



Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VII, Issue Three

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

March, 2013

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 you will find interesting and educational, and important dates where you can find the Master Gardeners speaking, demonstrating, and passing out information relative to your garden. If you would like to receive this newsletter monthly via your email address, log onto our website www.ECMGA.com, click on subscribe, and it will be sent around the 1st of every month. Best of all; it's FREE! Susan Clark, Editor

The Ellis County Master Gardeners
13th Annual Lawn & Garden Expo
Saturday, March 16, 2013 from 9am—5pm
Waxahachie Civic Center

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Listen to KBEC.....

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

The Ellis County Master Gardeners have a 5-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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Visit any sponsor for free tickets!
For further information,
please visit www.ecmga.com

2013 Lawn & Garden Expo Speakers

Speaker presentations will be in the Crape Myrtle Room
at the Waxahachie Civic Center



10:00 a.m. Rosa Finsley, Landscaping With Native Plants

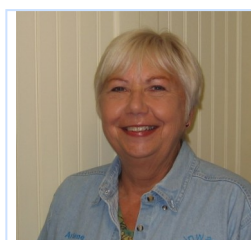
Principal of Kings Creek Gardens in Cedar Hill, Texas, Rosa is a nationally recognized expert in creating naturalistic and specialized landscape designs that preserve the ecology of the land. A licensed landscape architect, her work has been published in *Architectural Digest*, *Southern Living*, *Dallas Fort Worth Home and Gardens*, *The Dallas Morning News*, and *House and Garden Magazine*. Rosa's designs have also been featured on PBS and HGTV.



2:30 p.m. Randy Johnson, The Hidden World Beneath Our Feet: A Primer on Soil Biology

Former Director of Horticulture at Texas Discovery Gardens in Fair Park, currently operating Randy Johnson Organics, as an environmental/organic horticultural consultant, will speak on the topic of Soil Biology. Randy graduated from Texas A&M with a degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. While at A&M, he was also a proud member of The Corps of Cadets. He has propagated numerous species of native Texas plants, specializing in those species found on the Blackland prairie. Collecting seeds of native prairie species from prairie remnants, he will soon offer these for sale through his venture Blackland Seed Company.

Foods & Flavors of the Mediterranean Presented by Master Gardeners Arlene Hamilton & Susan Clark 12:00 p.m. In the Crape Myrtle Room



Arlene Hamilton

Arlene Hamilton is a Class of 2000 Texas Master Gardener and was named Outstanding Individual Master Gardener in Texas for 2003. Her area of interest has always been the use of herbs. Prior to retiring from her career as a church business administrator and moving to Texas, she was active in the Webster Groves Herb Society in St. Louis, Missouri where she studied, grew, and taught the use and delight of herbs throughout the area.

Arlene is presently a member of the Herb Society of America and the Greater Fort Worth Herb Society. She is past president of the North Texas Unit of HSA, past vice president of the GFWHS, past president of the Ellis County Master Gardeners, and past president of the WGHS. She is a Texas Rainwater Harvesting Specialist and currently has over 1400 gallons of rainwater storage tanks for her gardens and wildlife habitat area.



Susan Clark

Susan has been an Ellis County Master Gardener (ECMGA) since 2010. She has been interested in gardening for many years, a love she picked up from her mother. Currently, her main interests are vegetable and herb gardening, perennials, landscape design, composting, vermicomposting and organic gardening principles. Susan has taught classes on herbs and vermicomposting. She is editor of the ECMGA E-Garden Newsletter and serves on the Master Gardener board as the Vice President of Programs.



Children's Workshop 12th Annual Lawn & Garden Expo

By J.R. McMahan, Ellis County Master Gardener

Honey bees and bears make for a sticky situation. But in the case of the Ellis County Master Gardeners Annual Lawn and Garden Expo, honey bees and bears make a great combination! Bring your family to the Waxahachie Civic Center on March 16 and visit the Children's

Workshop Room between 9am and 5pm to see a live honey bee observation hive by the North Texas Honey Bee Guild. Information on home hives will be available and volunteers will be on hand to answer your bee questions.



Also making appearances in the Children's Workshop Room will be none other than Smokey Bear! We will be sure and have him on the opposite side of the room from the honey bees. Have your picture taken with Smokey Bear and learn about wildfire prevention from the Forest Service.

