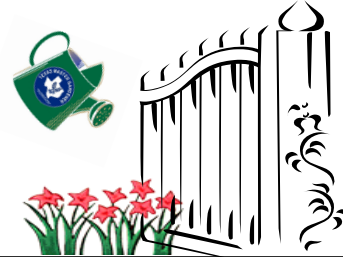




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume X, Issue Three

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

March, 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

The Ellis County Master Gardeners
17th Annual Lawn & Garden Expo
Saturday, March 25, 2017 ♦ 9 a.m.--5 p.m.
Waxahachie Civic Center

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Listen to KBEC

Saturday mornings at 8:10 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:

It's Mar, What Needs to be Done?	2
Wildflower of the Month	3
What's Happening in March	3
Expo MG Plant Sale	4
Expo Keynote Speaker: Neil Sperry	5
Spring Lighthouse for Learning	5
Expo Spotlight Sessions	6
Expo! Meet the Speakers	7
Expo! Children's Workshop	8
Alert! Grape Myrtle Bark Scale	8
March Garden Checklist	9
Farmers Market Meeting	9
Eclectic Gardening	10

Visit any sponsor for free tickets!
For complete details,
please visit www.ecmga.com



**Ellis County Master Gardener's
Lawn and Garden Expo – March 25th**

The Waxahachie Civic Center will open its doors to the 17th annual Ellis County Master Gardener's Lawn and Garden Expo on Saturday, March 25th. Exhibitors will pack the center with outdoor-living necessities, plants, machinery, yard art and landscape project materials.

Adults can attend sessions on gardening topics, or Ask The Experts about specific gardening challenges. An expanded Children's Workshop will have numerous interactive displays and take-home projects.

One of the most popular attractions continues to be the Master Gardener Plant Sale with a variety of plants suited for North Central Texas landscapes. Register for the many great door prizes donated by exhibitors. A big "Thank You" to Expo sponsors for making this event possible.

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

Planting

- ☼ Plant these annuals early in the month for spring color: petunias, larkspurs, foxgloves and stocks. Other annuals such as marigolds, celosia and wax begonias may be planted late in the month.
- ☼ Plant tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants from pots after March 15th. Plants should be hardened off (gradually exposed to outside temperatures) before putting in the ground.
- ☼ Plant seeds of warm-season vegetables such as beans, corn, squash, melons, and cucumbers starting mid-month.
- ☼ Plant herbs in raised beds with soil amended with organic matter. Plants should be hardened off before planting.
- ☼ Vines (hyacinth bean, Cypress vine, morning glories, and Malabar spinach) can be planted from seeds.
- ☼ Plant perennial flowers in amended well-drained soil. Know each plant's prime blooming season, height, width, and color to ensure season-long color. Mulch new plantings.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- ☼ Remove old growth from Bermudagrass lawns by lowering mower one or two notches, allowing the grass to spread faster and choke out weeds. Bag the clippings for composting or as mulch.
- ☼ Prune spring-flowering shrubs and vines such as flowering quince, azaleas, forsythia, bridal wreath (Spiraea), Lady Banksia rose, Carolina jessamine, and coral honeysuckle immediately after they finish blooming.
- ☼ Trees, shrubs, vines, and groundcovers can be fed with high-nitrogen fertilizer or compost. For patio pots and other container gardens, apply a diluted, water-soluble, high-nitrogen fertilizer once a week.
- ☼ Apply pre-emergent herbicide on lawns to control broadleaf and grassy weeds if needed. A "weed and feed" fertilizer is not recommended because it is too early to fertilize lawns.

Garden Watch

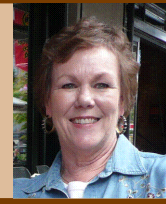
- ☼ If frost or freeze is predicted, cover vegetable plantings and tender annuals with frost cloth. It can make a six to eight degree difference in temperature.
- ☼ Control black spot, powdery mildew, and thrips on roses with an appropriate fungicide or systemic insecticide. Use a stream of water or insecticidal soap on aphids. When a pesticide is needed, always use the least toxic one first.
- ☼ Install a drip irrigation system in your vegetable garden for increased production and maximum water efficiency.



