturday Workday. Located at 1206 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill. For info, contact Julie Collins at jcollins@audubon.org.

(Continued on page 5)

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

Inside this issue:

<i>It's July, What Needs to be Done?</i>	2
<i>Wildflower of the Month</i>	3
<i>Planning for Winter's Harvest...</i>	3
<i>Herb of the Month</i>	4
<i>More Texas Superstars</i>	6
<i>Annual Grill Fest!</i>	7
<i>ECMGA on Facebook!</i>	7
<i>July Farmers Market Events</i>	7
<i>Landscape Gardening</i>	9
<i>Plant of the Month</i>	10



TURK'S CAP

Turk's cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*) is one of the best flowering perennials to attract hummingbirds and butterflies with a consistent bloom period from May to November. Once established, Turk's cap is drought tolerant and holds up well to Texas heat, but prefers some afternoon shade. Average size is two to four feet tall and two to three feet wide.

The most common variety is red—with "Big Momma" being about 1/3 larger than most species. 'Pam Puryear' is the pink flowering variety that has gained a lot of recognition in recent years. Blooms on the Turk's cap are a tight whorl of petals with a stamen extending through the middle to resemble a finial on top of a Turkish hat (thus its name). After blooms disappear, all varieties produce marble sized fruit that birds love.

FINAL TIPS AND LITTLE KNOWN FACTS

This native of Mexico and Texas is also known as Texas Wax Mallow. In North Central Texas' black clay, a well-established Turk's cap is exceedingly difficult to dig up due to its very tough, dense, and deep roots. Although drought tolerant as far west as Midland, in full sun it may get mildew which crinkles the leaves. It is especially welcome in shady sites.

The leaf is about three inches wide and shaped like a maple leaf. The marble-size red fruit is edible and is enjoyed by a number of birds and animals. The flowers provide nectar to eager ruby-throated hummingbirds and several species of butterflies. Caterpillars can be a problem.

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

Planting

- ◆ Plant tomatoes and peppers from transplants. They need full sun, mulch, and water several times a week. Plants should survive through a hot, dry summer if kept well watered. Other fall vegetables can be planted in August.
- ◆ Use tomato varieties that are early maturing and tolerant of the summer heat. Best varieties for this area include: 'Celebrity,' 'Juliette,' 'Porter Improved,' 'Cherry,' and 'Sweet 100.'
- ◆ Plant warm-season grasses such as Bermuda and St. Augustine from sod only. Sowing grass by seed in the heat of July will require abundant amounts of water to enable the seed to germinate and become an established lawn.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- ◆ Deadhead all blooming plants and fertilize sparingly. Clean up container plantings by removing dead leaves and flowers.
- ◆ Pinch off flowers of warm weather herbs that are going to seed to encourage additional foliage.
- ◆ Keep pinching back growing tips of fall-blooming plants to keep them compact.
- ◆ Grassy weeds such as dallisgrass and crabgrass will have to be weeded by hand or dug out. The bare area can be filled in with plugs dug from the existing lawn. The chemical herbicide MSMA, previously used on Bermuda turf, is no longer available.
- ◆ Nutsedge, easily recognized by its triangular shaped leaves, can be weeded by hand in mulched areas. It has underground rhizomes with nutlets, so dig them up too or the sedge may come back. It likes moist or wet areas. Nutsedge can be controlled by applying Image or Manage. Two applications are usually required. Apply two to three days after mowing. Read and follow label instructions.

Garden Watch

- ◆ Keep plants with berries, caladiums and elephant ears well watered.
- ◆ On a hot afternoon, wilting is a sign of stress. It may be from lack of moisture or that a plant's roots cannot take up available moisture in the soil. Wait until morning. If the plant is still wilting, it needs water.



Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener*



Antelope Horns—Milkweed Family (*Asclepiadaceae*)

Asclepias asperula (Dene.) Woods

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

Size: 1–2 feet

Blooms: March through November, Perennial

Antelope horns is a milkweed with stout, spreading stems. It forms a low clump one to two feet across. Chartreuse, star-shaped flowers are clustered at the end of the stems in three to four inch balls. Most leaves are opposite and sometimes are folded together along the mid-rib. Antelope

horns thrive in a sunny location in well-drained sand or gravel. The plant provides an important food source for butterfly larvae, but like almost all of the milkweeds, is extremely poisonous to livestock. It has been used medicinally for several hundred years, however. The fluffy hairs attached to the plant's flat seeds, and exposed when the okra-shaped pods open, are used to insulate gloves and vests.