The Children's Workshop Room is a collection of displays and hands-on children's activities where children can learn about gardening and nature. Past displays have included topics such as composting, water conservation, and bat education. Take home, hands-on activities have included seed planting, bird feeders, and bug catchers.

Do you know what a pizza garden is? Come play in the dirt and learn how you and your family can plant a pizza garden at home with just a few simple plants. Making homemade pizza is a wonderful family activity and younger children can enjoy assembling their own pizza puzzle in the Children's Workshop Room.

We will have some interesting nature exhibits to view and a professionally mounted insect collection you won't want to miss. As always, we will have surprises for the children to take home so come early before Smokey Bear eats all the honey!



We plan to have a lively Children's Workshop Room full of displays and activities appealing to children of all ages. Think honey bees and bears on March 16 and come visit the Ellis County Master Gardeners Lawn and Garden Expo Children's Workshop Room at the Waxahachie Civic Center between 9am and 5pm.



March Master Gardener Workday Schedule

Tuesday, March 5, 9am	Butterfly Garden	The Ellis County Master Gardeners would like to extend an invitation to those who might be interested to work alongside them in the public gardens. This will be an educational opportunity to ask questions, to learn firsthand practical gardening techniques, and to get to know your local master gardeners. Please join us when you can! For more information, please contact the Texas AgriLife Extension Office by calling (972) 825-5175.
Thursday, March 7, 9am	Extension Office	
Thursday, March 14, 9am	Greenhouse	
Tuesday, February 19, 9am	Concept & Demo Garden	
Thursday, March 21, 9am	Presbyterian Living Classroom	
Tuesday, March 26, 9am	Chautauqua/Triangle Garden	
Thursday, February 28, 8:30am	Getzendaner/Star Garden	



MG Expo Children's Workshop

Ellis County Master Gardener Lawn & Garden Expo

The EXPO is one of Ellis County's premier events with over 100 exhibitor booths and approximately 4,000 attendees. This show is unique within the metroplex because of the lawn and garden focus, educational opportunities, and the emphasis on fun for the whole family! A great way to promote new and existing businesses to advertise in Ellis County is through the Ellis County Master Gardeners Lawn and Garden EXPO.

For information on being an exhibitor or sponsor for the 2014 Expo contact James Kocian at expo.ecmga@gmail.com.



MG Expo Plant Sales

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

Planting

- ◆ Plant annual flowers and herbs in late March.
- ◆ Plant tomatoes, peppers and eggplants from pots after March 15th. They should be hardened off (gradually exposed to outside temperatures) before putting them in the ground. Cover if a freeze or frost is predicted.
- ◆ Sow seeds of warm-season vegetables such as beans, corn, squash, melons, and cucumbers mid- to late-March.
- ◆ Plant herbs in raised beds with soil that has been amended with organic matter.
- ◆ Vines, including hyacinth bean, Cyprus vine, black-eyed Susan vine, potato vine and others, can be grown from seeds to climb a trellis or arbor.

Pruning and Fertilizing

- ◆ Prune spring-flowering shrubs and vines such as quince, azaleas, forsythia, bridal wreath (*Spiraea*), 'Lady Banks' rose, Carolina jessamine, and coral honeysuckle after they finish blooming.
- ◆ Remove dead top growth (Bermuda grass only) by lowering mower blade one or two notches. Bag clippings and use in the compost pile.
- ◆ Apply a high-nitrogen fertilizer to pecans in March, and again in April and May.
- ◆ Begin fertilizing roses with a balanced fertilizer.
- ◆ All trees, shrubs, vines, and groundcovers can be fed with high-nitrogen fertilizer or compost.

Garden Watch

- ◆ As needed, control black spot, powdery mildew, and thrips on roses with an appropriate fungicide or systemic insecticide. Use a stream of water or an insecticidal soap on aphids.
- ◆ When a pesticide is needed, always use the least toxic one first.
- ◆ If needed, apply a pre-emergent on lawns to prevent spring and summer broadleaf and grassy weeds. A weed-and-feed fertilizer is not recommended because it is too early to fertilize lawns.

