



# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VI, Issue 4

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

May, 2012

**W**elcome 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](http://www.ECMGA.com), click on subscribe, and it will be sent around the 1st of every month. Best of all; it's FREE! Melinda Kocian, editor/Susan Clark, co-editor

## What's Happening in May

### **IT'S BACK! Beginning May 19th: Every Saturday from 8am—1pm.**

**Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market** Visit the Ellis County Master Gardener's booth! There are lots of free handouts, plants to buy, and some products to purchase. Pick up a printed copy of the E-Garden Newsletter for yourself or to pass on to a friend.



**Friday, May 11, 8am—6pm and Saturday, May 12, 8am—5pm. Mother's Day Sale at Tex-Scapes Greenery, 2705 South Kaufman Street, Ennis.** Call (972) 875-1716 for more info.

**Monday, May 21, 7pm. "Recognizing Good Bugs in your Environment" hosted by Indian Trail Master Naturalists.** John Watts, Insect Specialist/Entomologist at the Texas Discovery Gardens will present a program on the good bugs of our environment. The program is free and follows the 6 p.m. Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. It takes place in the Covenant Room of the First United Methodist Church, 505 West Marvin Ave, Waxahachie. Go to <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/> for more info.

### **Dogwood Canyon**

1206 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill

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

**Thursday, May 3, 9am—9pm. FREE First Thursday.** Enjoy FREE admission all day and join in throughout the day for guided hikes, animal encounters, and children's arts and crafts activities.

**Nature Walks** with Master Naturalist **Jim Varnum**. Email [jvarnum@aol.com](mailto:jvarnum@aol.com) for information about guided hikes and learning about Dogwood Canyon's unique ecosystem. (Wednesdays @ 2:30, Saturdays @ 11:00 and Sundays @ 2:30).

### **Cedar Ridge Preserve**

7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas

[www.audubondallas.org](http://www.audubondallas.org)

**Saturday, May 5. 7:30am—10:30am. Hike on the Wild Side Hike-a-Thon.** Register from 7:30am—10:30am. 11am: Prize Drawing (You must be present to win.) \$20 per person, \$5 per child (6-12 years old), Children 5 and under are free. *Cash Only—Rain or Shine.* Registrants will receive an event t-shirt (while supplies last). For additional information, contact: Robert Rinker (817) 881-2736 or [info\\_CRP@yahoo.com](mailto:info_CRP@yahoo.com)

**Saturday, May 19, 9am—12pm. 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 [jvarnum@aol.com](mailto:jvarnum@aol.com).

**Saturday, May 26, 9am—12pm. Habitat Restoration and Trail Maintenance.** For more info, email: [info\\_CRP@yahoo.com](mailto:info_CRP@yahoo.com).

(Continued on page 4)



### **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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Photo by  
Mox Moxley

### Hardscapes

No planting looks great 365 days a year without a lot of personal attention. One way to bring interest and focus to your garden is with special pieces that make your area unique to you. Whether you have a large aluminum bison in your pasture or just a small whimsical figurine tucked under a plant, the hardscape will make your garden special.

The Unseen Hardscape that you don't see is the most important in the garden. The addition of a single application of two inches of expanded shale will loosen, aerate, and add to your soils water retaining capabilities as no other product can. And it's permanent; do it once and it will treat the soil for your children's children's children, etc.

### Odds and Ends

- \* Maintain a two to three inch layer of mulch around all plants and bed areas.
- \* Keep mulch several inches away from trunks or stems of plants to prevent excess moisture and the entry of disease and insects.
- \* If available, shredded tree trimmings are one of the best kinds of mulch, but any type that decomposes to provide nutrients is fine. Grass clippings are not recommended for mulch. They provide nitrogen for the soil, so leave them on the lawn or put them in the compost pile.

Photo by Melinda Kocian

## It's May....What Needs To Be Done?

### Planting

- \* It's time to plant sweet potatoes.
- \* Plant other hot-weather, summer-blooming plants including succulents, purple fountain grass, esperanza, hibiscus, plumbago, purslane, moss rose, Mexican petunia, and angel's trumpet.
- \* Consider the following selections for shade: "Texas Gold" columbine, elephant ears, impatiens, torenias, nicotiana, and caladiums.
- \* Wait until June to plant periwinkle (vinca).
- \* After spring-flowering bulbs have bloomed, divide and replant them. Make sure the tops have dried before moving. The foliage feeds the bulbs for next year's blooms.