Planning for Winter's Harvest in the Summer Heat

*With Ginger Cole
Ellis County Master Gardener*



My husband accuses me of planning my next meal as I am sitting at the table eating the meal before me. He is right. I do. If I don't, who will? I've just had a wonderful breakfast of homegrown peaches and Uncle Sam cereal swimming in fresh creamy, goat milk.

The peaches were right off the tree, so juicy that when I bit into one, the juice ran down my chin. The taste was an explosion of goodness in my mouth. For dinner, I plan to have fresh corn roasted with a little olive oil, garlic and rosemary. Maybe I'll have a side of some fresh tomatoes with mozzarella and basil for a Caprese salad.

I'm also planning to have winter squash soup this fall. The kind they make at Whole Foods; rich and creamy with a touch of cinnamon and nutmeg. Yes, I do plan ahead. Most gardeners plan ahead. Enjoying the unequaled taste of fresh pro-

duce, fully ripened in season is the prize.

Now is the perfect time to plant winter squash. The average first frost in Ellis County is November 15th. Based on historic winter averages, by planting in mid-July, one can reasonably expect to harvest winter squash and many other vegetables before the first frost of fall. That is about 120 days, which is plenty of time for winter squash to mature by the fall.

Many crops have hit their zenith and are in decline by mid-July. Corn is one of many crops that may be ready to make way for something new. Remove and compost any unproductive plants from the garden. Add a little compost to prepare the site for the next

crop.

It is a good idea to rotate crops from different families throughout the garden in order to avoid building up soilborne diseases and pests. According to Roland Rob-

erts, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, sweet corn produces a coarse crop refuse that resists decomposition. The vine crops: pumpkin, winter squash, and watermelon, and legumes such as cowpeas accelerate the decay of crop refuse, and they grow well following corn. (For more



on crop rotation and succession planting, go to *Vegetable Rotations, Successions, and Intercropping* at <http://lubbocktx.tamu.edu/horticulture/docs/vegrote.html>).

It is probably too late to start watermelons, but squash should have plenty of time to mature by fall.

Winter squash varieties recommended for the North Texas area are Delicata, Early Butternut, Sweet Mama, Table Ace, Table King Bush Acorn, and Cream of the Crop. Delicata has an oblong fruit with some striped rind and rich golden flesh with a sweet potato-like texture. Early Butternut

(Continued on page 5)

Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



July Herb of the Month - Sunflowers

Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) sometimes called *maize de Texas* (Texas corn), the common sunflower is an American plant that has been widely cultivated and much improved from its modest ancestry. Here in Ellis County, these sun-worshippers are blooming now in meadows, along roadsides, and in gardens to the delight of butterflies, birds, and people. Millions of acres



of land in the US are devoted to the production of sunflower seed oil. In Ellis County, 20,000 acres of commercial sunflowers are produced annually for their oil according to Mark Arnold, our extension agent.

Sunflower seeds are roasted and sold as a snack food. Sunflowers can be processed into a peanut butter alternative.

They are also sold as food for birds, and can be used directly in cooking and salads.

Sunflower oil, extracted

from the seeds, is used for cooking, and to produce margarine and biodiesel. The cake remaining after the seeds have been processed for oil is used as a livestock feed. Sunflowers also produce latex and are the subject of experiments to improve their suitability as an alternative crop for producing hypoallergenic rubber.

Traditionally, several Native American groups planted sunflowers on the north

edges of their gardens as a "fourth sister" to the better known three sisters combination of corn, beans, and squash.

Lucy Harrell, an organic gardener and teacher in Texas encourages us to grow sunflowers in the garden as a "trap plant" for all sucking, rasping insects. The bugs are attracted to the sunflowers and less likely to damage your vegetable plants. As a companion plant, sunflowers and corn are protective to each other

with insect damage reduced on both. Cucumbers benefit when sunflowers are grown near them to provide a windbreak. In Texas, try growing sunflowers on the west side of the cucumber patch to provide afternoon shade.