Enjoy a day at the Ellis County Master Gardener's Lawn and Garden Expo. Support the Ellis County 4-H by visiting their concession stand for lunch and snacks. Pick up FREE tickets at any Expo sponsor. A list of sponsors is on page one and available at www.ecmga.com under the What's Happening tab.

Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Texas Bluebonnet—Legume Family (Fabaceae)

Lupinus texensis Hook.

Region: 1–8 (Ellis County Is Region 8)

Size: 6–24 inches

Blooms: March – May, Annual



Spring visitors to Texas are wide-eyed at the beauty of fields and roadsides carpeted with the state flower, the bluebonnet. Sandyland bluebonnet (*L. stulcarnosus*), perhaps misidentified at the time, was adopted in 1901 as the official state flower, but in 1971 it was decided to make all bluebonnets naturally occurring in Texas the state flower.

Bluebonnets are identified by their palmately divided, or hand-shaped, leaves and pea-type flower, closely clustered in an elongated inflorescence, or raceme, at the tips of stems. The petals are blue or purple, and occasionally pink, white or maroon.

Texas bluebonnet and sandyland bluebonnet are the only two species restricted to Texas, with Texas bluebonnet the most widespread. Sandyland bluebonnet is more likely to be seen in the eastern part of the state. In far west Texas, the Big Bend bluebonnet (*L. havardii*) makes a stunning display in the early spring of favorable years.

What's Happening in March?

Open House

The Master Gardeners will host an open house at the greenhouse on Saturday, March 18 from 9am until 12pm.

Come and tour our greenhouse. Learn about all the plants we propagate and the management of the greenhouse.

There will be a small selection of plants available for sale.

The greenhouse is located at the Waxahachie High School. Enter the greenhouse from the side of the school across the street from Walmart.



You're Invited!

Indian Trail Master Naturalists Events



Mockingbird Nature Park Wildflower Walk. Members of the Indian Trail Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program will lead a Wildflower Walk on **Saturday, March 18.** The walk starts at 9am at the Butterfly Garden. Please join this half mile stroll along the trails. Everyone is invited to

attend, and there is no charge. Bring drinking water and wear close-toed shoes. Insect repellent is a good idea. Walk will be canceled in the event of rain. Info at: <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/> or email: Information@itmnc.com

Join the **Indian Trail Master Naturalists** at their monthly meeting on **Monday, March 27.** The program for the evening is entitled **"Our Native Bees"** by **Carolyn Gritzmeyer**, a Certified Texas Master Naturalist and a charter member of the Indian Trail Chapter. Carolyn has been interested in insects all her life and recently turned to the study of native bees. Impressed by the variety of bees attracted to the Butterfly Garden at Mockingbird Nature Park, Carolyn decided to turn her vegetable garden into a native wildflower garden, which brought a riot of wildflowers and an almost unbelievable number and variety of native bees.

Carolyn will present an overview of native bees, featuring photos from her garden and elsewhere in Ellis County. The program is free and follows the 6 p.m. Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. Meeting location: First United Methodist Church, Family Life Center 505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email ellis-tx@tamu.edu

2017 Expo Plant Sale

The Master Gardeners Expo will offer a wide variety of plants for sale, as listed below. Vendors will also be present with a large selection of flowers, plants, and herbs to choose from. There will be various garden items for sale at the Expo.

For a complete list of plants and details about the varieties, visit:

<http://txmg.org/ellis/lawn-garden-expo/plant-sales/>

VEGETABLES

Peppers

Cal Wonder
Anaheim
Sheep Nose Pimiento
Mucho Nacho Hybrid

Tomatoes

Abe Lincoln
Beefsteak Tycoon
Tumbler Hybrid
Brandywine
Celebrity Hybrid
Arkansas Traveler
Early Girl Hybrid Vff
Juliet Hybrid
Roma

HERBS

Verbena Lemon 'Aloysia triphylla'
Mint, Chocolate
Tarragon Texas, Tagetes lucida
Thyme, lemon
Lemongrass

