



Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VIII, Issue Six

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

June, 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 June

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 weekly events at the market on page eight and the plant of the month on page 11.**



Saturday, June 7, 10am–4pm, ECMGA Gardener Tour—See page six for details.

Saturday, June 7, 8am–1pm, BRIT First Saturday-Green Revolution Day. Enjoy tours, children's activities, vendors and booths, and a farmers market! Events include: plant walks, free tours, the FWISD art show, Bella's Story Time for children and more! For complete details, visit <http://brit.org/prairieday>.

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

Saturday, June 7, 9am–3pm, Water-Wise Landscape Tour in Dallas. Dallas County Master Gardeners will be giving free talks on Water-Wise gardening, native plants, herbs for shade and more. Master Gardener volunteers will help answer questions about the plants and landscapes on the tour. For more information, visit <http://savedallaswater.com/wwlt/> or call the Water Conservation Hotline at (214) 670-3155.

Saturday June 28, 9am–4:30pm, Level 2, Introduction to Native Landscapes presented by the Native Plant Society of TX. Learn the value of including and preserving native plants in landscapes, understand the differences between sustainable and conventional development, learn your Texas vegetation region and soil type, and learn 50 native Texas plants recommended for your landscape. Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center, Cedar Hill. Visit <http://npsot.org/wp/nlcp/north-texas-classes> to register.

Saturday, June 28, 9am–12pm, Dogwood Canyon—Fourth Saturday Workday. Located at 1206 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill. For info, contact Julie Collins at jcollins@audubon.org.

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/ennistxfarmersmarket>. Located at N. Dallas St. in Downtown Ennis.

Indian Trail Master Naturalists

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

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

Saturday, June 14, 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.

(Continued on page 6)

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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CRAPE MYRTLE

Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*) is one of the most easily recognizable trees in the landscape. Average sizes can range from three to 25 feet tall and may be grown as a shrub or multi-trunked tree depending on the variety. Crinkled flowers bloom in large clusters from white to many shades of pink, red, and lavender. Fall color is red on all varieties except the white blooming ones that turn yellow.

The white 'Natchez' has an aromatic fragrance that attracts bees for miles and displays showy cinnamon bark in the winter. Once established, all varieties will live on rainwater alone except in extreme conditions. Plant selection should be made in summer when plants are blooming to ensure color of variety, but will be easier to establish if planted in the fall.

Pruning should be limited to deadheading clusters of dried seed pods to encourage re-blooming and removal of suckers that shoot out around base of the plant.

FINAL TIPS AND LITTLE KNOWN FACTS

Crape Myrtle, native to China and Korea, has adapted well to Texas. It is one of the most common small landscape tree or shrub planted in Texas. Crape Myrtles are a spring-flowering, deciduous tree bearing seeds or fruit eaten by wildlife. They are best planted in winter months (January to February) and tolerate a wide range of site conditions including drought and alkaline soils.

Crape Myrtles come in a variety of sizes and shapes ranging from miniature (3-4'), semi-dwarf (4-5'), dwarf (5-8') and tree (20-50'). There are many cultivars to choose from with spikes of flowers in a wide variety of colors. Optional modest pruning of dried pods, new seeds or fruit at tips of limbs after first full bloom in summer can produce reliable fall color. Winter pruning is unnecessary and will not produce more flowers.

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

Planting

- ◆ This is the best time to plant vinca (periwinkle) in full sun. They like the hot weather, but do not overwater! Cora is a new type of vinca that is resistant to soil-borne diseases. It comes in many colors except yellow. Water with drip irrigation or soaker hose to keep water off the foliage.
- ◆ Warm season color or foliage plants can still be used in containers or in the ground.
- ◆ Buy and plant crape myrtles in bloom to be certain you have the desired color. They come in a wide range of colors and sizes. Look for ones that are resistant to powdery mildew.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- ◆ Prune back autumn sage and mealy cup sage by one-third. Deadhead other salvias as well as annuals and perennials to stimulate more growth to allow the plant to continue re-blooming until late fall.
- ◆ Continue to prune as necessary, fall blooming plants such as Mexican bush sage, Mexican mint marigold, copper canyon daisies, asters and mums to keep them compact and prevent buds from forming prematurely. Don't prune after September when buds begin to form.
- ◆ This is the second time to use an all-nitrogen, slow-release fertilizer on turf grasses. You can cut the amount by half to prevent excessive growth, which means more water and more mowing!