You too can enjoy these colorful symbols of summer. To grow well, sunflowers need full sun. They grow best in fertile, moist, well drained soil with a lot of mulch. Seeds should be planted about a foot apart and one inch deep.

Children and sunflowers are meant to be grown together! The seeds are large and easily handled by little fingers. They will germinate in just a few days in a small paper cup in a sunny window. One of my favorite garden projects with children is to build a flower house. Use a stick to trace out a large circle, about six feet across, drag the stick along the ground and gouge out a trench about an inch deep. Have the children drop fat sunflower seeds and dainty

morning glory seeds in the trench. Cover the seeds and give them a small drink of water.

Be sure the children water the circle daily until the flowers are well established. When the sunflowers are about six feet tall, pull out a few to make an opening into the circle. With heavy twine weave in and out between the tops of the sunflowers and carefully begin pulling them toward the center of the circle to form a teepee. Within a few days the morning glories will crisscross through the sunflowers forming a beautiful garden playhouse where dreams and imagination will play



out all summer.

The Maximillian sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*) is a beautiful example of one of 38 species of perennial sunflower native to Texas and found growing wild throughout the state. They flower in late summer and the blooms grow up the stalk of the plant. The Land Institute and

other breeding programs are currently exploring the potential for these as a perennial seed crop. But if you have a

friend with a pasture you might be able to gather some seed and give this late bloomer a try.



What's Happening (Continued from page 1)

Indian Trail Master Naturalists

For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email ellis-tx@tamu.edu
Visit: <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/>

Saturday, July 12, 9am, Wildflower Walk. Members of the ITMN will be leading a walk at Mockingbird Nature Park. Join in this ½ mile stroll along the trails to identify wildflowers. Free to the public. Participants should bring drinking water. The walk will be canceled if raining. The park is located at 1361 Onward Road, at the corner of Mockingbird Lane and Onward Road in Midlothian. Info at: <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/> or email: Information@itmnc.com

Monday, July 28, 7pm, ITMN present "The Digital Plant Press". Ricky Linex will discuss modern methods such as the digital camera, flat bed scanner, and use of e-mail and internet resources to self-learn plant identification. 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

Texas Discovery Gardens

3601 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Dallas

More events and details online: TexasDiscoveryGardens.org

Friday, July 4, 10am–7pm, Fair Park Fourth: Red, White and Butterflies! Join in for this park wide celebration on the 4th of July! Enjoy the gardens and butterflies for just one buck during this family friendly celebration. Gardens stay open until 7pm.

Saturday, July 5, 11am, Butterfly House Discovery Tour. Join entomologist John Watts for a guided tour of the Butterfly House and Insectarium. Get a behind the scenes look at these winged-wonders. Followed by the noon butterfly release! *Admission: \$8/adults, \$6 for ages 60+, \$4 for ages 3-11.*

Saturday, July 12, 11am, Garden Explorers Walk: Life in the Pond. Get out in the garden on this family friendly walk! Examine why ponds in your garden are so important to the local ecosystem. It ends in time to catch the Butterfly Release talk at noon in our conservatory. *Admission: \$8/adults, \$6 for ages 60+, \$4 for ages 3-11.*

Saturday, July 19, 10am–12pm, Moths: Tales from the Dark Side. Delve beyond butterflies and learn about one of nature's "other pollinators," the moth. Learn about fascinating behaviors, adaptations, and diversity in the moth world from Entomologist John Watts. *\$15; \$12 for TDG members.*

Saturday, July 26, 10:30am–1:30 pm, Fascinating World of Butterflies. Discover the fascinating world of butterflies with Dale Clark, co-founder of the Dallas County Lepidopterist Society. The class begins at Texas Discovery Gardens and ends with a field trip by caravan to Dale's butterfly farm south of Dallas. The farm is not usually open to the public. This is your chance to explore on a behind-the-scenes tour! *Class is capped at 30 participants, so register early! \$30; \$24 for TDG members.*

Brumley Gardens, Bishop Arts Location

700 West Davis, Dallas, (214) 942-0794

<http://www.brumleygardens.com/home/>

Saturday, July 12, 2pm, Keeping Chickens with John Ramos from Urban Chicken Ranching. Come join this seminar to learn about choosing, caring for, and the upkeep of chickens. There will be chickens for sale that day as well.

