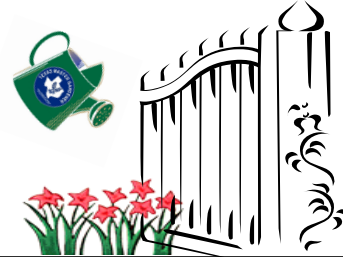




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume X, Issue 7

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

July, 2017

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. Best of all; it's FREE! Susan Clark, Editor and the Newsletter Team: Susan Ellis, Donna Hubbard, Bree Shaw

What's Happening in July?

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!

Every week at the Market, there is a unique theme designed to highlight vendor products, in-season produce, children's activities, or interesting garden subjects. Following are the upcoming themes for July and early August:

July 22: Master Gardeners' Grill Fest

July 29: Crafty Crafters

August 5: Melon Madness

Next Pop-Up Horticulture Class is July 29th...see page 3 for details!



Indian Trail Master Naturalists Events



Join the **Indian Trail Master Naturalists** at their monthly meeting on **Monday, July 24**. The program for the evening is entitled **"Discovering and Preserving Texas' Botanical Heritage: Good for Science, Good for Conservation"**.

Barney L. Lipscomb, editor, author, writer, public speaker and researcher will discuss plant life, vegetation, and natural history in Texas based on collections from the past 197 years. The program will examine herbarium collections to 1) map under-collected areas in Texas, 2) look at the rate of plant collecting in the 21st century, and 3) identify areas of Texas in need of further exploration and collecting. The program is free and follows the 6p.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

Wildflower & Bird Walk. Cancelled for the months of July and August. Walks will resume on September 16th. Look for details in the September newsletter.

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

Planting

- ✧ Plant tomatoes and peppers from 4-inch pots. Visit <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable> for recommended varieties.
- ✧ Early July is the time to plant small and medium pumpkins for a Halloween harvest.
- ✧ Plant heat-tolerant annuals that have been acclimated to hot, sunny conditions. This includes moss rose, purslane, trailing lantana, purple fountain grass, firebush, and copper plants.
- ✧ Lawn grasses can be planted this month, but you will need to water twice daily for short intervals to keep soil surface moist until the grass has established good roots, usually in two to three weeks.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- ✧ Fertilize plants that bloom on new growth, such as crape myrtles, tropical hibiscus and roses, with a high-nitrogen fertilizer to promote late-summer growth and fall blooms. Apply same fertilizer to boost summer annuals and fall-flowering perennials.

- ✧ Light pruning of erratic spring growth may be done to maintain the natural form. Dead and diseased wood from trees and shrubs should be removed. Major pruning should be postponed until mid-winter.
- ✧ Deadhead all blooming plants. Remove dead leaves and spent blooms from container plants.

Garden Watch

- ✧ Be a "plant health" detective! Plants respond in various ways to heat and drought stress. These symptoms are often misdiagnosed as an insect or disease problem. Correctly identify the problem before turning to a pesticide.
- ✧ Be alert for summer drought conditions, which could occur at any time now, leaving normally well-hydrated plants lacking sufficient water. If plants are still wilted the next morning, watering is needed.
- ✧ To improve water use efficiency in your landscape, visit <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/publications/#water>.
- ✧ Galls on leaves of oaks, hackberries and other trees are caused by many species of gall-forming insects, and are a result of the female stinging the leaf tissues as she lays her eggs. Galls are harmless since the insect doesn't feed on plant tissues.
- ✧ Watch for lawn pests. Dry, light-colored areas in sunny parts of St. Augustine are probably the result of chinch bugs (small black insects with white diamond on their backs). Apply Merit (imidoclopyrid) or other labeled insecticide. Grub worms are the culprits if the turf turns brown and easily comes up when pulled on. Treat with a granular insecticide.
- ✧ Rapid death of established landscape plants and orchard trees during the summer may signify the presence of cotton root rot, a soil-borne fungal disease common in our calcareous clay soils. Since there is no effective control, verification by the Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab at Texas A&M (<http://plantclinic.tamu.edu>) will help you know what plants can be used as replacements.

The Crape Myrtle is considered a small tree, but comes in many sizes and varieties. This deciduous tree has moderate growth with low water needs. The Crape Myrtle provides profuse spikes of beautiful flowers in many colors ranging from white, pink, purple or red that bloom throughout the summer. The tree also features attractive, smooth, peeling bark. Crape Myrtle trees may have problems with aphids and powdery mildew.



Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener*



Drummond Skullcap—Mint Family (*Lamiaceae*)

Scutellaria drummondii

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

Size: 6–12 inches

Blooms: February–November, Annual/Perennial

Scutellaria is a large, worldwide genus. Fourteen of the American species are found in Texas. Drummond skullcap is a low, bushy, hairy little plant. It has the square, four-angled stems characteristic of the mint family. The small, purple to blue flowers are a half-inch long and two-lipped. The three-lobed lower lip extends tongue-like, well beyond the upper lip. The center lobe is notable for its

purple-dotted white spot and notched tip. The small leaves are oval and opposite. Lower leaves are short-stalked; upper leaves are stalkless.

Skullcap is a very common plant, found in various soils, in nearly any sunny location. Although skullcaps belong to the mint family, they are bitter and toxic and should never be used as a flavoring. Their small size, profusion of flowers, and drought tolerance make them an excellent choice for a garden border.



2017 Pop-Up Horticulture

*An Educational Program Presented by the
Ellis County Master Gardener Association (ECMGA)*

COMING SATURDAY, JULY 29

“DIAGNOSING PLANT PROBLEMS”

“Diagnosing Your Plant Problem” will be the subject of a special Pop-Up Horticulture event scheduled for Saturday, July 29 at the Waxahachie Farmers Market.

Diagnosing plant health problems can be difficult, and symptoms can often be misinterpreted. For example, yellowing leaves: Is it caused by a moisture or weather-related condition? A nutrient deficiency? Or is the problem caused by an insect or even a disease? These are all real possibilities. So, if you are not sure what is ailing that sick plant in your landscape or garden, why not seek help from the Ellis County Master Gardeners.

Master Gardeners Susan Knapp, Scherle Barth, and Monty Gearner will be at the Farmers Market on Saturday, July 29 to answer your plant questions, as well as train you on what to look for when diagnosing a potential problem. These trained Master Gardeners will also be available to discuss rose rosette disease and crape myrtle bark scale, both of which are major problems in the Ellis County area.

And, if you really want help with that plant problem, bring a sample in a zipped plastic bag to the Farmers Market; and Susan, Scherle and Monty will help you identify and diagnose the culprit. Quality digital images or photos are also helpful. And if a diagnosis cannot be confirmed, they can assist you in submitting a sample for lab analysis, especially if a disease is suspected.

**** Please note, if the plant is a rose, please bring close-up photos of the problem instead of an actual sample.**

Mark your calendars for Saturday, July 29 from 8am–1pm at the Waxahachie Farmers Market. Remember to bring along plant samples or photos for help in solving your plant health question. Look for the Master Gardeners' white Pop-Up tent on the north side of the market grounds.

In the Vegetable Garden: Corn

By Pam Daniel
Ellis County Master Gardener



Hello, and welcome to the July edition of In the Vegetable Garden. If you have questions that this article doesn't address, give us a call at (972) 825-5175 or contact us via the web at www.ecmga.com. Ask for one of your Master Gardener Vegetable Gardening Specialists. Following are some general tips for the vegetable garden and the vegetable of the month: corn.

Planting:

Plant fall transplants of tomatoes and peppers. Also, it's time to sow seeds for the pumpkins you want for Halloween. Finish planting cantaloupe and watermelon seeds, and sow winter squash seeds in early July. You can also sow black-eyed pea seeds throughout July. Late in the month you can sow bush and pole beans and Irish potatoes.

Maintenance

Take a look at the vegetable garden each morning. If plants are wilted in early morning, they need some water. Keep an eye out for signs of wilting and pests, as this hot and dry month is a difficult month for most vegetable gardens.

Vegetable of the Month CORN

Planting dates:

For spring, after all danger of frost has passed (March 15-April 30). Extra sweet varieties should be planted when soil temperature reaches 60° to 65°F.

For fall crop, plant 80-90 days before first average frost date (June 1-August 15). Fall maturing sweet corn will almost always be the highest quality, since cool nights increase sugar content.



Planting Method:

Plant three to four seed per foot of row, 1-1½ inches deep.

Plant rows in blocks rather than long rows to increase pollination, as corn is wind pollinated. One grain of pollen from the top of the plant must pollinate each of the silks that come out of the ears. Each silk is attached to a kernel, and that kernel will not grow unless pollinated.

I plant my rows in blocks of about one third of the row about 10 days apart to have longer harvest times.