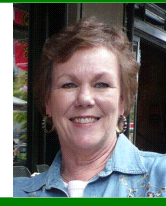
Garden Watch

- ◆ Insects and diseases will be prevalent this time of the year. Treat with an appropriate organic or chemical pesticide, if needed. Vegetable plants that cannot be salvaged should be pulled up and destroyed.
- ◆ Look for small, spindle-shaped bags hanging from trees. These are bagworms. Pull them off by hand. Insecticides are not effective once the bag has formed. They are usually found on cedars, cypress, and other cone-bearing trees. However, they can be found on other plants including oaks and barberries. They multiply, can defoliate a tree, and eventually kill it.



Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Showy Primrose—Evening Primrose Family (Onagraceae)

Oenothera speciosa L.

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

Size: 8-18 inches

Blooms: March through July, Perennial

Lax and sprawling, this early-spring to summer bloomer has a cup-shaped flower of four petals, united at the base to form a short tube. The pink flowers are two to over three inches across, with a yellow center edged in white. The branching plants, spread by underground rhizomes, form large colonies. Alternate leaves are lobed or cleft, two or three inches long, and toothed or wavy. Showy primrose is easily grown from seed.

The flowers of this species open in the evening; some other *Oenothera* species, though also known as evening primroses, actually open in the morning. Evening primroses are often called buttercups because of their abundant yellow pollen and the cup-like form of their flowers. An introduction from Europe, *O. biennis*, was once a popular vegetable, cultivated for its roots, and can be found throughout the eastern United States, extending into east Texas. *Oenothera* are not related to true primroses (*Primula*).



Garden Excursions: Marie Selby Gardens

Submitted by Sheila Cloonen, Ellis County Master Gardener

On our family's annual Thanksgiving vacation in 2013, I was lucky enough to visit the Marie Selby Gardens in Sarasota, Florida. William and Marie Selby originally bought the property in the early 1920's. William made his enormous wealth in the oil and mining industry. This seven acres was their winter home. Summers were spent on their ranch in Montana. The original landscaping was planned by Marie with a large rose garden figuring prominently in the overall design with borders of blooming flowers alongside the roadway that leads to the tip of a peninsula.

The garden, which was donated by Marie on her death in 1971 and opened to the public in 1975, specializes in epiphytic plants. The most common epiphytes of Florida are bromeliads (*Bromeliaceae*), orchids (*Orchidaceae*) and ferns (*Pteridophyta*). The word epiphyte, is derived from two Greek terms, epi- and phyte, literally meaning "that which is found above or on a plant". These plants like to "hitch a ride", so to speak. They are plants that live on other plants, but are traditionally classified as non-parasitic. Often called air plants, epiphytes attach to their host plants for support and to reach more sunlight.

Since the Gardens opened, the property has doubled in size from seven acres to over 14. The elegant mansion, on adjoining property, was purchased in 1973 and now houses the Gardens' Museum. The garden maintains a plant collection numbering more than 20,000 greenhouse plants, plus thousands more in the outdoor gardens. Eight greenhouses include the stunning Tropical Conservatory where unusual flora can be seen year round. Walking through this greenhouse is much like entering a rainforest with its waterfalls and beautiful flowers in every direction.

A newly added feature of the Garden is the Ann Goldstein Children's Rainforest Garden. This exhibit opened in the fall of 2013. It includes a play land with interactive games and teaching stations for kids of all ages.

The Welcome Center houses the gift shop and is also home to the Cooley Theater where you will watch a brief orientation video explaining the Gardens and its history. After checking in, you immediately enter into the Tropical Conservatory. Be prepared to spend a good deal of time in here. There is a lot to see (and smell). Upon exiting, you enter the Sho Fu Bonsai Exhibit where demonstrations are held on the care of bonsai trees. These trees are well tended to and definitely show it. There, specially trained individuals teach the public the art of trimming and special needs of the bonsai tree.

Once you've got the bonsais all figured out, you can follow the many trails through the 14 acre garden where you will stumble upon a large koi pond, a Banyan grove, fern garden, hibiscus garden, succulent garden, wildflower garden and much more. The original Selby home, a Mediterranean Revival-style house, still stands and features a café and kid's corner. Oceanside on the bay-walk, you will find mangrove trees that are a critical part of the marine ecosystem along with a beautiful view of the bay.