13th Annual Ellis County Master Gardener's Lawn and Garden Expo

- ◆ Over 100 Exhibit Booths
- ◆ Adult and Children's Workshops
- ◆ Keynote Speakers
- ◆ Ask the Experts
- ◆ Door Prizes
- ◆ Plant Sales
- ◆ 4-H Food Concessions

Go to our website: www.ecmga.com for more information about the 13th Annual Lawn and Garden Expo.

Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener*



Texas Stork's Bill – Geranium Family (Geraniaceae)
Erodium texanum Gray

Region: 2-8 and 10 (Ellis County is Region 4)
Size: 6 – 18 inches
Blooms: February through May, Annual/Biennial

Stork's bill has horizontal stems. Stalked, wrinkled leaves, indented at the base, are three-lobed and are one to two inches long. The reddish purple flowers, an inch across, have five petals and are in clusters of two or three. Sensitive to light, the flowers open in late afternoon and close in the morning. Fruits are one to three inches long and divide into a v-shaped beak as they mature, reminiscent of the long bill of a stork. Stork's bill can be used as a pot herb or chopped for salads if collected in early spring when it is tender. A tea made of the leaves has

been used as a mild diuretic and is said to relieve gout and rheumatism. It can be found growing in open sandy or rocky places, on prairies or on disturbed sites.

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



Thursday, March 21, 6:00–7:30 pm—Adding Bulbs to Your Garden This class will deal with the various types of flowering bulbs that are available, how to make the best selections for your garden and location, when to plant them, and how to maintain them. Instructor: Monica Nyenhuis Cost: \$12.00

Monday, March 25, 6:00–7:30 pm—Rainwater Harvesting Homeowners wanting to conserve water and save on bills are looking to rainwater harvesting as an old concept with a new value in a time of water shortage and droughts. Efficient water use is increasingly important to Texas. With a growing population and limited supply of ground and surface water, Texans must use water wisely. Learn how to capture, divert, store, and distribute rainwater for later use. Instructor: Pam Daniel Cost: \$12.00

Monday, April 1, 6:00–7:30 pm—Getting Started with Roses This class will deal with the basics of rose gardening for making the best rose selections for our area and your specific garden. You will learn the differences between the major kinds of roses and how to plant and maintain a healthy rose garden. It will also cover when and how to prune your roses. Instructor: Jim Suggs Cost: \$12.00

Thursday, April 4, 6:00–7:30 pm—Herbs, From the Garden to the Kitchen Of all the plants you can grow in your garden, herbs are some of the easiest, especially in the Ellis County area. Our dry, rocky soils make for good ground for these useful plants. Not only are they attractive and easy to grow, they are of great use in the kitchen. This class will teach you what to plant, how to care for it, and how to bring your herbs into the kitchen to make tasty and healthy dishes. Recipes and handouts included. Instructor: Susan Clark Cost: \$12.00

Monday, April 8, 6:00–7:30 pm—Attracting Butterflies to Your Garden Do you want to learn how to attract more butterflies to your garden? Join us for this informative class. You will learn what butterflies are in our area and what plants you will need to add to your garden to attract the various types of butterflies. Learn the difference between host and nectar plants and why you need both in order to have the most butterflies. Instructor: Carolyn Ross Cost: \$12.00

Thursdays, April 11- May 2, four classes, 6:00–8:00 pm—“Ag 101”—Beginning Farmer/Rancher Join this experienced instructor as you cover these topics: soils and soil fertility, soil testing, pasture management, basic livestock productions and pond management. This class will be held at the Ellis County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office at 701 S. I-35E, Suite 3. Instructor: Mark Arnold, County Extension Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources Cost: \$22.00

Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



Herb of the Month:

Bay Laurel (*Laurus nobilis*)

Bay Laurel or Sweet Bay is an aromatic evergreen tree or large shrub reaching 20+ feet tall, native to the Mediterranean region. Chosen by the International Herb Society for Herb of the year 2009, bay is semi-hardy in this part of Texas. A mature plant can survive to about 15° in a protected area of the landscape. Plant bay on a sunny southeast exposure near a building or wall for best protection from harsh north winds. Bay Laurel will tolerate some high shade and can suffer damage from too much direct Texas summer sun.