Thin seedlings to 10-12 inches apart when they are about three to four inches tall.

Varieties: White: Silver queen, frontier. Yellow: golden queen, Guadalupe gold, Bicolor: sweet G-90, Honey and pearls.

Culture: Needs loose, healthy, well drained soils. Make sure young seedlings don't suffer from lack of water and especially during the period from tasseling to harvest. Dirt plants when they are about 12 inches high, by piling extra dirt around base of plant onto roots.

Fertilizer: Heavy feeder. Use lots of compost and organic fertilizer. Side dress when plants are 12-18 inches high with high nitrogen. Side dress again when the tassels and silks form. Use about half a handful of organic fertilizer per plant or about three cups per 25 foot row.

Harvest: 60 to 90 days. Pick when husk is still green, silks dry brown, kernels full size and milky liquid. Harvest by grabbing the base of the ear and twisting and pulling downward. Sweet corn is best when harvested during the cool of the morning and eaten as soon as possible. Don't overcook corn.

Crape Myrtles: A Texas Classic

By Susan Ellis
Ellis County Master Gardener



It's July already and hopefully you have driven through Ellis County and admired the beautiful crape myrtles. They have been called the Lilacs of the South, and they are in full bloom. If you do not have any crape myrtles, it is not too late. They bloom for three months or more, and are available in many colors and sizes.

Crape myrtles love sun and are perfect for a hot, dry spot. They need water the first year or two but after that, they do well on their own. A little nitrogen in the spring and fall will support their growth and give you gorgeous blooms.

The main problem with Crape Myrtles in this area is powdery mildew. It gets on new growth and turns the leaves gray to white. One can always spray with a good fungicide, but the best solution to this disease is prevention. Sun and lots of air circulation will help, but choosing a variety that is disease resistant is even better.



Acoma

The team at A&M in conjunction with the team at LSU have come up with a list of varieties that are extremely hardy and disease resistant for our area of the country. Their favorites are as follows:

Natchez: Gorgeous plant with "weeping" like branches that will reach 30 feet tall with white blooms.

Basham's Party Pink: Upright to 30 feet with lavender-pink blooms

Tuscarora: Upright to a height of 25 feet with coral pink blooms

Muskogee: Upright plant reaching 20 feet with lavender blooms.

Sioux: Vivid pink blooms reaching to 15 feet

Tonto: Smaller plant reaching 12-14 feet with deep red flowers

Acoma: Smaller "weeping" plant with white blooms reaching to 14 feet.



Tuscarora

Notice there are all different sizes. This will help with the need to prune. Crape Myrtles do not need a lot of cutting back if the plant is the right size for the location. Lopping the suckers at the bottom will help the plant grow upright. Also, anywhere the branches rub on each other is a good place to consider cutting one of them. The severe cutting back in the spring (often referred to as "crape murder"!) is not needed to promote blooms nor is the trimming of the spent blooms.

What better plant could you have? One that loves the heat, blooms, and doesn't require much else than admiration!



Basham's Party Pink



Save The Date!
Saturday, March 26, 2018

Late Bloomers

Looking Forward to Fall!

By: Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener



It's here! The dreaded heat of the summer when no one feels like working in the garden. But, fall will come and its cooler temperatures will bring us new enthusiasm. I always look forward to seeing these late bloomers putting on their show in the garden.

Autumn Sage (*Salvia greggii*): A semi-evergreen, woody shrub that grows three foot tall and wide, and comes in all colors. Actually, the flowers start in early spring and last all summer long. These salvias benefit from frequent haircuts after a flush of bloom. The August trim is especially important for good fall blooms. The tubular flowers attract hummingbirds, and the nectar brings butterflies and bees.

Mexican Bush Sage (*S. leucantha*): This plant is worth having as a background plant for its lovely lance-shaped, silvery leaves. Flowers emerge on long, draping spires in solid lavender, or lavender and white. To keep the tall plants from becoming too leggy and to encourage more blooms, prune back by half in mid-spring and early summer.

Mexican Mint Marigold (*Tagetes lucida*): (pictured right) Equally at home planted in the herb garden and flower border, the leaves have a distinct, anise-like scent. The leaves can be used in teas and as a substitute for tarragon in cooking. With its small yellow daisy-like flowers and its two to three foot size, it would look great planted in front of the taller Mexican bush sage for an eye-catching combination of yellow and purple.