The Marie Selby Botanical Gardens are a must see. If you have a passion for orchids there is much to learn here. It is a respected center for research and education as well as a famous showplace that delights more than 180,000 visitors each year.

Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



June 2014 Herb of the Month – Parsley

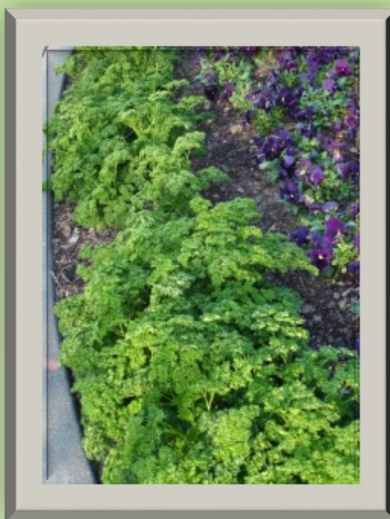
Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum* and *neapolitanum*) has the misfortune of being a token herb on plates of steak and fish as a garnish. But the resilient sprig is edible and its high chlorophyll content makes it a natural breath sweetener, which is a good reason to nibble some after a heavy meal.

There are three common varieties of this popular biennial: flat leaf (Italian), curly leaf, and parsnip rooted, and Hamburg. Parsley has a gentle flavor and works especially well at blending the flavors around it. Both curly leaf and flat leaf varieties are used in cooking, but the flavor of the flat leaf is preferred by chefs. Parsley works with most foods except sweets.

It is an important part of the Middle Eastern tabbouleh. The French feature parsley with ham in aspic, with garlic, butter, and escargots; and as persillade, a fine mince of garlic and parsley added at the last moment of

substituting some of the basil with parsley.

Parsley seeds can be sown in late winter for a spring crop or in the late summer after our Texas nights have



cooled down a bit for a fall crop. Although hardy during mild winters, the plants that germinate in the fall tend to consider spring their second season and will flower and set seed early. I generally plant half of the seed packet in the fall and the rest in the spring so there are always fresh greens to enjoy with winter soups and summer salads.

Because of its deep tap root, parsley is difficult to transplant and should be sown where it is to grow. Be patient when planting seeds as they are extremely slow to germinate, up to six weeks. Parsley prefers moderately rich, moist, but well-drained soil. It will tolerate partial shade.

As an attractive bright green, compact plant, parsley has earned a place as a border or edging in both herb and ornamental garden beds. It is used as the border of a tussie-mussie.

Placed in the vegetable garden, parsley is supposed to repel asparagus beetles. Parsley is susceptible to crown rot. It may be attacked by carrot weevils, parsley worms, or nematodes. It is a favorite food of the black swallow butterfly caterpillar. Be sure to plant extra for both of you.

Although the preferred use of parsley is fresh; it can be frozen and stored in sealed freezer bags.

The following recipe was an appetizer favorite of my friends in the Webster Groves Herb Society back in Missouri.

Parsley Spread

Finely chop a bunch of parsley and two cloves of garlic. Add some extra virgin olive oil, just enough to make it moist, a little salt and fresh ground pepper, and some grated Romano cheese. Let it rest a bit to blend flavors. Serve on crackers or thin baguette slices.



Persillade

cooking to sautés, grilled meats, and poultry. The Belgians and Swiss are fond of fondue with deep-fried parsley on the side. The Japanese also deep fry parsley in tempura batter. The Mexican and Spaniards use parsley as a prime ingredient in salsa verde, and the English make parsley jelly. When making Italian pesto, try



Tussie-Mussie

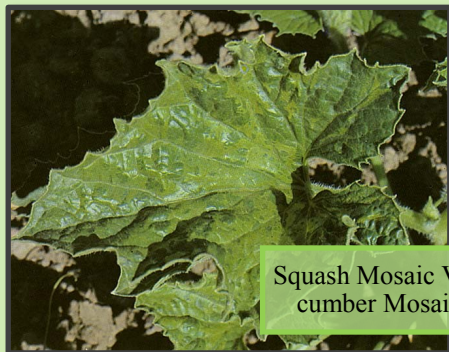
Gardening Smart—Jubilant June

By Carolyn Foster
Ellis County Master Gardener



As we bid a sad farewell to our bountiful, beautiful wildflowers, our attention turns to our gardens. Our perennials should be bursting from the soil nicely and our annuals growing and spreading with lots of blooms. I'm still transplanting the overage of perennials to share with the Master Gardener's greenhouse project. You can too, just call the office about donations.