Bay leaves are used for their flavor in cooking. The fragrance is sweet, but not overpowering with a blend of spices such as nutmeg and clove. These scents are followed by a hint of citrus and mint. One or two bay leaves make an excellent seasoning for poultry, fish and meat, and enhance the taste of any stew, soup, or sauce. It is an important ingredient in many French, Moroccan, and Turkish dishes. The peak of

bay's aroma is a day or two after picking the fresh leaves. This brief drying time concentrates the oils just enough. Bay leaves should be used whole and removed from the dish before serving.



Chopped leaves have very sharp edges and must be enclosed in a muslin bag. Add fresh bay leaves early in the cooking process to release the most flavor—unlike most herbs, bay can be boiled for hours.

Bay Laurel gets its name from the Latin *Laurus* meaning green tree and *nobilis* meaning noble or renowned. A wreath of bay laurels was given as the prize at the Python Games because the games were in honor of Apollo. Greek mythology holds that the nymph Daphne was transformed by the river god Ladon into the laurel tree to escape the pursuit of Apollo. In the bible, the sweet bay is often an emblem of prosperity and fame. It is the source of the word *baccalaureate* and *poet laureate*.

A classic use of bay is the French *bouquet garni* which is a bundle of the three herbs: bay leaf, thyme and parsley tied together. The herbs can be tied with a string or placed in a muslin bag, so that they can be removed from the pot before serving. Generally, the herbs are fresh but can be dried.

Here is a wonderful use of bay to flavor cakes, pie filling, or drizzled over all types of baked goods, fruits, and fruit salads. This also makes a wonderful sorbet.



Bay Syrup

1-1/2 cups water
1-1/2 cups sugar
10 to 12 bay leaves

Combine the water and sugar in a small saucepan. Add the bay leaves and bruise them gently against the side of the pan with a spoon. Place over medium heat and bring to a boil. Cover, remove from the heat, and let cool to room temperature. Remove the leaves and press to extract their flavor. Syrup can be refrigerated for about 10 days or frozen for up to 6 months.

Some additional uses for bay leaves are:

⇒ Add a couple of leaves to the water for cooking pasta, potatoes, and rice.

⇒ Poaching liquids for fish and poultry are richer with a few bay leaves added.

⇒ Fresh bay leaves and juniper berries are the two major flavorings in marinades for game

meats. A good way to get that flavor combination is to steep some leaves in gin for a few weeks and add the liquid to the rest of the marinade ingredients.

⇒ Add two leaves to Italian-style sauces, pot roasts, and other braised meat dishes.

⇒ Simmer a leaf in the warm milk mixture for custards and puddings.

⇒ Use bay leaf to flavor hot chocolate.

⇒ Add a bay leaf to canisters of flour, cornmeal, and other grains to prevent weevils.

One final note: be aware that not all bays are edible. Be sure you are using *Laurus nobilis*.





What's Happening in March

IT'S BACK! Beginning March 23rd: Every Saturday from March to December 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!!!**

.....●.....
Saturday, March 9, 10am–1pm, ECMGA Greenhouse Open House! Plan your spring garden with the help of Ellis County Master Gardeners. Prizes, refreshments, and tour the Waxahachie High School Greenhouse. Location: 1100 Highway 77, Free!

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There are many opportunities in our area for learning more about gardening and the environment. Ellis County Master Gardeners' Lighthouse for Learning spring classes are listed on page five. The following organizations also offer classes. Please visit their websites for more information.

BRIT. Classes include: Edible Flowers, Mushrooms, Organics, Herbs, and many more. Visit <http://www.brit.org/events/learners> for more info. Fees vary, some include lunch. Also check the calendar for other events at <http://www.brit.org/calendar/>

The Dallas Arboretum. A few class examples include: Square Foot Gardening, Attracting Birds, Landscape Design, Tomatoes, Beekeeping, Creative Arts, and many more. Visit <http://www.dallasarboretum.org/AdultEducation/index.htm> for details and registration. Fees vary.

Garden Inspirations. Classes in March include: Perennial Cutting, Vegetable Gardening, Culinary Herbs, Seed Saving, Tomatoes, and more. For complete details and to register for classes, visit www.gardeninspirations-tx.com. Class fees vary; some are free.