Fall Aster (*Symphotricum oblongifolium*): (top picture) The two to three foot mounds with one and a half inch lavender flowers with yellow centers are especially nice in the fall border when combined with Mexican Mint Marigold. Requiring good drainage and detesting over fertilizing and overwatering, they are a must for water-wise landscaping. Cut back the plants in spring or early summer to maintain a dense growth habit.

Blue Mistflower (*Eupatorium coelestinum*): A plant also known as Hardy Ageratum or Boneset is a prolific fall bloomer that puts on a show for four or more weeks and fairly buzzes with the activity of butterflies, bees, and other insects seeking its nectar. Its misty display of blue/purple, fluffy flowers are especially nice planted with Mexican Mint Marigold giving you the pleasing combination of blue/purple with yellow.



Copper Canyon Daisy (*Tagetes lemmonii*): The name gives you a clue. Brush against it as you walk by and the air will fill with the fragrance of citrus and camphor. This plant makes a three to four foot tall mound with a profusion of single bright yellow blooms about an inch in diameter. The blooms are a great source of nectar for several species of beneficial insects. Give it plenty of room and it may need to be staked. It's a wise choice for the low water use garden.

Sweet Autumn Clematis (*Clematis paniculata*): Most types of clematis are best left on the pages of the seed catalogs if you garden here in Texas, but this vine is an exception. It sprawls over whatever support you provide. It explodes into a billowy white mass of quarter-sized white blooms with a knock-your-socks-off fragrance. Remember it likes its face in the sun and its feet in the shade, so plant a low growing shrub or place a container at its feet to shade the roots.

Fall Obedient Plant (*Physostegia virginiana*): Did you even wonder why it is called obedient plant? The blooms on the stalk can be moved to the side and will remain in that position when you let go. This plant produces snapdragon-

shaped flowers of lavender/pink blooms with dark lavender purple markings. It willingly takes over a planting bed if given moist soil. It is better kept just moderately moist to curb its enthusiasm, or consider an underground barrier.

Maximilian Sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*): This relative of garden sunflowers is also willing to roam and should be kept on the dry side to tame its aggression. This sunflower is a perennial that blooms in the fall with many three-inch yellow

(Continued on page 7)



HELLO SUMMER



Find us on:
facebook®

Ellis County Master Gardeners are 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 Farmer's Market or Lighthouse for Learning Classes. 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 posted include ways to add whimsy to your garden, a recipe for container potting soil mix from Neil Sperry, Pop-Up Horticulture news, and updates on local events that gardeners will find interesting and educational. You can also post pictures and let us know what is happening in your gardens and landscape.

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>

Late Bloomers (Continued from page 6)

blooms spiraling upward along the four to six foot tall stalks. To tame it a little bit, cut it back severely in July or August and gradually move it out of the flower beds and to the pasture fence.

Sedum (*Sedum spectabile*): Sedum has blue-green, roundish foliage, and bears bright pink flowers in round, flat heads in late summer. Established plants can be 18 to 24 inches tall. It's a butterfly magnet and one of the best plants for a water-wise garden. 'Autumn Joy' is easily found in our local nurseries, also 'Neon' and 'Vera Jameson' (a low grower more like a groundcover) are good choices.

All of the above perennials like full sun. Obedient plant, sedum, and blue mistflower can take part sun. Planted



Sweet Autumn Clematis

Fall Obedient Plant



now they will need attentive watering for the next few weeks until their roots become well established.

As we wilt through the summer months, think "fall" and plan to add some of these late season performers to your landscape now and extend the color season on into the fall.

Fennel: Beautiful and Functional

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) is a beautiful tender perennial growing to a height of four feet or more in the southern garden. It's a relative of dill, coriander, caraway, cumin, carrot, and Queen Anne's lace. You might find it in the produce aisle of your grocery store referred to as anise. The most common culinary fennels are green, bronze, and Florence or bulb fennel.

Florence fennel forms a bulb base that can be sliced and served raw as a salad or sautéed and presented as a vegetable. The ripe seeds of the plant adds a soft taste of anise to puddings, spiced beets, breads, teas, sauces, liqueurs, and Italian sausage. Many Asian-Indian restaurants have a bowl of seeds at the checkout counter, offered as a breath freshener and digestive aid as you depart.

The delicately flavored leaves and stems are suited for relishes, salads, and garnishes. Fennel leaf adds a wonderful flavor to fish and helps reduce the fish odor. Fennel stalks make a delicious bed for salmon or other whole, grilled fish.