### Fertilizing and Pruning

- \* For larger fruit, manually thin peaches, apples, pears, and plums to be five to six inches apart.
- \* Fertilize tomatoes and most other vegetables every other week for productive and vigorous plants.
- \* Mow lawn grass the proper height every five days to keep it dense and healthy. Keep the blade sharp for a good clean cut to prevent browning at the tips.
- \* Deadhead roses and other reblooming plants. Feed fruit trees, perennials, annuals, ground covers, and vines with a lawn fertilizer.
- \* Pinch back Mexican bush sage, aster, chrysanthemum, copper canyon daisy, and Mexican mint marigold to encourage compact plants and more blooms in the fall. These may need to be pruned several times during the year.

### Garden Watch

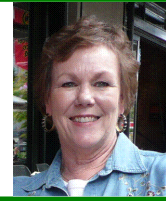
- \* Look for insects and diseases on tomatoes and other crops. Early detection is imperative. Keep the soil adequately moist to prevent blossom-end rot on tomatoes. Spray for early blight with a labeled insecticide as soon as it is detected. Crop rotation each year will help prevent some diseases from building up in the soil.
- \* Horn worms on tomatoes are common and can devastate a crop. They can usually be removed by hand or controlled by Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*). Use it with care on any plant. It kills all types of caterpillars including those which are larva of butterflies and moths.
- \* Squash vine borers and squash bugs tend to be a problem. Destroy the eggs of squash bugs found on the underside of the leaves by hand or a stream of water. Many vegetable pests can often be controlled by mechanical, biological, or organic means before using chemical pesticides. Always read the label to make sure the product is safe for vegetables.





## Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



### **Black-Eyed Susan** – Sunflower Family (Asteraceae)

*Rudbeckia hirta* L.

**Region:** 1, 2, 4, 7 (Ellis Co is in Region 4)

**Size:** 1—3 feet

**Blooms:** May—November, Annual/Perennial

Black-Eyed Susan is named for the brown center disk, which may rise an inch above the petals. Slightly drooping petals are yellow, often with a dash of reddish brown near their base. Tips of the eight to twenty petals may be toothed. Stems and leaves are covered with rough hairs. Leaves are unlobed, narrowed at the base, variable in shape, but usually longer than broad, and sometimes obscurely toothed. The stems usually branch at the mid-point. It grows in various types of soil, but especially favors sandy or alluvial (grainy) soils. It is found in grassy areas along roadsides and at the edges of woods. It is utilized for dye and tea. Indians are believed to have used juice from its roots to relieve earaches.

## Bat Facts

*By Jamey Guarascio-Cosper  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



With spring in full swing, mosquitoes are on the prowl and in full force! Fortunately, for those of us that love spending time outside, bats are also returning for the summer from their winter roosts. As you may know, bats are a top predator of the mosquito. In one hour, one bat eats 600—1,000 mosquito-sized insects. Therefore, 50 bats are capable of eating a minimum of 180,000 bugs in six hours with no ill effects on livestock, household pets, or children. No pesticide on the market can match that claim!

Bat cuisine consists of mosquitoes, flies, June bugs, ants, termites, moths, scrub beetles, crickets, and spotted cucumber beetles (the

adult stage of corn rootworm), to name only a few. Some species even consider grasshoppers fine dining—there is no accounting for taste.

Now for those of you that cringe at the mere thought of bats being in the area, let me dispel some ridiculous rumors and share some interesting facts.



◆Bats do not intentionally fly into your hair. Bats are shy and avoid people whenever possible. However, if you have ever been to an evening football game, you are well aware that mosquitoes and gnats hover close to people. Thus a low-flying bat is most-likely catching his dinner and proba-

bly saving someone from an itchy bite (and possibly West Nile virus) if he flies close by.

◆North American bats have no desire to suck blood. They are all insectivores. Of the 1,108 species of bats currently identified, only three rely on blood as a food source and those three species reside in Central and South America.

◆Bats make up a quarter of the mammal species.

◆Bats are not blind. Most bats have good eyesight; however, due to the nature of their nocturnal flight times, insect-eating bats rely on echolocation for navigation. They are so efficient that they can detect a strand of hair in complete darkness.