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Dogwood Canyon

1206 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill

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

Thursday, March 7, 3:30pm, Trout Lily Walk at Dogwood Canyon with Jim Varnum. For more info, contact Jim at jevarnum@aol.com.

Thursday, March 7, 9am–9pm, Dogwood Canyon—Free First Thursday. Located at 1206 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill, just south of Cedar Hill State Park entrance. For more info, go to: <http://tx.audubon.org/Dogwood.html>

Monday to Friday, March 11-15, 1pm daily, Dogwood Canyon Spring Break Speaker Series. This Spring Break, Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center has invited some of the metroplex's most interesting naturalists to join us for a speaker series. **Great for Kids and Adults!** Contact: Tania Homaoun at thomayoun@audubon.org Website: <http://dogwoodcanyon.audubon.org>

Monday, 3/11: Pierre Bradshaw of On the Wing Again with Katrina the Harris Hawk

Tuesday, 3/12: Artist Charlotte Flowers will present on Sketching from Nature

Wednesday, 3/13: Mark Pyle with the DFW Herpetological Society will bring out his reptiles

Thursday, 3/14: Dr. Bob Osborne and his amazing insect collection

Friday, 3/15: Derek Main research paleontologist at the Arlington Archosaur

Saturday, March 23, 9am–12pm, Dogwood Canyon—Fourth Saturday Workday.

.....●.....
Texas Discovery Gardens

3601 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Dallas

TexasDiscoveryGardens.org

Saturday, March 9, 9am–12pm, Modern Victory Gardens: Spring/Summer Vegetables. Join a growing trend and learn how to create a bountiful organic community or backyard vegetable garden with a panel of gardening experts. We cover seasonal gardening topics. \$25; \$20 for TDG Members. Register in advance.

(Continued on page 8)



2013 Ellis County Master Gardener Scholarships

One of the primary missions of the Ellis County Master Gardeners is to build partnerships with the Ellis County community to expand horticultural education and opportunities.

In keeping with this mission, the Ellis County Master Gardeners Association (ECMGA) will again make scholarship funds available in 2013 to deserving Ellis County high school seniors pursuing studies in horticulture related fields.

Scholarships are available in the amount of \$2,000. To qualify, the applicant must be a current or former resident of Ellis County, have an elected academic major in a horticulture-related field that includes, but is not limited to: horticulture, agriculture, environmental science, forestry, botany and entomology, and be able to provide proof of acceptance and/or current registration at an accredited institution of higher learning.

Completed applications must be received by April 2, 2013 to be considered for scholarship award.

Additional information on the scholarships, the application, and award process can be obtained by contacting the Texas AgriLife Extension Office, 701 S. I-35, Suite 3, Waxahachie, TX, 75165 or by calling (972) 825-5175. The website is www.ecmga.com.

Welcome Spring!



(Continued from page 7)

March 11-15, 11am—3pm daily, Spring Break Safari Week. Join TDG as they celebrate Spring Break in Garden Style! All activities are free with paid garden admission. Remember that Tuesdays are always free (Butterfly House exhibit is regular admission). For info, visit <http://texasdiscoverygardens.org/springbreak.php>

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Saturday, March 2 to April 7, Dallas Blooms at the Dallas Arboretum. Once again, the Dallas Arboretum kicks off springtime with one of the most spectacular floral displays in the world. For more info about events and visiting the arboretum, go to: www.dallasarboretum.org/

Saturday, March 16, 9am—12pm, Cedar Ridge Preserve—Conservation in Action Workday. Volunteers help remove non-native plants, restore trails, and work in the butterfly garden. Water, snacks, pruning shears, shovels, and work gloves provided. Contact: info_CRP@yahoo.com. Location: 7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas. www.audubondallas.org

Friday, March 22, 8:30pm, Mockingbird Nature Park “OWL PROWL”. Indian Trail Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist and the Midlothian Parks and Recreation Department are co-hosting a Mockingbird Nature Park Night Hike/“OWL PROWL”. Located at 1361 Onward Road, the corner of Mockingbird Lane and Onward Road in Midlothian. Register by calling (972) 291-2868.