Deadheading will ensure continuous blooming as will regular feeding. There are both organic and chemical types of fertilizers. The organics include fish emulsion, manure, blood and bone meal, and my personal favorite, sludge, which is worked into the soil. Organics are a bit more expensive than



Squash Mosaic Virus (top) and Cucumber Mosaic Virus (bottom)

the chemical fertilizers, but also tend to last longer and add more microorganisms to the soil. Be aware, however, that some organics don't contain all the elements necessary for total plant growth needs.

Time to fertilize landscape trees, shrubs, vines, ground covers and lawn with high nitrogen, slow release products; flowers and veggies with high nitrogen or all nitrogen granular plant food; container plants each time you water if you didn't use a slow release; iron deficient plants in alkaline soils with iron/sulfur additive (yellow leaves with dark green veins on new growth).

Plant turf early in month to establish roots before heat of mid-summer; start on fall tomatoes and set out last week of month; remove flowers from coleus, caladiums, basil, santolina, lamb's ear and mums to keep plants vegetative.

There are dry (granular) and liquid chemical fertilizers. Some act quickly and others are timed-released. Time-released will feed two to six months depending on the brand. Some are released each time you water and others are released when the soil temperature reaches a certain level.

All chemical fertilizers have a percentage of nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium, by law, listed on the package in that order. Nitrogen works with the leaves and stems, while phosphorous and potash help flowers, fruit, and root growth. Liquid fertilizers are best applied to damp soil. For dry fertilizers, water well after application.

For consistent growth, abundant flowers and best results, all plants need a constant supply of moisture. A deep soaking is much better than frequent, light watering. Deep soaking helps plants develop deep, strong root systems.

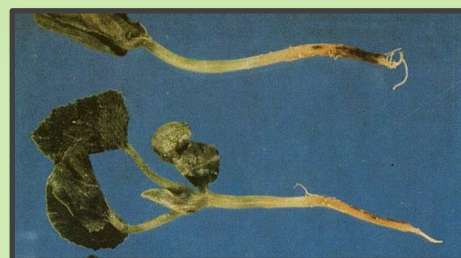
Frequent light watering results in shallow root sys-

tems and encourage diseases and weed growth. When you water, water well and let the soil dry slightly between watering. Drought tolerant plants require less watering. Remember, the general rule of thumb for watering is deeply and infrequently.

Let's talk about diseases. To cut down fungus diseases, avoid wetting the foliage of plants when watering. Try to water early so that plants can dry before nightfall. Below are some com-

mon diseases to watch out for.

BOTRYTIS BLIGHT: (Gray Mold) Overwinters on infected plant parts, attacks weak and dying foliage, especially old dying flowers. It's a grayish-brown, often fuzzy growth on buds, flowers or leaves. Flowers come apart easily when touched. Pick off and destroy faded and infected blooms. Spray with fungicides.



DAMPING OFF (pictured above): A fungus most often a problem in damp soil. Stems of young seedlings rot at ground level and fall over or fail to emerge (pre-emergent damping off).

Do not overwater seedlings, try misting instead.

FUNGUS DISEASES: (Powdery mildew and rust). Spread by wind and splashing water; overwinters on plant



Rust on a blackberry leaf

debris. Powdery mildew is evidenced by white powdery masses of spores on leaves, shoots and buds; distorted shoots or stunted foliage. Rust is shown by yellow and green mottling on the upper leaf surface opposite pustules of powdery, rust-colored spores

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ECMGA GARDEN TOUR 2014

On Saturday, June 7, in conjunction with the Gingerbread Home Tour, the Ellis County Master Gardeners will be hosting tours of two of our teaching gardens, which have been established and maintained for the purpose of sharing gardening knowledge with the public. The tour is free, the locations are very accessible, and we really hope you will stop by. There will be a drawing for a rain barrel to be given away at the Horticultural Learning Center at Getzendaner Park at the end of the day. You do not have to be present to win. Please come by either garden to register to win. Master Gardeners will be on hand to speak with and answer questions from 10am to 4pm.