PERENNIALS

Acanthus flame
Begonia, Dragon Wing Red
Begonia, Dragon Wing Pink
Buddleia Black Knight
Cuphea Bat face
Esparanza Myan Gold
Eupatorium 'greggi'
Evolvulus Blue Daze
Leopard Lilly
Leucophyllum Lowry's Legacy
Pavonia Rock Rose lasiopetala
Petunia solanaceae Laura Bush
Phlox Paniculata, Texas Pink
Phlox Paniculata, John Fannick
Plumbago auriculata
Salvia Greggii hot lips
Salvia Greggii San Antonio
Salvia Henry Duelberg Blue
Scutellaria, Skullcap
Scutellaria, Skullcap
Stachys Helene von Stein
Zexmenia

Lawn & Garden Expo



Interested in becoming a
2017 Expo Sponsor Or
Expo Exhibitor?

Contact James Kocian at
expo.ecmga@yahoo.com

Reserve the date: March 25, 2017!





2017 Keynote Speaker: Neil Sperry

**"IF I COULD WAVE A MAGIC WAND"
LESSONS I SPENT A CAREER TRYING TO IMPART)**

1:30 p.m. Meeting Room C & D

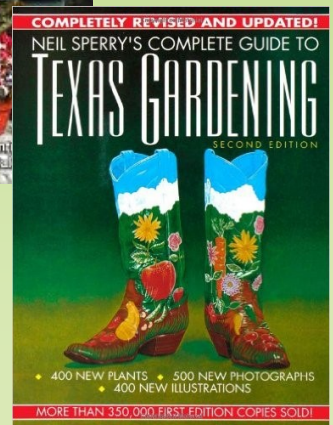
Book Signing to Follow

Neil Sperry, Texas gardener, author, radio broadcaster and gardening expert will be presenting "If I Could Wave a Magic Wand" (Lessons I Spent a Career Trying to Impart). This is a "must not miss" for anyone who wants to learn more or has questions about successful gardening in North Texas. Afterwards, he will be signing and selling his most recent book and answering questions. If you have any of his books and want him to sign them, he will do that too.

Neil Sperry grew up in College Station, the son of a professor and head librarian. He attended Texas A&M, but transferred to the Ohio State University where he completed both his B.S. and M.S. in horticulture.

Neil broadcasts weekends over DFW powerhouse radio station WBAP NEWS/TALK 820 AM. That follows a very successful 30 year career at KRLD Dallas/Fort Worth. His *Complete Guide to Texas Gardening* is the 4th bestselling gardening hardback in American history. In April of 2014, Neil Sperry released his latest book, *Neil Sperry's Lone Star Gardening* (Texas Complete Planting Guide and Gardening Calendar).

Neil is an excellent presenter and an expert in many areas of gardening and landscaping. Don't miss out on this opportunity to hear him speak. Come early for the best seats!



Light House for Learning

(With the Ellis County Master Gardeners)

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

Register online at http://www.wisd.org/default.aspx?name=CO_LighthouseforLearning

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

Thursday, March 30, 6pm–7:30pm, Chickens 101. Everyone thinks two-legged feathered friends are easy and fun. You may want the fresh eggs. So how do we get started? What do we need to know before we make that decision? The class will cover the basics: city ordinances, why should you have chickens, how to obtain them, feed and care, house and space needs, and breeds. Instructor: Jane Slone. Cost: \$12.00

Monday April 3, 6pm–7:30pm, All About Trees. Thinking about adding some trees to your property? This class will go over the various trees that grow in our area, including native trees. Subjects covered include what to look for at the nursery, how and where to plant trees, and how to care for trees. The instructor will also discuss pruning basics including when and how to prune. Trees are a big investment so come and learn all about how to choose the best trees for your property. Instructor: Allan Paxton. Cost: \$12.00

Monday, April 17, 6pm–7:30pm, Creating a Butterfly Garden. Creating a butterfly garden can be fun and easy for everyone, from the novice to the experienced gardener. This class will guide participants through all the aspects of planning for and creating garden environments that attract and support butterfly populations. This includes garden layout, host plant selection, plants that provide nectar, and other butterfly friendly environment tips. Instructor: Bea Rocha and Cheryl Ellison. Cost: \$12.00



2017 Spotlight Sessions Schedule

9:30 a.m. **Rainwater Conservation with A.D. Cowser**

Learn about the importance of saving water and how to build your own rain barrel.