◆Bats are meticulous; they clean

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton  
Ellis County Master Gardener



### May Gardening

Hasn't this been a glorious spring! About 7:00 this morning, I walked out to the garden, cup of coffee in hand to enjoy the butterflies, cool breeze, and newly planted vegetables. Three hours later I was up to my knees in dirt, mounds of weeds were scattered about, and the peppers, squash, basil, and marjoram were planted. It's about impossible to just walk through the garden. Oops, I was still in my pajamas!

My lazy gardener ethic has paid off again. The basil was still in the potting shed late in April when we dropped to about 50° one morning. You know basil doesn't like cold feet so should not be planted until night temperatures stay in the 70s. I doubt that one night would do much harm, but an extended cool spell will stunt their growth. This year I've planted a variety of basil including purple ruffle, cinnamon, Thai, lemon, and of course, lots of sweet Genovese, my favorite green basil. The Vietnamese and African blue varieties have reseeded from last year's plants and have emerged. North Haven Gardens in Dallas had a new variety to try called "Key Lime". I wonder if it will taste like a pie. We shall see.

Most of the "weeds" being pulled are mints which crept under the pathway and have thrived in the butterfly garden. I preach planting mints in containers or confined areas, but obviously failed to practice that and now have a problem of them choking out the more desirable butterfly plants. Every tiny snip of root left behind during weeding will return. Lesson learned, but problem not solved. The good news is mints can be used as companion plants. Allowed to thrive in the spring, mint will act as a trap for the four-lined plant insect. By June, the insect will be in decline and I can rip out the mint which is also in decline because of the Texas heat. Never fear, early next spring the mint will return with vigor.

Other companion plant practices include planting tomatoes near roses to help prevent fungal diseases such as black spot, powdery mildew and rust. Plant basil near tomatoes to help them be less watery and have a richer flavor. Many herbs provide fungal control and should be included in the vegetable and flower garden. Thyme, oregano, garlic chives, onion chives, and yarrow will provide systemic fungal control.

Hopefully, you have most of your

herbs in by now, but if you are looking for a few more varieties other than parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme you may want to head to the Fort Worth Botanic Garden on Saturday May 21. It's the annual Herb Festival of the Greater Fort Worth Herb Society. In addition to workshops and knowledgeable speakers, there are a number of vendors specializing in herbs as well as native plants, annuals, perennials, and garden art. The sale begins at 9 a.m. and goes until 4 p.m., but you will want to get there early for the best selection.

If you are not heading to Fort Worth that day, remember it's also the Grand Opening of the Waxahachie Downtown Farmers Market. This marks our tenth year. We will be on the courthouse square for the opening, but within a few weeks will be moving to a new location, across from city hall in a former lumberyard. The new site will allow the farmers market to expand the hours and days of operation. Anita Williamson, Director of Downtown Development, took the market vendors on a recent tour. There was much enthusiasm and excitement about what can become of the market as we develop new ideas for use.

See you at the Market!

*What's Happening in May (Continued from page 1)*

**Texas Discovery Gardens**  
3601 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Dallas  
[TexasDiscoveryGardens.org](http://TexasDiscoveryGardens.org)

**Friday, May 11, 2pm—4pm OR Saturday, May 12, 8am—10am. Plant Safari** This pre-sale tour shows how to incorporate native and adapted plants into your landscape. Learn about the environmental conditions they thrive in and the beneficial insects they attract. Attendees can buy plants at our Member's Preview. Admission: \$15, \$10 for TDG Members. Advance registration strongly encouraged.

**Saturday, May 12, 10am—2pm. Plant Sale** Enjoy native and adapted plants that are rare to find in local nurseries!

**Saturday, May 19, 9am—12pm. Beneficial Insects & their Host Plants** Learn about insects that keep your garden healthy and how to attract them with **John Watts**. Admission: \$25, \$20 for TDG Members. Register in advance.

## Vegetable Gardening Tips for May

By Pat Dockins  
Ellis County Master Gardener



Here's some things to keep in mind during the month of May.

- ◆ Continue to harvest spring crops daily to keep them producing as long as possible.
- ◆ Mulch peas and cole crops to keep the soil cool; water regularly.
- ◆ Continue to plant heat-tolerant tomato plants. Generally, the smaller size like the cherries will continue to bear during the hot weather if kept watered.

When the temperature gets over 100 degrees, almost nothing will bear fruit. Keep watering and when the temperatures drop back to the 90s, you'll start getting tomatoes again.