Monday, March 25, 7pm, Indian Trail Master Naturalists presents “John Bunker Sands Wetland Center, History—Mission—Events” with Linda Dunn, Education Manager at JBSWC and Master Naturalist—North Texas Chapter. The program is free and follows the 6pm Master Naturalist meeting that is open to the public. ***New meeting location:** Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Parkway, Red Oak. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email ellis-tx@tamu.edu

Tuesdays, April 2 to May 28, 6pm—9pm, Indian Trail Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist will hold their Annual Training Classes at First United Methodist Church, 505 West Marvin Avenue, Waxahachie. Applications are due by March 18, and are available online at <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/>. For information, contact the AgriLife Extension Service Office by phone at (972) 825-5175 or email: ellis-tx@tamu.edu, or contact Paul Grindstaff at Training@itmnc.com.



Landscape Gardening

From: Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener

Ellis County Master Gardeners have a website at www.ecmga.com. Check this website for information on gardening in Ellis County, sign up for a monthly newsletter, or access other websites including the Texas A&M Horticulture website. Questions for Master Gardeners will be answered with a return email or telephone call, if you leave a message at (972) 825-5175.

Crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*)

Written by Cynthia W. Mueller, Master Gardener, Galveston County, TX

The crossvine is a member of the Trumpet-Creeper Family (Bignoniaceae) and has gone by other names such as *Anisostichus capreolata*, *Doxantha capreolata*, and *Anisostichus crucigera*. This native perennial vine is usually found in east Texas forested areas, but is also found in various places in westernmost central Texas. Its woody vines climb well (up to 50 feet) due to the tendrils (modified leaves), which have claws at the tips, enabling the crossvine to cling to fences and walls without help.

The opposite leaves are usually four to six inches long and two inches wide. The leaves are glossy, dark green in summer and more reddish after frost. In areas with mild winters, the vine will keep its leaves during the winter, and is ready to continue growing and flower as soon as warmer weather arrives. This is a good characteristic for a vine, which is planted to cover arbors and provide shade quickly.

The heavy spring blooms of crossvine are its main attraction. The vines almost completely cover themselves with clusters of two inch, trumpet-shaped flowers, attractive to hummingbirds, in various shades of yellow, buff-orange, brick, and red. The flowers are not scented, to most people. After blooming, four to eight inch long dark brown, woody seed pods are formed.



The native Americans used crossvine as a remedy for a number of physical conditions, including diphtheria, edema, headaches, and rheumatism. The genus 'Bignonia' honors King Louis XV of France's librarian, Jean Paul Bignon, and the species name 'capreolata' describes the twisted, winding, branched tendrils. It is said that the plant received its name 'crossvine' from the design of the cut cross-section of the stems.

Crossvine does best in full sun, but will grow in partial shade, although there will be fewer flowers. It is able to survive standing water for short periods of time and thrives in many different soil conditions, preferring a near-neutral pH. After establishment, it could be considered to be drought-resistant. It is said to be hardy to Zone 6. It can be quickly differentiated from the trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*), another native vine, because crossvine's compound leaves are split into two parts.

The vine may be propagated from stem or root cuttings or from seeds, which need no pretreatment and are considered viable for about one year. The best time to collect pods is when they are light brown in color in the late summer or early fall.

Crossvine is commercially available in several selections, but many beautiful variations have been discovered in the

woods and brought into gardens. The varieties often seen include 'Atrosanguinea', which may too dark red in color to stand out in the garden; 'Tangerine Beauty' a blend of apricot and golden rust color; 'Helen Fredel' a more yellow specimen; and 'Dragon Lady' 'Jekyl' and 'Shalimar Red'.

If the crossvine has any drawbacks, it might be that it grows too robustly for the space it has been given. Sometimes suckers appear that need to be taken up to keep the plant in bounds. Deer



will eat it.