The Butterfly Garden (*pictured left*)

is located south of the square, one block north of Howard Road adjacent to the rodeo grounds. It is part of the Getzendaner walking trail and parking is available at the site. You will learn to cultivate plants that attract butterflies and foster their proliferation.

The ECMGA Horticultural Learning Center (*pictured right*) is located at the entrance to Getzendaner Park on S. Grand behind the hospital. Here you will see examples of four types of gardens with very different purposes ranging from a cutting garden to an herb garden. While in the park, you can shop nearby vendor and art exhibits. The gardens are within walking distance of parking.

We encourage you to take this opportunity to meet your Master Gardeners and learn about some of the work we do in the community.

Gardening Smart (Continued from page 5)

on the lower surface. Remove and destroy all infected plant parts and debris and apply fungicide.

VIRUS DISEASES: (Including Mosaic and Aster Yellows) Spread by propagation of infected plants, by aphids, and some leafhoppers. Mottling or mosaic patterns are on leaves; growth is stunted or distorted. Dispose of affected plants. Prevention is the best control.

If you are dealing with a disease not mentioned here, call with the symptoms and Master Gardeners can help you identify the culprit. Our number is (972) 825-5175.

Keep your garden growing strong with the proper cultural care and you'll have a minimum of problems. Keep garden, pots, and tools clean.

Stay tuned next month for a discussion on common insects, both good and bad, and treatment options for infestations.

Save The Date!
Saturday, March 28, 2015



What's Happening (Continued from page 1)

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, June 16, 7pm, Indian Trail Master Naturalists present "How Streams and Rivers Flow". Tina Hendon, Watershed Program Manager, TRWD, and TX Master Naturalist will talk about the evolution of streams and rivers, and how natural and man-made influences affect their behavior. The program is free and follows the 6pm Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. Meeting location: First United Methodist Church, Family Life Center, 505 W. Marvin Ave, Waxahachie.

Saturday, June 21, 9am-12pm, Cedar Ridge Preserve—Conservation in Action Workday. Work in the butterfly garden and on the trails. Water and snacks provided. For info, call Jim Varnum at (214) 543-2055 or email jevvarnum@aol.com. 7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas



In the Vegetable Garden

With Monica Nyenhaus
Ellis County Master Gardener



Let's talk peppers, sweet peppers, not so hot peppers, and hot, hot peppers. Growing them successfully in Texas will require patience and diligence, but the outcome is worth it. Keep in mind that peppers are a tropical plant and they love that perfect 70-80 degree weather. Like I said, patience and diligence is required here.

PLANTING: Unless you have a greenhouse or have a friend with a greenhouse, (wink, wink) you will need to purchase your peppers from a nursery or one of the big box stores. You can start pepper seeds indoors with a sunny window, but they are very picky about germination. Unless you just want to experiment for the fun of it, I would recommend buying plants. I do have a greenhouse and know for certain that they need specific light, warmth, and moisture. Even then are slow to germinate and grow in the greenhouse, but alas, I do it anyway!

I have talked about soil in previous articles, but I cannot stress it enough to have good, rich soil with lots of nutrients in it. A raised bed or container are mostly required here in Ellis county for successful vegetable gardens. You can till your soil, but it will require a lot of added compost and a few years to get it where it should be. Our clay is so expansive and dense, it doesn't lend itself well to the needs of soft aerated soil so I would recommend the first two options.

Get them in the ground and keep them watered. You don't want them wilting. It makes them more susceptible to disease; not soggy, just moist. And watch the weather!

Peppers, like tomatoes, are heavy feeders (need lots of fertilizer). Whether you use organic or synthetic, the plants don't know any different. It's the minerals they need and you can buy tomato pepper food just about anywhere they sell plants. Feed them about every two weeks once they set flowers. All peppers need at least six to eight hours of full sun. Afternoon shade would be ideal,



something I didn't realize until after my garden location was made. You can put up a tarp or screen of some kind. The reason for this is sun scald. Though peppers don't seem fragile as they look and feel pretty firm, our Texas sun can literally fry their skin. That's why an afternoon shade is a good thing for these guys.