- ◆ Plant eggplant, pepper plants, cucumber, squash, okra, beans, sweet potatoes, melons, and southern peas this month.
- ◆ Watch for insects and diseases.



Squash vine borers and squash bugs love this month when plants are tender and juicy.

Early Blight on tomatoes can start to be a problem now.

Keep the lower branches and leaves cut off the plant to help alleviate this disease. If you use pesticides, read the label carefully to be sure it is safe to use on vegetables.

### Bat Facts (Continued from page 3)

themselves more thoroughly than cats.

- ◆ Fruit bats are responsible for 80-85% of reforestation of the world's rain forests through seed dispersion.
- ◆ Tequila traditionally comes from a cactus pollinated by bats. Numerous medicines are harvested from plants solely pollinated by bats.
- ◆ The bat colony at Bracken Cave in San Antonio (*pictured right*) eats several TONS (some reports show 250 tons) of insects each evening.
- ◆ The majority of the 1,108 species of bats are listed as Endangered or Threatened, primarily due to destruction of roosting sites.

The final point is what brings me to share this information. I would challenge anyone interested in gardening, species conservation, or outdoor sporting events to put up a bat house to

attract the mosquito eradicator! You can purchase a bat house through Bat



Conservation International's website or by building a bat house of your own. Specifics on what color to paint, how high to hang, and which direction to face the house can be obtained from these sources as well.



Most people fear bats because of their rumored "link to rabies." Statistics show that less than one-half of one percent of bats contract rabies. Additionally,

ly, bats are not a carrier for the dis-

ease, but die from it just like any other animal. However, you should **NEVER handle a bat**. As I stated earlier, healthy bats are shy creatures and normally avoid humans. Therefore, if you come upon a bat lying on the ground or roosting unusually low on a building or tree, do not touch it. Instead, call a rehabilitator and have the bat rescued. Although the bat may simply be suffering from dehydration or disorientation due to being blown off course, bats ARE wild animals and should not be handled. They may bite if they feel threatened. You can locate a rehabilitator through [www.batworld.org](http://www.batworld.org) or [www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org).

If you would like more information, please check out these two bat conservation organizations. Bat World, based in Mineral Wells, website [www.batworld.org](http://www.batworld.org) or Bat Conservation International, based in Austin, website [www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org).

Happy Bat Watching!







## Landscape Gardening

From: Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener

Ellis County Master Gardeners have a website at [www.ecmga.com](http://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.

### Watering Practices

By Dr. Douglas F. Welsh, *Professor & Extension Horticulturist, Texas AgriLife Extension Service*

In a few months, we will be in the midst of another hot Texas summer, one coming on the heels of last year's poor rainfall record. Properly watering plants during the summer tends to be one of the most confusing and misunderstood gardening chores. Often, ardent gardeners do not recognize inadequate watering until it is too late and plants are badly damaged or dead.

"How often should I water?" and "How much should I apply?" are a couple of the most-often asked questions from gardeners. Since water is both essential for healthy plant growth and often costly to apply in quantity during the summer, it is important to get it to the plant's roots efficiently and keep it there. The following are several suggestions for easier and more effective watering. These techniques apply to all gardening, from shade and fruit trees and vegetable gardens to lawns and house plants.

- ◆ Never water strictly by the calendar. We don't drink water every ten minutes or every hour, so why should plants be watered every two days or once a week? Instead, learn to recognize dry plants and soil and use these as your tip-off for watering. Too many factors determine how fast a soil dries for us to put watering on a regular basis.
- ◆ When the plants are dry, water thoroughly. Water lawns so that the soil will be wet several inches down, to encourage deep rooting and drought tolerance. One of the worst mistakes people make in their gardens is trying to 'sprinkle' them each day by using their thumb and the end of a running

hose. Most gardeners just don't have the patience to stand in one spot long enough for deep water penetration.

- ◆ Water trees by taking the sprinkler off the end of the hose and letting water run slowly for several hours out under the drip line (not near the trunk). Be sure that runoff does not occur.



- ◆ Most plants should be watered in the morning. Evening watering increases the likelihood of disease invasion, as the majority of diseases develop most rapidly in cool, moist conditions.

- ◆ While watering your lawn, try to keep water off the leaves of trees and shrubs as much as possible.