Friday, July 18 & Saturday, July 19, Free 45 minute Landscape Consultations with a Professional. There will be a limited number of 45 minute slots from 10am–5pm, by appointment only. Attendees will get 50% off all plant materials, cash and carry on the day of the consultation. For DIY customers only. Please call Carrie Bailey at (214)343-4900, Ext. 107 to schedule. Deadline for appointments–Wednesday, July 16, 12pm.

Friday, August 1 to Sunday, August 3, Big Half-Off SUMMER SALE. More details to follow! Call or visit the website.

Thursdays are Senior Citizen Day! Receive 25% off your purchase! *May not be combined with any other offer.

Planning Winter's Harvest (Continued from page 3)

produces fruits with tan rinds and moist smooth creamy-orange flesh. There are many varieties of seeds locally or on-line.

Squash seeds are relatively easy to dry and save for future plantings. In order to save seeds (and money), buy an heirloom or non-hybridized variety. Purchased hybrid seeds produce some wonderful plants and are often very productive. It is not recommended to save seeds from hybrid varieties for future use though since hybrid plants will not produce seeds true to the

parent.

When the heat of summer is gone and you are ready for a bountiful fall harvest of winter squash, here are some tips. Cut, don't pull ripe squash from the vines. A broken stem exposes the fruit to rot. Don't use the stem as a handle. Don't let your children or grandchildren use them for bowling balls! I can personally attest to the fact that squash bruised from being used as a bowling ball will not keep well.

If properly handled and stored in a cool, dark room some varieties may last eight months. Storing fruit under a bed on a wo-

ven mat for good air circulation works very well. Just be sure to check on them and use them before they go bad.

If you plan ahead this summer, when it's cold and dreary this fall, you can cook up some warm and delicious winter squash. My husband likes acorn squash stuffed with mincemeat pie filling and baked. He gets his mincemeat fix with the extra nutrition from the squash and without the extra piecrust calories. If you don't know what kind of winter squash you like, go to the grocery store and buy several kinds. Then plant the kind you like.



Pink Flare hibiscus might be too gaudy for some, but not Texas!

New Pink Flare and Peppermint Flare varieties named Texas Superstars.

In the mid-1990s, Dr. Sam McFadden of Somerville, TN, a well-known plant breeder, developed a hibiscus whose color he didn't like, one whose gaudiness actually embarrassed him a bit, according to Texas A&M AgriLife Research horticulturist, Dr. Brent Pemberton.

The best he could do was say it was the same color seen when a road flare is struck at night: a brilliant, hot florescent fuchsia, said Dr. Brent Pemberton, A&M AgriLife Research scientist and chair of the Texas Superstar executive board.

Texas Superstar board members decided what might have been too gaudy for Tennessee would play well in Texas, especially with our blindingly bright sun that washes out more subtle colors.

In 1998, Flare along with Moy Grande, a red hibiscus variety with 12-inch diameter blooms, and Lord Baltimore, another red variety, were named Texas Superstars. All three became popular thanks to promotional efforts.

But since 1998, two new colors, Pink Flare and Peppermint Flare (white with red stripes), were found and named Texas Superstars.

But why name a variety as Texas Superstar a second time? Because the original Flare was not pink. It was fluorescent red, giving Texas gardeners further op-

More Texas Superstars-Hibiscus

With Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener



tions for landscape design.

Though the colors of its sister plant, Peppermint Flare, are more subdued, it is directly related to the same "mother" Flare variety that was nearly abandoned to obscurity in Tennessee because it was too scarlet. Peppermint Flare is true to its name, resembling a huge peppermint candy, only streams of fluorescent red in the center reveals the family ties to its more flamboyant sister.

Like most hibiscus varieties, Pink Flare and Peppermint Flare are easy to grow.

Though the blooms grow eight inches to ten inches in diameter, the plants themselves remain relatively small, about four feet—what horticulturists call "dwarfy."