VARIETIES

Sweet Peppers: Bells, there are a ton of varieties of bells. The most common is the California Wonder varieties here in Texas. These are the big, blocky ones they have in grocery stores. My Baker Creek Catalog lists 18 different bells alone. I will tell you that my gardening journey has kept me laughing a lot at myself! I didn't know that a green bell was just an unripe red, yellow, or orange bell pepper. Here in Texas, it's pretty hard to get any bells to ripen fully under the Texas heat since they get scalded before they can fully ripen. More about that later.

Sweet Banana peppers grow well here. Once again, there are so many varieties of seeds. You won't find most of them in the stores, so I am trying to stick to what's available. These plants will get to four feet or more in size. I cage mine as they tend to flop over from the weight of the peppers.

Mild to Medium Hot Peppers:

Anaheim, Big Jim (*pictured above right*), Hot Banana, Poblano, and Pasilla are the most common ones grown here in north Texas. They do very well and can take the heat, but your harvest will come late in the season unless they have afternoon shade. My harvests really come in late September to October. I water and tend all summer just getting a few here and there. As summer wanes and we have that lovely 80s weather, they come on with a vengeance! These plants can grow to five feet or more. I also cage these for support.

Hot Peppers: Jalapeno, Serrano, Habanero, Cayenne, Hungarian hot wax (*pictured above left*), Thai, Paprika. Again there is a multitude of hot pepper varieties out there, but most are not available as



plants. Most of these plants are smaller and more compact, but they produce huge harvests so you don't need a lot of them.

GROWING AND TENDING YOUR PEPPERS

As gardeners we all have our special "what works for us", but I have found some things to be consistent about peppers. First, once you see some peppers at the start of the season, pick them off. It's hard, but do it. They will set more flowers, thus more fruit!

Second, inspect for bugs. Aphids tend to be on the underside of the leaves. Spraying with water will often be all the control you will need. If you have ladybugs, you have aphids somewhere. Ladybugs eat the aphids. I haven't had too many problems with aphids on my peppers, but last year I had one plant that they seemed to love. I finally just pulled it out. I grow several of each variety so I can do that if I have to.

Mockingbirds: I have a little war with them. They do recon on my garden. I watch them literally walk down my rows looking up at my plants looking to see if there is food for them. It's crazy! The capscicum, which is the oil that makes them so hot doesn't bother them. They must think I grow these things just for them!

I put the disposable pie tins all over the cages in the garden, both on the tomatoes and peppers. I poke a whole with scissors and tie them to the cage giving enough rope so they blow in the winds. The reflection from the sun and the noise help to keep them out, but not entirely. They are relentless and they don't eat the whole thing they just have a few bites. Argh, enough said about bugs and birds!

HARVESTING

If we have a mild spring and early summer low temps, you may get some peppers. As we go into the 90s, you will begin to see the flowers dropping off and then nothing

(Continued on page 8)

In the Vegetable Garden (Continued from page 7)

but green foliage. Take heart. Keep watering and feeding them through the heat.

As the peppers ripen, you can tell when they are ready as the stem will somewhat droop down and show some shriveling if you look close. Feel the pepper. If its firm and is the size it should be, then it's probably ready. I just snap the pepper off by lifting it up. If it doesn't snap off, don't push it. It's not quite ready.

With bells, you may need to use scissors since the stem is quite thick and may break the branch if you are not careful. Don't think that your peppers are going to be the size you see in the grocery store. It happens sometimes, but our heat here makes it very hard to get them to the size that commercial growers provide. Pick often. You need to harvest almost daily once they have matured. They will not put on more peppers if you don't harvest!

In closing, I want to say that whether you like your peppers fresh, frozen or canned, they are a great addition to your garden. There is nothing better than having your own vegetables from the garden to cook with. Since we in Texas are so fond of southwestern food, it's no wonder peppers are so popular here. Well, I need to get to the store to put out my pie tins, I see the Mockingbirds doing recon already!



Jalapeno Sweet Potato Soup

5 lbs. sweet potatoes
1 medium onion
4 slices of bacon
3 cloves garlic
½ cup of butter
6 cups chicken broth
1/4 cup pickled sliced jalapenos
2 teaspoons cumin
½ cup cilantro leaves
1 cup cream
4 teaspoons of kosher salt
1 teaspoon of black pepper
Peel and chop sweet potatoes into even chunks and bring to a boil. Cook until just tender. Drain and cool.
Chop onion, bacon, and garlic. In a large pot, cook the bacon until rendered. Remove and drain. Add the butter to the pot and cook the onion until translucent. Add the garlic just before the onions are done. Add the chicken broth, sweet potato, and cumin. Bring to a boil and reduce heat. Remove from the burner. Add jalapenos, cilantro, cream, salt, and pepper. Use an emulsifier, blender, or food processor to puree the soup. Heat to desired temperature, but do not boil. Bon appetit!