This is especially important for such plants as crape myrtle and roses, which are troubled by leaf diseases which spread rapidly on wet surfaces.

- ◆ Symptoms for plants which have been kept too wet are about the same as for those kept too dry. Roots in waterlogged soils die and do not take up water, so plants wilt and turn yellow. Try not to water a drowning plant!
- ◆ Organic matter, such as shredded pine bark and composted manure can increase water absorption when they are worked into our native soil.
- ◆ To keep moisture in the soil, use a thick mulch, such as shredded pine bark, grass clippings, or tree leaves. In addition to reducing evaporation, mulches also keep the soil cooler and make weed pulling much easier.
- ◆ Be especially careful to keep newly planted trees and shrubs well watered. Their developing root systems are sen-

sitive to under- and over-watering. But again, don't drown them.

- ◆ Always soak chemical fertilizers into the soil immediately after application. These materials are excellent sources of plant foods, but they are also salts, and can pull water out of plant tissues, resulting in burn, unless they are watered into the soil.

Gardeners often wonder what type of sprinkler is best. Generally speaking, most do a satisfactory job of making an even application. However the most efficient and effective type is the impact sprinkler (the kind used on golf courses and athletic fields).

For plants to thrive during the upcoming summer months, they will need plenty of water, but equally important is properly applying the much needed water.

For more information on preparing your landscape for the hot, dry weather go to <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind>

### Garden Checklist for May

- ◆ Experiment with a container of Bougainvillea this summer. It is a plant that prefers conditions that are hot and dry! Full sun and a rest period without too much watering are usually necessary before a burst of new blooms.
- ◆ It is not too late to sow directly into the soil seeds of sunflower, zinnia (pictured), morning glory, portulaca, marigold, cosmos, periwinkles, and gourds. Achimenes, cannas, dahlias, and other summer-flowering bulbs can also be planted in May.
- ◆ Allow foliage of spring-flowering bulbs to mature and yellow before removing.
- ◆ Pinch back the terminal growth on newly planted annual and perennial plants. This will result in shorter, more compact, well branched plants with more flowers.



(Continued on page 8)

## Caladiums—A Summer Favorite

By: Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener



Mother's Day is a good target date for planting caladiums. Optimum soil temperature should be 65 to 70 degrees. Caladium tubers tend to rot if planted too early in soil that is too cool.

The life or energy of a caladium tuber is measured in weeks. The average life is usually around 20 weeks. By staggering the time of your

plantings, you can have beautiful caladiums going into the fall. Plant as late as June or July to extend the foliage display.

Although their colors will be brighter if given afternoon shade, some caladiums can bask in the sun while others are only happy in the shade. The more sunlight caladiums are grown in, the higher the water requirements.

In trials at the Dallas Arboretum these caladiums have been given the *Arboretum Approved* designation:

### Fancy Leaf

◆ Apple Blossom—shade, rose-colored veins, pink blush, green border, great habit

◆ Firecracker Red—shade, deep red shiny foliage, tall red with green margin

◆ Moonlight—shade, almost metallic pure white foliage, no burn all summer, thick growing and full



◆ Raspberry Moon—shade, raspberry flecks, bright lemony green splotches, full plants, very unique color

◆ Roseglow—shade, dark rosy glow centers, deep green edging

### Strap leaf

◆ Candyland—shade but can take full sun, candy colored pink splotches, yummy looking, very full and bushy, fast growing

◆ Mount Everest—shade, it's bigger and taller than some fancy leaf, super bunching, huge

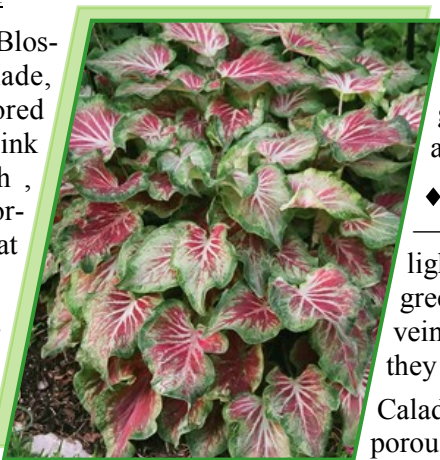
◆ Victoria—can take shade to sun, ruffled compact mounds of bright red-pink

◆ White marble, White Star, White Delight—can take shade to sun, white waxy large leaves,