Fennel is easy to grow from seed in early spring or fall. Both bronze and green leaf varieties are readily available as seedlings from local herb growers in the spring. Once established the plants can grow from three to five feet high when in bloom. Fennel is very hardy and drought tolerant, but extra water improves its appearance. Harvest mature seeds and store in a dry, dark place. Collect and use the leaves fresh. They lose their flavor when dried.

Bronze fennel adds a striking background appearance to a vegetable, herb, or flower garden, and is a favorite plant in my garden. Although many herb growers consider swallowtail butterflies a pest to fennel, dill, and parsley, I suggest you plant extra for these beautiful creatures. The striped caterpillars, which feed on these herbs will pupate then emerge as gorgeous swal-

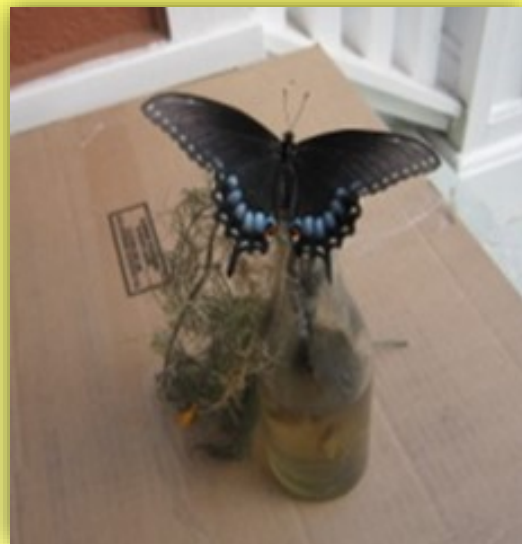
lowtail butterflies. Since my backyard is organic and a Certified Wildlife Habitat, my butterfly population has exploded. Unfortunately, so has the population of predators such as birds and lizards, whose favorite food is fat caterpillars. One recent day, we counted more than twenty caterpillars on the fennel. The

next morning, all were gone while the cardinals, blue jays, and mockingbirds perched nearby looking like innocent observers.

During the past few weeks, my screened porch has become a caterpillar nursery and I've become a dotting mother making countless trips to the garden to replenish the food supply for 15 hungry babies. I spent most of last evening corralling four of the little darlings as they searched for a more secluded place to pupate. As of today, there has been one successful hatching, five pupae, and ten fennel-munching caterpillars growing fatter by the day.

The nursery has added a whole new dimension to gardening and reinforces my love of organic gardening. My grandsons will arrive in a few days and I will send some pupae home with them. I also plan to take

some over to the Master Gardeners' butterfly garden on the hike and bike trail. My fennel supply is not sufficient to feed the number of eggs this brood of butterflies will produce!



Eclectic Gardening

With Jane Slone, Ellis County Master Gardener

THIS MONTH:

What are Invasive Plants and Bull Thistle



The dictionary defines an invasive plant as “an invasive species -a plant, fungus, or animal species that is not native to a specific location (an introduced species), and which has a tendency to spread to a degree believed to cause damage to the environment, human economy, or human health.”

Some plants found in a specific region or state may not be considered invasive, but planted in an area that has no competition, it becomes invasive by crowding out the native plant until it may become extinct. An example of this is the common oxeye daisy. This plant can be grown in Texas, but in Colorado, this flower is invasive. Colorado has banned planting the oxeye daisy. A group of southwestern Colorado counties and government agencies are joining together to fight the spread of the invasive oxeye daisy. It's a weed as far as they're concerned.

As citizens of the state of Texas, it is our responsibility to prevent the invasion of many of these non-native invaders. We might bring a plant home from vacation and then plant it in our garden. Why is this a potential problem? There are two scenarios. The plant may survive and grow well in our garden. It could adapt and not become invasive. Or the plant may survive in the area and then become invasive. The latter scenario is the problem. This will destroy the natives that inhabit the area. It is possible that the daisy may be an invasive plant in Texas at a future time. This happens with more than just plants; it can occur with animals as well.

Taken from the Agrilife database, the following statement is found on their website texasinvasives.org:

“Observation data submitted by volunteer citizen’s scientist in the Invaders of Texas program, this database provides geographical locations for known and potentially invasive plant species in Texas.”

How do we know if a species will become invasive? The trial gardens plant new species and obtain data about growth patterns. This information can be used to determine the growth of the plants before they become available in our plant centers. Once the plant is tested and released as non-invasive, we know that we can safely bring the plant into our gardens and it will not be an invasive species.