Garden Checklist for March 2013

Dr. William C. Welch, TX AgriLife Extension Service

- ◆ Often, tomato and pepper plants started outdoors from seed will grow so quickly they will catch up with commercial plants in size within a few weeks. For many gardeners, this is the only way to obtain rare or heirloom varieties. But because this has been a winter with erratic weather patterns, it's best to keep an eye on young tomato transplants, so that they may be covered if the threat of a late frost occurs.
- ◆ Don't be in a hurry to set out young pepper plants. Wait until the temperatures seem to be settled.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Start hanging baskets of petunias, ferns and others for another dimen-

(Continued on page 10)

Texas Native: Redbud Tree

By Marilyn Simmons
Ellis County Master Gardener Intern

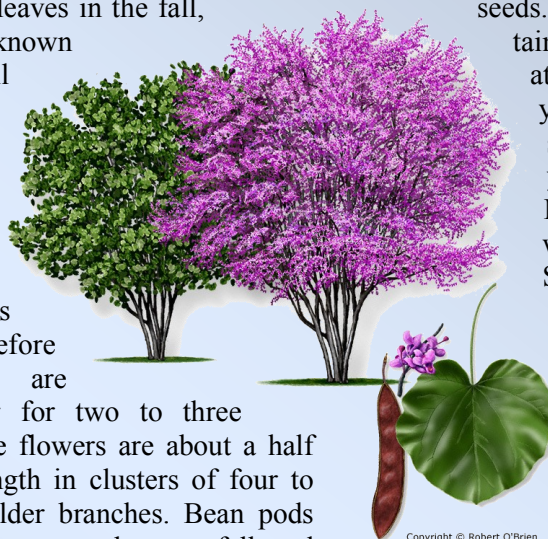


The Redbud Tree is an early flowering tree for the landscape. In early spring, a scattering of Redbud trees can be breathtaking. Whether it is in a landscape or in nature, the emergence of lavender and purple blooms of the redbud is a definite sign that spring is coming. The redbud will grow in a wide variety of soils. This small 20 to 30 foot, sometimes 40 foot tree, can be found in Texas all over the Piney Woods of Northeast and central Texas and across the center of the state. Redbud will grow in full sun or as an understory tree in partial shade.

This deciduous tree is generally rounded in shape, and occasionally erratic in shape, making it a wonderful selection for accenting a landscape. The Eastern Redbud is the largest of the Redbuds. All redbuds are easily recognizable by the heart shaped leaves. These leaves are three to five inches



long, dark green on top and light green underneath. The tree will have yellowing leaves in the fall, but is not known for its fall display. However, the awesome spring show as flowers emerge before leaf buds are spectacular for two to three weeks. The flowers are about a half inch in length in clusters of four to eight on older branches. Bean pods form and stay on the tree fall and winter.



The light grey trunk is tight and thin and changes to reddish brown, turning a darker grey in color as it ages. Watch the trunk of the tree for borers. Watch for damaged or flakey bark from time to time.

This tree is easily propagated by seed. Collect seed pods when mature.

They will be about two to four inches long and brittle. Shell and air dry the seeds. Store in sealed containers at room temperature for up to one year. If seeds will be stored longer than a year, store at 41°F. Many of the seeds will not germinate. Sound seed can be determined by soaking seeds in water. The mature seeds will sink to the bottom; immature seeds will float. Scarify seed in a

vinegar and water solution, then keep seeds at 41°F for 30–60 days. Seeds will usually germinate in about three weeks. Cuttings can be taken from young wood or wood sprouts.

We have redbuds along the creek in our housing addition and many Redbuds grace the roadways in Ellis County. This tree is Oklahoma's State Tree and has always been a favorite of mine.

Landscape Gardening (Continued from page 9)

- sion in landscape color. One attractive begonia plant can yield a number of others through careful rooting of stem cuttings.
- ◆ Plant dahlia tubers in fertile, well-drained soil.
 - ◆ 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.

- ◆ Select and order caladium tubers, as well as, coleus plants for late April 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 per 100 square feet of bed area. Check mulch on azalea and camellia beds and add where needed.
- ◆ Fertilize roses every four to six

weeks from now until September.

- ◆ 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.

In the Vegetable Garden

With Ginger Cole

Ellis County Master Gardener



Resolutions of a Gardener

Maybe this really should be confessions of a gardener. This time of the year, I usually have a couple of raised beds full of wonderful fresh spinach. No chemical fertilizers, no pesticides, and raised right here, just the way I like it: a nearly-free harvest ensuring that the spinach I prepared and served was less than hours old. I protected my raised beds with row covers and my cool season vegetables were the most productive pest free produce I'd ever had.