Though dwarfy above-ground, hibiscus plants have an extensive root system, which means they can be grown all over Texas and survive the winter without mulching.

They are easy to grow and able to thrive with a modest amount of added nutrients. They do well in any soil type. The plants are also practically sterile, not producing seed,

which encourages a "luxuriant" reblooming. By practically sterile, it's meant they produce seeds, but only rarely.

All perennial hibiscuses are hardy to Zone 5 (the Midwest); they survive our Texas winters although they are slow to reappear in the spring. Their blooms last for one day only and when cut will survive for that one day without water and are frequently used for decoration or worn in the hair.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas A&M AgriLife Researchers extensively test and designate plants as Texas Superstars that are not just beautiful but perform well for Texas consumers and growers. They also must be easy to propagate, which should insure that the plants are not only widely available throughout Texas, but reasonably-priced too.

Texas Superstar is a registered trademark owned by Texas A&M AgriLife Research. More information about the Texas Superstar program can be found at <http://texassuperstar.com/>.

Sources: Dr. Brent Pemberton, b-pemberton@tamu.edu & Robert Burns



**Interested in becoming a
2015 Expo Sponsor Or
Expo Exhibitor?**

Contact James Kocian at
expo.ecmga@yahoo.com

Reserve the date: March 28, 2015!



ANNUAL GRILL FESTIVAL

Come one, come all! The Ellis County Master Gardeners will hold the annual Vegetable and Fruit Grilling Festival on Saturday, August 2nd! Mark Arnold, County Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Texas A&M Agri-Life Extension Service, will again man the grill for this fun event. The Master Gardeners will collect donations from the Farmers Market vendors and prepare the fruits and vegetables for the grill.

Samples are handed out to the public and there is no charge for the event. Food should start coming off the grill around 9:00 AM and will continue until everything is gone. Please plan on attending this fun event.



Find us on:
facebook®

Are you a Facebooker? You should be! Ellis County Master Gardeners are now on Facebook and we'd love to have you join us. Check in to find out where and when our local events will be held—events like the Downtown Waxahachie Farmers Market or Earth Day in Ferris. Drop by our page after an event to see pictures.

Use our page as your point of contact to ask us gardening questions or get information about flowers, vegetables and herbs...we cover it all! Some of the recent articles we posted described how to create a straw bale garden, how to prune your roses, and how deep to plant bulbs. You can also learn about new varieties of plants such as the Tycoon tomato, a new Texas Superstar that produces fruit that can grow up to one pound or larger!

You'll find us at this link, and all you have to do is click the "Like" button to see our daily posts! We look forward to hearing from you with questions and comments. If you have a QR Code reader on your smartphone, you can scan our code and be taken directly to our Facebook page.

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



From Facebook Administrator and ECMG Intern, Kim Cole

July Farmers Market Events



July 5th—We're still celebrating Independence Day with Red, White, and Blueberries at the downtown Waxahachie Farmers Market. Our vendors still have tomatoes, onions, and well...maybe some blueberries. Come on down and check it out! The Master

Gardeners are featuring a new plant of the month. This month's feature is the pretty Blue Daze, so be sure to come by our booth. The plant of the month will be available throughout the month of July, or until stock runs out!

July 12th—Looking to adopt a pet? Today is Adopt-A-Pet day, so come on down to the market to see if you can give a good home to one of the pets. It's the second Saturday and that means a kid's activity. This Saturday we'll be making ladybug sanctuaries. So if you have kids or grandkids, be sure to stop by. The vendors still have lots of good produce, meats, baked goods as well as pottery, handmade jewelry, plants, and more.

July 19th—It's Salsa Saturday at the Farmers Market. Come on down to the market and sample some great fresh tasting salsas. Be sure to find Susan, a master gardener, at the market today with her take on some yummy salsas. And the MGs are on hand to answer your gardening questions.

July 26th—It's Melon Mania at the Farmers Market today. A great time to come sample locally grown watermelon and cantaloupe. What better way to cool down in the evening than to enjoy cool fresh melons. And it's the last Saturday to purchase Blue Daze plant from the Master Gardeners.