The information below is about one of the common plants found in the Ellis County area that has become invasive and harmful to Texans.



If you are new to Ellis County area and not familiar with invasive plants, you may find the beautiful purple flower pictured to the left on your property. If left to its own devices, it will continue to reproduce, until it overtakes the area and prevents growth of other plants.

This article is not based on the thistle plants that have value for medicine or feed for birds. It is based on the invasive plant found on farm roads. There are many different species, that are valued around the world, and used for medicinal purposes.

THE TEXAS BULL THISTLE

History

“The thistle has represented Scotland as its national emblem for hundreds of years. According to the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (Illinois), thistle plants saved the Scottish Countrymen from attack by Norseman, who stepped on the prickly plants, screamed in anguish and alerted the Scottish people of their presence. As a result, King James V established the most prestigious order of knighthood in 1540, known as the Order of the Thistle.”

Basic Growth Information

It is considered to be a biennial, which means that it may take two years to complete its life cycle. Individual bull thistle plants form a single rosette with a taproot up to 28 inches (70 cm) long. Rosettes may develop up to 3.3 feet (1 m) in diameter. The taproot does not spread, but develops several smaller lateral roots. Stems have spiny wings and grow 1 to 6.6 feet (0.3 to 2 m) tall, with many spreading branches, and sometimes a single stem. Bull thistle stem leaves are lance-shaped and 3 to 12 inches (7.6-30 cm) long with prickly hair on the top and a very hairy underneath. Lobes on leaves are tipped with stout spines. Bull thistle flower heads are 1.5 to 2 inches (3.8 to 5 cm) in diameter, 1 to 2 inches (2.5-5 cm) long, usually solitary, and clustered at the ends of shoots and branches.

Where is it found in Ellis County?

It is most often found on farms and ranch land and the side of highways. It is not thought of as a flower that you would cultivate and use in your home wildflower garden, but some consider it beautiful due to the purple flower at the tip of the stems.

We see the common purple color in our area, but it can be found in white or pink in other areas as well. The flower blooms in May and continues through June. It is seen along the



Eclectic Gardening (Continued from page 9)

country side roads because it can survive in our dry soil. When provided a slightly acidic soil (pH <6.8), it will flourish in farm fields. The mature plants have very sharp-edged leaves, so it is not considered a wildflower you would want to cultivate for your garden. Perennials flower from June into September, producing between 40 and 80 seeds within each flower head.

Hearty invaders, perennial thistles drop their seeds in the fall, and the seeds germinate within 10 days. Both the parent plants and their new seedlings lie dormant during the winter and reemerge in the spring, continuing to grow year after year.

In Texas, bull thistle is considered an ecological threat. It is a problem in pastures because it competes with and decreases desirable forage and has no significant nutritive value for livestock. Sharp spines deter livestock, and presumably wildlife, from grazing.

If bull thistle is invasive, why do we see commercial uses of it?

Seeds from thistle plants are used in bird seed. Milk thistle has a medicinal use in Europe. Scotland has called it the Blessed or Holy Thistle.

Not an endorsement, but in other countries thistle is very medicinal as stated in the example below.

“The German government endorses the use of milk thistle as a supportive treatment for inflammatory liver conditions such as cirrhosis, hepatitis, and fatty infiltration caused by alcohol or other toxins. It also recognizes that silymarin possesses the ability to help prevent liver damage if taken before toxin exposure.” Silymarin is extracted from the seeds of milk thistle.

In summary, is thistle a good plant or is it a bad plant? In the beginning, we talked about Scotland and how they considered the plant to be holy. Then we looked at the farmers in our country and how they want it removed from the cattle feeding fields. Enjoy the flower, but keep it within a boundary and allow the natural habitat to exist. Be aware that it is considered an invasive species and act responsibly as you garden. The point of any plant, is for beauty, for food, or for protective habitat.



Save The Date!
Saturday, March 26, 2018

GARDEN CHECKLIST FOR JULY/AUGUST

by Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist, TX A&M

- ✧ Evaluate the volume of water delivered from lawn sprinklers to ensure healthy, stress-free grass during the heat of the summer. One thorough watering that will deliver one inch of water at a time is better than several more shallow sessions. The amount of water available through flower bed 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 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.
- ✧ 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.

Thank You All!

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Gold



Bronze



Green

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