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 Farmer's 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



June Farmers Market Events

June 7th—The Farmers Market theme this week is All Things Gingerbread. There's a lot going on both in the city and at the market today.

There's the Gingerbread tour of homes. Plus the Master Gardeners have a garden tour at Getzender Park and at the butterfly garden behind the rodeo, along the Hike & Bike trail. Stop by the MG booth for details. Also at the booth check out the Plant of the Month: dwarf Mexican petunia, a Texas superstar.

June 14th—The second Saturday of the month means Kid's Activity Day at the Market. The Master Naturalists will be on hand to help kids make Father's Day cards out of natural materials. Bring the kids by the booth located next to the Master Gardeners.

June 21st—Summer has officially arrived! Come on out to the Farmers Market for Tomato Twist. Come for tastings, recipes, and bushels of tomatoes, ripe and flavorful for a great addition to any meal.

June 28th—Bike & Buy is the theme for this Saturday's market. There's a lot going on this week in the city. One thing is for sure, you'll see loads of cyclists as they and their Rotary Club sponsored bike ride near the market. So come on down, enjoy the day, and see what the farmers have for sale.



Save The Date!
Saturday, March 28, 2015

Six Simple Steps of Repotting

With Susan Gilliland

Ellis County Master Gardener



I recently bought some plants that I was not yet ready to put in the ground. I'll bet that has happened to you too. I found I was having a difficult time keeping them watered. I knew they were pretty pot-bound, so I decided I would make one plant into many. And, what a money saver when you can do it!

Firstly, you will know they are root bound because the pot will be bulging, the roots will stick out of the bottom holes, and they will need lots of water.



In just a few minutes I was ready to split this one gallon plant apart and make about six to seven quart-sized plants.

The illustrated steps are:

1. Gather your supplies: small pots, potting soil and trowel, gloves and a sharp knife.
2. Make sure your new pots are washed and disinfected.
3. This plant was seriously root bound, so I soaked it in water for one hour

and cut about one inch of the roots off of the bottom. I need to be able to separate them and that mixed



up root mass won't let me do it.

4. Next, I pry the individuals apart gently with my fingers. It's kind of a "feel thing" at this point because you want to leave enough root on each little plant. So tug, pull, and twist until it 'feels' right.



5. Once you have the mass split up into reasonable sized plants with enough roots to sus-



tain themselves, trim off the bottom roots to fit the pot and lovingly place into a new, clean pot with fresh potting soil. I often soak the new plants in fish emulsion for an hour or so prior to planting.



6. Water the new transplants frequently for at least the first week, until the roots are established.

You have just turned a \$7.99, one-gallon perennial into six or seven smaller plants. In this case, we were splitting a dwarf Mexican petunia



and they are fast growers, so I have way more plants than I planned for and they will do better in the garden.

Tend to these plants for two to three weeks before putting them into the garden and they will give you lasting joy and many blooms.



Interested in becoming a
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Contact James Kocian at
expo.ecmga@yahoo.com

Reserve the date: **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.

Kong™ Series Coleus (*Solenostemon scutellarioides*)

Dr. Mengmeng Gu, Assistant Professor & Ornamental Specialist Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Kong series coleus is an annual with very attractive foliage that grows well under shade to partial sun. Its' extremely large foliage sets it apart from the other coleus.

There are seven colors in the series: green-green leaf with slight cream veining and markings; mosaic-different pattern of bright green; shades of red and cream; red-red center with strong veining and bright green edge; scarlet-tri-color pattern with a scarlet center surrounded by a deeper burgundy and an irregular green outer edge; rose-rose center surrounded by a bright green edge; and salmon pink-red center with salmon pink veining and bright green edge.



'Kong Scarlet' coleus

Kong coleus provides constant color in the shade with large, colorful leaves. Prune flower spikes appearing at the end of summer to have a longer show of the foliage. Kong coleus can be used for mass planting or in containers. When used in combination planters, Kong coleus performs the best when planted near the outside of the container.