10:00 a.m. **Garden Sanctuary with Susan Knapp**

Gardening is a very therapeutic activity for many people and I find few things more fun than sharing that knowledge and watching someone become inspired by their gardening success.

This talk will be a short introduction on creating your favorite spot in the garden using principles that incorporate wise use of plants, water conservation and easy maintenance. From very simple to ornate, a garden sanctuary can be a place to escape and enjoy the outdoors.

10:30 a.m. **Azaleas 101: Encore Varieties with Sandra Jones**

There are new and amazing varieties of azaleas. With the addition of new varieties each year, the possibilities for creating stunning banks of color in your garden with Encore® Azalea are continually expanding.

11:00 a.m. **Herbal Pet Care with Arlene Hamilton**

If your family includes cats, dogs, or other backyard pets you can keep them healthy and insect free using some common herbs. Herbs are multi-talented members of the plant world. One use of these wonderful plants is their ability to safely control unwanted insects. Many herbs emit powerfully aromatic and volatile oils, which may appeal to humans, but are disliked by many insects. These pests will abandon areas where such herbs in fresh, dried, powdered, or essential oil forms are used.

11:30 a.m. **Water Conservation with Maureen Nitkowski**

Maureen will discuss how important water conservation is to the environment.



Meet the Speakers

A.D. Cowser, Master Gardener



A.D. Cowser joined the Ellis County Master Gardeners in 2009. His primary focus has been helping maintain the gardens constructed by Master Gardeners. These projects are used as teaching gardens and are open for the public to visit throughout Ellis County.

In 2012, Mr. Cowser had the opportunity to become a Rainwater Specialist. The class was held in Brenham, Texas. During this class, the students learn the technique of making their own rain barrel. Subsequently, A.D. has taught others the principles of conserving water and how to make their own rain barrel in order to utilize natural water resources and preserve our environment.

Susan Knapp, Master Gardener



I have had a lifelong romance with all kinds of gardening and a special love for gardening with roses and ornamentals. In 2004, I began the Master Gardening Program in Dallas County and have since completed the Plant Propagation Specialist and Vegetable Specialist programs. I am currently enrolled in the Landscape Design Study Program sponsored by the Texas Garden Clubs, Inc., and Texas AgriLife Extension Service at Texas A & M University.

Sandra Jones, Master Gardener



Sandra Jones is a Master Gardener with an interest in perennial plants. One of Sandra's primary interests is to work in the gardens that the Master Gardeners have built throughout the city.

Arlene Hamilton, Master Gardener



Arlene Hamilton is a graduate of the class of 2000 Texas Master Gardeners. Arlene was named Outstanding Master Gardener in Texas in 2003. Her interest has always been the use and delight of herbs.

Arlene is a member of the Herb Society of America. She is a Texas Rainwater Harvesting Specialist and has storage tanks holding over 1,400 gallons of rainwater for her gardens and wildlife habitat area.

Arlene is a much-requested speaker by garden clubs, civic groups, and garden nurseries. She has taught classes and workshops throughout Texas and the USA, and loves sharing her passion with others.

Maureen Nitkowski, Master Gardener



Maureen Nitkowski is a biologist by trade and has been a gardener from the time she was able to walk. She chose to become a Texas Master Gardener 15 years ago to access research-based gardening information for herself and to share with the public. Maureen is also a Texas Master Naturalist and works as an educator at the John Bunker Sands Wetland Center in Seagoville.

Children's Garden Workshop Room at the Expo



The Children's Workshop Room has become a favorite area at the annual Ellis County Master Gardener Lawn & Garden Expo. Children and adults all enjoy the educational exhibits, hands-on activities, and lively atmosphere. The opportunity to move to a larger room was such a big hit in 2016 that we will again be set up in the Crape Myrtle Room of the Waxahachie Civic Center. Master Gardener volunteers are available to assist children with activities and answer parents' questions about gardening with children. Indian Trail Master Naturalists are always a big part of the Children's Workshop Room, and working closely with the Master Gardeners, provide fun learning activities all through the day.