◆ Thai East Meets West—shade, bright white leaves with red veins, short and compact, grows in a whorl

◆ Thai My Thai—shade, dark red foliage with white veins and green border, shiny foliage, fast growing

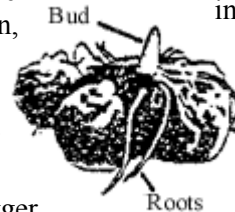
◆ Starburst (pictured left)—shade, new growth has light pink veins on pale green background, develops white veins on dark pink background as they age



Caladiums do best in a well-drained porous soil mixture that is rich in organic matter. Set the tubers, with the knobby side up, eight to twelve inches apart depending on the tuber size (the smaller the tuber the closer together). Plant two inches deep with a one to two inch layer of mulch to

maintain the moisture they need. At planting

time some growers recommend removing the central bud to encourage more leaf production from the side buds. To do this, press the bud with your thumb. It usually pops off easily. Incorporate a slow release fertilizer into the soil at the time of planting and again at six to eight week intervals ending in September.



As they mature, caladiums will develop ivory-colored flowers that resemble a spike partly enveloped by a petal-like bract. Remove these flowers as they form so that the plant's energy will be directed to producing more foliage.

Versatile enough to be used in containers as well as in your garden, try combining taller varieties with some

of the shorter varieties. A stunning combination would be Aaron as your background, Candidum in the middle, and White Wing in the foreground.

Want something that no one else has? Look for



Twist and Shout—burnt orange background with dark olive-green dots and leaf border!

What would a Texas summer be without caladiums. With their brightly colored leaves, who needs flowers! Just admiring caladiums gives us that cool feeling.



## Inviting Insects Into Your Vegetable Garden

By Maureen Nitkowski  
Ellis County Master Gardener



After a season of fighting invasions of squash bugs, stink bugs, grasshoppers, cucumber beetles and all of the other hexapod villains of the veggie patch, a gardener might be puzzled by the idea to bring more insects into the garden. My suggestion is to encourage beneficial insects to come to work with you to produce those vegetables. By beneficial insect, I refer to those insects that are pollinators or predators.

Often the vegetable gardener wonders why the cucumbers, squash or tomatoes have flowers but no fruit. The most likely answer is that insect pollinators are lacking. An effective way to keep pollinators in your neighborhood is to diversify the plantings in your surroundings. If you have plants in bloom almost all year long you will have a supply of pollinators at the ready for your vegetables. You can



choose among low maintenance herbaceous annuals or perennials, flowering vines, trees, and shrubs that are native or adapted to Ellis County.

In addition to habitat for pollinators, plant diversity supports predators both insect and avian to feast on the insect pests on your produce. Ladybugs dine on aphids on your pepper plants just as readily as they do on your roses or milkweed. Birds devour caterpillars and beetles if they have nesting sights near you. Remember that the "good guys" are present but will need some time for their numbers to increase to effectively deal with the pests. Be patient, and also be vigilant so you will know early when insect pests have arrived.



Frequently check beneath leaves for eggs and on all plant surfaces for damage or frass. Be able to identify the beneficial insects in their various life stages.

One last suggestion to tip the balance toward beneficial insects rather than insect pests is to engage good sanitation practices in the vegetable patch. Remove infested or infected plant material after the growing season, rotate crops, cultivate the soil, and keep the weeds out.



Help the "good guys" to help you.

Beneficial insects: lady beetles, praying mantis, honey bees, assassin bug (pictured above), lacewing, and damselfly.

Insect pests: grasshoppers, stink bugs, weevils, aphids (pictured left), thrips, and squash vine borers.

### Landscape Gardening (Continued from page 6)

- ◆ Time to plant caladium tubers, impatiens, coleus, begonias, and pentas in shady areas.
- ◆ Replace or replenish mulch materials in flower beds and shrub borders to conserve moisture and reduce weed growth.
- ◆ Make cuttings of your favorite chrysanthemums and root them in a mixture of sand and peat moss. Cover cutting box with plastic and place in shaded area for five or six days to prevent wilting.
- ◆ Prune climbing roses as they complete their spring bloom season. Remove dead or weak wood as needed.
- ◆ 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.

- ◆ During the summer, soil moisture becomes extremely important and essential for good plant production. Because continual watering is oftentimes costly and time consum-



ing, 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.





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