Last fall, I planted my spinach. Apparently, I was in a funk last fall and when my spinach failed to germinate in a timely manner I did not investigate or replant. I found myself in shock at the grocery store paying about \$5.00 for a plastic container of organically grown spinach.

As an experiment, I used the plastic container from the store-bought spinach as a planter to start some spinach indoors. I planted 18 seeds. Only six seeds germinated, or 33%. That is an incredibly low germination rate. Optimistically, I could rationalize that even those six little sprouts would eventually grow into plants that will equal or surpass the \$5.00 value of spinach that came in the plastic container.

I did not like the results of my little experiment, so I looked at what may have caused my low success rate. First, I was using old seeds. After a little research, I found that spinach seeds, if kept in opti-

mal conditions, may last about five years. Optimal conditions being defined as seeds maintained in an airtight container in a refrigerator.

Strike two for me. I am apparently guilty of seed abuse or neglect. My seeds were not kept airtight protected against moisture fluctuations. Nor were they in a refrigerator. Sometimes they were in the house or garage. Occasionally, I left my seed basket in the garden overnight. Bad conditions under which my seeds had been kept resulted in seed viability of only about a year.

Because of my "seed abuse", not only did I miss out on a fall and winter of fresh spinach, I lost money. A packet of spinach that cost \$3.95 has from 300 to 400 seeds. By splitting the difference, say there were 350 seeds in a packet, if only half (175) grew and were harvested as full bunches of spinach, the value of the mature plants would have exceeded \$150.00. So I was not only disappointed in not having my own beautiful fresh spinach, I had lost money.

In my resolve to cease abusing my seeds, I purchased two small plastic airtight containers: one for cool season crops; the

second for warm season crops. They are stored in the refrigerator in the garage. Further, I resolve to seek to share seeds with fellow gardeners.

Do I really need 300 to 400 spinach seeds? If spinach would grow here in the summer, the answer could be yes. My favorite breakfast is a ranchero omelet with a side of spinach and black beans. I could eat that every day. However, spinach is a cool season crop and does not grow here in hot weather. That means less than a half of a packet is all I would need each season.

My final resolution is to refer to the following seed viability chart (reprinted from the dirt happy blogspot) and keep my garden seeds fresh and viable when I do choose to keep seeds from year to year. However, maybe it is a good idea to have lots of gardening friends with whom to share surplus seeds and have a fresh start every year.

Note: The original information had spinach listed at one year. Spinach is listed under the five year column. Remember, these are based on optimal storage conditions. When seeds have been refrigerated in an airtight container, be sure to leave

the container closed when it is removed from cold storage. To prevent condensation and moisture formation on the seeds, the closed container should be allowed to come to room temperature before opening. Moisture on the seeds may cause them to deteriorate in storage.

Relative Longevity of <u>Well-Stored</u> Vegetable Seed (by years)					
Five	Four		Three	Two	One
Collards	Beets	Radish	Asparagus	Corn, sweet	Onion
Corn salad (mache)	Brussels Sprouts	Rutabaga	Beans	Leek	Parsley
Cress	Cabbage	Sorrel	Broccoli	Okra	Parsnip
Cucumber	Cauliflower	Squash	Cabbage, Chinese	Pepper	Salsify
Endive	Chard, Swiss	Tomato	Carrot		Scorzonera
Lettuce	Chicory	Turnip	Celeriac		
Muskmelon (Cantaloupe)	Eggplant	Watermelon	Celery		
Spinach *	Kale		Kohlrabi		
	Pumpkin		New Zealand Spinach		
			Pea		

2013 Lawn & Garden Expo



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9 a.m. - 5 p.m. March 16, 2013

Waxahachie Civic Center

2000 Civic Center Lane, Waxahachie, TX

Guest Speakers

10:00 a.m. Rosa Finsley, Landscaping With Native Plants

12:00 p.m. Arlene Hamilton & Susan Clark

Flavors of the Mediterranean

2:30 p.m. Randy Johnson, The Hidden World Beneath Our Feet

Exhibitors & Children's Workshop

ECMGA Plant Sale

Admission at the Door \$5 Adults, Children Under 12 Free.

Free tickets will be available from our Expo sponsors after March 1st.

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