Representatives from the Junior Master Gardener program will be on hand to talk with teachers and parents of homeschool students. The Children's Workshop Room exhibitors include the Texas Honeybee Guild with their live honeybee demonstration hive. Texas Discovery Gardens joins us with unusual critters and information about their education and outreach. Fascinating insect collections from local residents are also been on display and parents are welcome to bring their insect questions. Smokey Bear has also been known to make an appearance! The Children's Workshop Room is always a buzz of activity with educational opportunities children can participate in. Plan to visit the Children's Workshop Room for a fun time and always a surprise or two!



**** Landscape Alert! Crape Myrtle Bark Scale ****

Crape myrtle, a much used Texas landscape plant, is under threat from a new type of scale invader, according to two Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service experts.

Dr. Mike Merchant, AgriLife Extension urban entomologist at Dallas, said the new scale pest turns the bark of crape myrtle trees an ugly black color, and will be bad news to owners of these otherwise beautiful landscape plants.

Dr. Mengmeng Gu, AgriLife Extension horticulture specialist at College Station said, "As of today, scale infestations have been found on crape myrtles in North Texas, College Station, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and in the Memphis, Tennessee area."

If you are purchasing trees, be careful to check every specimen for evidence of this bothersome pest. For further information, visit the full article at: <http://citybugs.tamu.edu/files/2010/05/EHT-049-Crape-myrtle-bark-scale.pdf>



Crape myrtle tree covered with the white scale of crape myrtle bark scale. (TAMU AgriLife Ext Service photo by Dr. Mike Merchant),

GARDEN CHECKLIST FOR MARCH

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

- ☼ Plan for and invest in some permanent bulb plantings this year. Bulk bulbs are less costly than the small packages from nurseries or box stores. Once planted, the lawn may be mowed as usual after the foliage of the bulbs is dried. *Scilla peruviana* (pictured) is a choice bulb that brings hard-to-get blue shades into the garden.
- ☼ Prepare beds for planting flowers and vegetables. You may want to consider renting or buying a garden tiller to speed up the process; however, a strong back and a garden fork will still do an excellent job.
- ☼ For every 100 square feet of bed area, work in a several-inch layer of either compost, pine bark or sphagnum peat moss, plus five pounds of balanced fertilizer.
- ☼ Check with your local county agent for the average last killing freeze date for your area. Remember that killing freezes can occur after this date.
- ☼ Pruning of evergreens and summer flowering trees and shrubs should be completed in early March. Prune spring flowering trees and shrubs as soon as they finish blooming.
- ☼ Select and order caladium tubers as well as geranium and coleus plants for late April



Peruvian daffodil, or *Scilla peruviana*, is a choice bulb for warmer Texas gardens

and early May planting. Do not plant caladiums until soil temperature reaches 70°F.

- ☼ As camellia and azalea plants finish blooming, fertilize them with three pounds of azalea-camellia fertilizer. Check mulch on azalea and camellia beds and add where needed.
- ☼ In North Texas, there is still time to plant seeds of your favorite annuals in flats to be transplanted out-of-doors when danger of frost is past.
- ☼ Beware of close-out sales on bare-root trees and shrubs. The chance of survival is rather low on bare-root plants this late in the season. Your best bet at this time of year is to depend on container-grown or balled-and-burlapped plants for landscape use.
- ☼ Start hanging baskets of petunias and other annuals for another dimension in landscape color.
- ☼ Plant dahlia tubers in fertile, well-drained soil.
- ☼ Dig and divide summer and fall flowering perennials just before they initiate their spring growth.



If you would like to learn more about the farmers market and being a vendor, there will be an informational meeting Thursday, March 23 at 6 pm at Waxahachie City Hall in the council chambers. Application forms as well as market rules and guidelines will be available. Vendors will be able to tour the market area, turn in paperwork and fees, and ask questions at the meeting. Returning sellers are encouraged to attend. For more information, contact Anita Brown at city hall, (469) 309-4111.