Garden Checklist for June

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

- ◆ Supplemental irrigation is essential for all but the hardiest plants in times of extended drought. Water lawn and garden thoroughly, but not

too frequently. As a general rule, soak to a depth of eight inches. Finish watering by early afternoon, to lessen the chance of disease.

- ◆ Check watermelons for ripeness regularly. They are usually ready when the bottom portion is definitely yellow-green or even yellow in color.
- ◆ Take a critical look at your landscape while at the height of summer development. Make notes of how you think it can be better arranged, plants that need replacement, overgrown plants that need to be removed, and possible activity areas that can be enjoyed by family members.



- ◆ Check for insects and diseases. Destroy badly infested plants. Spider mites can be especially troublesome at this time. Select a chemical or organic control, or use insecticidal soap.



'Kong Salmon Pink' coleus

- ◆ Especially during dry summers, soil moisture becomes extremely important and essential for good plant production. Because continual watering is oftentimes costly and time consuming, it pays to conserve the moisture around plants. This is best done

by mulching. A good mulch will retain valuable moisture needed for plant growth, and improve overall gardening success. Mulches are usually applied two to six inches deep, depending on the material used. In general, the coarser the material, the deeper the mulch. For example, a two inch layer of cottonseed hulls will have about the same mulching effect as six inches of oat straw or four inches of coastal Bermuda hay.

- ◆ There is still time to plant some of the colorful, heat-tolerant summer annuals. Direct-seed zinnias and portulaca, and purchase plants of periwinkle, salvia, marigold, and purslane. Be sure to water transplants as needed until roots become established.
- ◆ Removing faded flowers from plants before they set seed will keep them growing and producing flowers. A light application of fertilizer every four to six weeks will also be helpful.
- ◆ House plants can be moved out of doors this month. Sink the pots in a cool, shaded garden bed to prevent them from drying out so quickly. Water pots, container plants, and



'Kong Red' coleus

(Continued on page 11)

Landscape Gardening (Continued from page 10)

hanging baskets often. Monthly feedings with house plant fertilizer will encourage continued growth.

- ◆ Now is the time to plan for next spring. Consider digging and dividing any crowded spring bulbs. Once the bulbs have matured and the foliage has turned brown, it is time to spade them up and thin out the stand. Crowded bulbs produce fewer and smaller blooms. They usually need thinning every three to four years.
- ◆ June is the time to select daylily varieties as they reach their peak of bloom.



- ◆ Fertilize roses every four to six weeks. Apply a high-nitrogen fertilizer immediately after a flush of bloom.



- ◆ Continue to spray susceptible roses with a black-spot control such as Funginex every seven to 10 days.
- ◆ Re-blooming salvias, such as *Salvia greggii* and *S. farinacea*, should be pruned back periodically during the summer. To make the job easier, use hedging shears, and remove only the spent flowers and a few inches of stem below. Fall-blooming perennials, such as Mexican marigold mint (*Tagetes lucida*), chrysanthemums,

physostegia (pictured below), and *Salvia leucantha*, should be pruned in the same manner during the summer to keep them compact, reducing the need for staking. This type of pruning should be completed prior to September 1, since flower buds begin forming about that time.



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. Because stock was not available in May, we are repeating the dwarf Mexican petunia as June's featured plant, (*Ruellia brittoniana*), a Texas Superstar called 'Katie' with purple blossoms. We apologize for any inconvenience. Recently, a dwarf pink version of Katie called 'Bonita™' was introduced into the market. Under proper growing conditions, dwarf Mexican petunias tend to reseed and produce tall upright clumping, dark green plants. In full bloom during the hottest part of the summer, they produce lance-shaped leaves and bright, tubular flowers.

- ☼ Exposure: full sun to partial shade
- ☼ Height: 6-8 inches
- ☼ Planting time: spring to summer from containers
- ☼ Soil type: adapts to most soils from acidic to moderately alkaline with moderate drainage
- ☼ Suggested uses: accent, small scale groundcover, perennial borders, edging or mixed plantings
- ☼ Bloom time: early summer to frost

Dwarf Mexican petunias are very adaptable and will tolerate both wet and dry soils. They prefer full sun, but will grow in shade though flowering will be less. Although dwarf Mexican petunias are drought tolerant once established, they perform best with regular irrigation during droughts and with regular feeding of high phosphorus fertilizers.



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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