My Garden of Zen

*Written by Marsha Rowen
Ellis County Master Gardener*



Have you ever wanted to get away from the noise and stresses of day-to-day living? I have found a way without ever leaving my home and it was one of the best decisions of my life. I have always wanted a water garden with koi, water lilies, and the sound of gentle water flowing.

I know what you are thinking! A water garden is a big project, and costly as well. It doesn't have to be. You can start with a large ceramic pot and go from there. Believe me, I have had so many different types of water ponds, from a small container to pre-formed ponds to holes in the ground, and finally the one I have now.

How do I begin? First choose a spot where you can sit and enjoy your garden, and one that you can see from different rooms in your home. I wanted mine to receive morning sun and where I can see it from my kitchen and bedroom window next to my patio.

Decide how much room you want to use for its construction. Do you want to attempt designing and installing it yourself or do you want to hire a professional to do it? We bought pallets of rock for five years before we ever started our water garden. We had a small dozer dig the hole. I wanted it at least three feet deep with a six inch to one foot shelf built around the inside of the pond for easy access to plants.

You can use a large pre-formed mold or the thickest liner you can find (usually

from a water garden specialty store). You will need to have water and electricity for your pond. You can use a hose and an extension cord or install underground.

The next step is the fun part: putting the rock or stones in the bottom and sides of your pond. You can use smaller rock and/or river rock up to the size of your fist or larger. Keep in mind there will be times when you need to step into your pond to make changes or clean up, or to cool your feet and legs on a hot day! I usually wear rubber soles when I step into mine.

You can use bog plants to circulate your water or use equipment to filter your water to stabilize the life of your fish. The pump you use to circulate water will depend on the size of your pond. You can actually go on-line and Google "pond pump calculator" and lots of websites will come up that can assist you in your calculations.

When you put the water in the pond, you will also need a chlorine removal liquid for the addition of fish. You can buy koi and/or goldfish at your local pet store. You can get larger ones from the new koi store in Waxahachie on College Street.

I started with small, inexpensive fish at first. They grow fast! Last year, some of my fish even had babies. They hid under

the rock ledges until they were one-to-two inches. There were about sixteen new fish.

The first night we had water in the pond, the frogs spread the word and had a party. They made all their loud mating calls and more came. It was a real symphony! Next morning, there were slimy strings of eggs back and forth across the pond. Pretty yucky. Soon after that, we had lots of tadpoles and then little frogs everywhere. Soon though, they were mostly gone—nature's laws of checks and balance at work!

I have left out a lot of details of building a pond due to time, space, and for fear of becoming boring. I have loads of books and a video on ponds that I have accumulated over the years. Any of you are welcome to come by and see the finished project. I love to step out my back door and see the fish swarming for food. They are very entertaining to watch. Every night

the frogs' symphony is music to my ears. You are invited to come to my Garden of Zen any time! ☺

To take Marsha up on her invitation or for more information, call the AgriLife Extension office at (972)825-5175 or email an inquiry to elismg@ag.tamu.edu.



Save The Date!
Saturday, March 28, 2015





Landscape Gardening

From: Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener

Ellis County Master Gardeners have a website at 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.

Accent the Fall Landscape with Vegetables and Herbs

by Dr. William C. Welch, Extension Horticulturist, Texas AgriLife Ext Service

Vegetables and herbs can be used in imaginative ways to add beauty, interest, and utility to our landscapes. Midsummer and early fall offer us a good 'second season' for growing these plants if gardeners can motivate themselves to provide a little extra care during the long, hot days of late summer.

Hanging containers of parsley, mint, thyme, rosemary, and tomatoes can all be started now. These plants may be available at local nurseries, but with a little extra effort they can be grown from seed. Each has a drooping growth habit which makes it especially appropriate for hanging-container use.

An even larger variety of herbs and vegetables may be grown in the more 'down-to-earth' containers, such as clay pots and wooden tubs. Tomatoes, peppers, lettuce, eggplants, carrots, and radishes are just a few of the many available. Even small porches and decks of apartments can be made more attractive and interesting with groupings of containers filled with herbs and vegetables.

Two important points to consider in growing container plants are the media and the container selection. Most vegetables require excellent drainage, so select a container with a hole in the bottom.

Plain clay pottery is attractive and versatile, as are many of the cedar and redwood tubs.