For more information, visit <http://www.waxahachie.com/Departments/DowntownDevelopment/DowntownFarmersMarket>



FIND US ON FACEBOOK AT:

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



Eclectic Gardening

With Jane Slone, Ellis County Master Gardener

THIS MONTH: CONTAINER GARDENING



If you don't have room for a garden in your yard, consider containers. Container gardening is very popular with apartment dwellers and zero lot house owners. The main obstacles to overcome are space, sunlight, and water, but there is still opportunity to grow several of your favorite flowers or vegetables.

It is important to buy plants that are suited to container growth. For example, corn would not be a good choice for container gardening, but there are good alternatives that work well with containers and can give you a sizeable crop of homegrown vegetables. Below is a list of some of the best options.

Top 10 Container Vegetables

1. Tomatoes: All kinds do well in pots. Try grape and cherry varieties for easy growing. Their small size makes them easy to handle. Put up a trellis because they love to climb.

- ♦ Pros: Growing them in containers makes them a snap to water because it's easier to get under their leaves; cherry tomatoes produce quickly.

- ♦ Cons: Don't seed directly in container. Young tomato plants need specific growing conditions to get started, which can be tricky; buy seedlings instead.

2. Peppers: Bell and chili peppers are good container contenders. Peppers can be picky when starting out, so plant seedlings instead of seeds.

- ♦ Pros: Red mini bell peppers are quick producers, about two months until they're ready to eat.

- ♦ Cons: You'll need some patience. Regular peppers take up to three months to mature.

3. Lettuce: Any kind of lettuce will grow in pots. You can seed directly in the pot.

- ♦ Pros: Huge selection to choose from. You can plant different varieties in the same container to create a beautiful display.

- ♦ Cons: Lettuce needs full sun. You might have to move your containers around to ensure good exposure.

4. Spinach: All different varieties thrive in containers. Scatter the seeds and thin them out as they grow.

- ♦ Pros: You can trim off the leaves when you want them and they'll just keep growing more.

- ♦ Cons: Good drainage is really important for spinach. It prefers sunny days and cool nights.

5. Radishes: French Breakfast, White Icicle, and Short Cherry Bell are three varieties to try. Plant one to two inches apart, and thin as they grow.

- ♦ Pros: Super quick! About 25 days and they're ready to crunch.

- ♦ Cons: They don't like heat. If you live in a hot zone, look for varieties that are heat-resistant, or grow in the spring and fall.

6. Green onions: Very pretty and very easy to grow.

- ♦ Pros: They don't take much room and are easy to manage. They like sun, but be sure to wait until the danger of frost has passed before planting.

- ♦ Cons: They take a couple of months until they're ready.

7. Carrots: Any type of carrot will work in containers. When they're ready to harvest, soak the container with water first to making pulling easier.

- ♦ Pros: There are many types to choose from; "kaleidoscope" mixes come with a variety of flavors and beautiful colors.

- ♦ Cons: Some will take up to 80 days until they're ready. If you're an impatient gardener, look for quick-maturing types, such as Touchon and Little Finger.

8. Swiss chard: Seed directly in your container and trim leaves as needed. They'll continue to produce. Chard is tastiest when it's young.

- ♦ Pros: Very durable plant that tolerates warmth.

- ♦ Cons: Getting your kids to eat it (unusual flavors).

9. Cucumbers: Another good plant for impatient gardeners, cucumbers add crunch to summer salads and sandwiches.

- ♦ Pros: Quick to germinate and quick to grow.

- ♦ Cons: They need sturdy support posts or a trellis so the plants have somewhere to climb. Or try smaller, less-heavy bush cucumbers.

10. Green beans: So easy to grow, you can put your kids in charge.

- ♦ Pros: Quick growers and you'll have a bumper crop if you pick regularly because they will just keep growing.

- ♦ Cons: Climbing beans, called pole beans, grow five to six feet, so stick to bush beans, which hit one to two feet on sturdy, self-supporting stems.