Small containers dry out very quickly, and sometimes require daily or twice-daily irrigation. A minimum size for containers is 10 to 12 inches, with 16 or 18 inches being more appropriate for large plants such as tomatoes or egg-

plants. The media must also drain well for most plants to thrive and yet still hold an adequate amount of water.

Some gardeners prefer soilless mixes, such as half peat moss and half vermiculite. Others like the added support of micronutrients found in mixes such as one-third garden loam, one-third peat moss, and one-third sharp sand.

Many different media can be used successfully. The most important factor is for the gardener to learn how to manage the media selected, since water and fertilizer requirements vary considerably.



Garden Checklist for July-August

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- ✧ Bagging and supporting melons increases productivity
- ✧ By August many fall vegetable seeds and even small plants may be set out

for later production. Be careful to give extra water, and a little shade, to these young plants while they are becoming established. The result will be excellent cool season garden produce.

- ✧ Trim off faded flowers on crape myrtles and vitex to encourage later rebloom.

- ✧ Evaluate the volume of water delivered from lawn sprinklers to ensure healthy, stress-free grass during the heat of the summer. One thorough water-

ing which will deliver one inch of water at a time is better than several more shallow sessions. The amount of water available through flowerbed sprinklers may be checked by placing several shallow pans among shrubs or flowers.

- ✧ Caladiums require plenty of water at this time of year if they are to remain lush and active until fall. Fertilize with 21-0-0 at the rate of one-third to one-half pound per 100 square feet of bed area, and water thoroughly.

- ✧ Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning from now until midwinter. Severe pruning at this time will only stimulate tender new growth prior to frost.

- ✧ Sow seeds of snapdragons, dianthus, pansies, calendulas, and other cool-season flowers in flats, or in well-prepared areas of the garden, for planting outside during mid-to-late fall.

- ✧ Plant bluebonnet and other spring wildflowers. They must germinate in late summer or early fall, develop good root systems, and be ready to grow in spring when the weather

(Continued on page 10)

Landscape Gardening (Continued from page 9)

warms. Plant seed in well-prepared soil, one-half inch deep, and water thoroughly.

- ✧ Picking flowers frequently encourages most annuals and perennials to flower even more abundantly.
- ✧ Pick okra, peas, and peppers often to maintain production.
- ✧ It is time to divide spring-flowering perennials, such as iris, Shasta daisy, oxeye, gaillardia, cannas, day lilies, violets, liriopse, and ajuga.
- ✧ Make your selections and place orders for spring-flowering bulbs now so that they will arrive in time for planting in October and November.
- ✧ Don't allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture.
- ✧ A late-summer pruning of rosebushes can be beneficial. Prune out dead canes

and any weak, brushy growth. Cut back tall, vigorous bushes to about 30 inches. After pruning, apply fertilizer, and water thoroughly. If a preventive disease-control program has been maintained, your rose bushes should be ready to provide an excellent crop of flowers this fall.

- ✧ It is not too late to set out another

planting of many warm-season annuals, such as marigolds, zinnias, and periwinkles. They will require extra attention for the first few weeks, but should provide you with color during late September, October, and November.

- ✧ Establish a new compost pile to accommodate the fall leaf accumulation.



NEW this year: Farmers Market Plant of the Month

Each month, the Ellis County Master Gardeners will feature a “plant of the month” for sale at the farmers market. July’s featured plant is the **Blue Daze** (*Evolvulus glomeratus*). Plants will be on sale at the Master Gardener booth.

- ✧ Tropical used as a summer annual
- ✧ Flat mound, two to three feet wide, four to eight inches tall
- ✧ Frosted green to blue foliage

- ✧ Sky blue to purple, one-inch flowers
- ✧ Blooms spring to frost, profuse in summer heat
- ✧ Heat, salt, and high pH tolerant, but not overly drought tolerant
- ✧ Survives full sun, but best with afternoon shade
- ✧ Use as edging, bedding, summer groundcover, containers, or hanging baskets

Stop by our booth at the Farmers Market. We love to talk plants and hear your gardening stories.



Thank You All!!

**Thanks to the sponsors, exhibitors, and visitors for making the
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Ellis County Master Gardeners' Lawn & Garden Expo
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