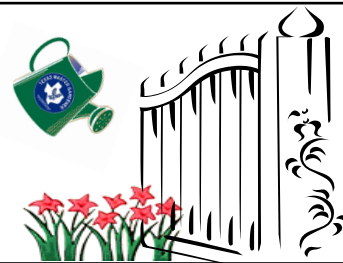




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume X, Issue Five

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

May, 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

What's Happening in May?

Every Saturday from April to October from 8am-1pm.

**410 S. Rogers (across from City Hall in the old lumberyard building)
Visit the Master Gardeners' Booth!**

- ☞ Useful gardening tips
- ☞ Plants and herbs for sale
- ☞ Free handouts...Some items for a fee
- ☞ Tell a friend to sign up for the E-Garden Newsletter... it's FREE!

The World of Container Gardening

"Pop-Up Horticulture" will make its first appearance of the year this Saturday, May 20 at the Waxahachie Farmer's Market. The featured topic will be the exciting world of container gardening.

What is a container garden? "Simply, it is a scaled-down version of the beautiful garden you may have always wanted growing in your yard", explains Ellis County Master Gardener Micki Roark.

Micki will be on hand to teach you how to create a sunny and a shady garden in a lovely container so that you can be inspired to plant your own. You will be taught the entire process of selecting the container, preparing the right soil, choosing the correct plants, and placement around your home.

Two demonstrations are planned during the morning at 9am and 11am. Please plan to attend and learn how to make your own beautiful container garden. Look for the Master Gardener Pop-Up Tent!



Listen to KBEC

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

The Ellis County Master Gardeners have a five minute segment every week, offering you helpful information on what you need to be doing in your landscape, as well as "happenings" around the county. Be sure to listen in!

Melinda Kocian

Indian Trail Master Naturalists Events



Join the **Indian Trail Master Naturalists** at their monthly meeting on **Monday, May 22**. The program for the evening is entitled **"Grass Identification and Morphology"** by **Rich Jaynes, Texas Master Naturalist and Environmental Scientist**. The presentation will include distinguishing morphological features and ecological

attributes of ten famous native grasses of the Blackland Prairie, as well as identifying a few places in the Metroplex where you can experience restored and/or surviving native tallgrass prairie areas. The program is free and follows the 6 pm 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

Master Naturalist 2017 Annual Spring Training Class. ITMN will hold their Annual Training Classes on Thursdays from 6pm-9pm from August 24 to November 16 at First United Methodist Church Family Life Center, 505 West Marvin Avenue, Waxahachie. The Texas Master Naturalist Program is co-sponsored by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Applications

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

PLANTING

- ☼ Plant heat-loving annuals including copper plant, firebush, gomphrena, lantana, pentas, purple fountaingrass and ornamental sweet potato in sunny areas. Buy "hardened" plants that are acclimated to sun.
- ☼ In shady spots, plant caladium and elephant ear bulbs, begonias, coleus, pentas, and impatiens (mildew-resistant types).
- ☼ Seeds of celosia, cosmos, marigold, morning glory, sunflower, portulaca periwinkles, gourds, and zinnia can be sown directly in the beds. Keep seeded area moist until seeds germinate. Achimenes, cannas, dahlias, and other summer flowering bulbs can also be planted in May.
- ☼ Establish new lawns before summer heat sets in. Sow seeded varieties of Bermudagrass early in the month; or sod Bermuda or St. Augustine grass. Water daily for the first few weeks to develop a good root system.

FERTILIZING AND PRUNING

- ☼ Manually thin the fruit on peaches, pears, plums, and apples to five to six inches apart early in the month.
- ☼ Fertilize tomatoes and most other vegetables every other week for productive and vigorous plants.

- ☼ Prune spring-flowering shrubs and vines soon after flowering. Keep the natural shape of the plant in mind as you prune, and avoid excessive cutting except where necessary to control size. Deadhead roses and other reblooming plants.
- ☼ Feed fruit trees, perennials, annuals, ground covers, and vines with a lawn fertilizer (3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio).
- ☼ Allow foliage of daffodils and other spring-flowering bulbs to mature and yellow before removing.

GARDEN WATCH

- ☼ Allow bluebonnets and other reseeding, annual wildflowers to die and the seeds to dry before mowing the stubble. Delay mowing until end of growing season if other wildflowers are growing in the area.
- ☼ Maintain a two to three inch layer of shredded hardwood or other wood mulch in beds and around all plants to conserve moisture and reduce weeds.
- ☼ Check tomatoes for signs of early blight (yellow blotches on lower leaves). Apply a labeled fungicide if needed. Keep soil adequately moist to prevent blossom-end rot (browned tissue on bloom end of fruit).
- ☼ Look for squash bugs in early morning. Destroy eggs found on underside of leaves by hand. Vegetable pests can often be controlled by mechanical, biological, or organic means rather than by chemicals.
- ☼ Watch for bagworms on junipers and other narrow-leafed evergreens. Apply Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) or general insecticide at first sign of larvae feeding. Remember that once the bag has formed, your only option is to manually pull them off.
- ☼ Make initial application of Image® or SedgeHammer® to control nutsedge (or "nutgrass") in established warm-season lawns.

The **Shumard Oak** is a large, deciduous tree reaching heights of 120 feet and a width of 50-60 feet. The Shumard Oak tolerates full sun and low to medium water requirements.

This Texas native produces acorns eaten by wildlife. The Shumard Oak is a fast growing tree with orange to deep red fall color. Oak wilt can be a disease problem.



Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener*



WINECUP, LOW POPPY MALLOW

Callirhoe involucrata (Torr.) Gray
Mallow Family (Malvaceae)

Size: 18 inches
Blooms: February-July, Perennial

Several species of winecups in Texas vary in color from deep wine to pink or white, but the blossoms are always recognizably similar. They flower on long stalks from leaf axils, at first cup- or goblet-shaped, then flattening out as the blossom matures. Their flowers open at midday and close near dusk, but the exact flowering period may be related to water availability.

The incised leaves are shallowly or deeply cut into five to seven lobes, and are wider than they are long. Both leaves and flowers of winecup yield a dye, but whether the color is orange or gray depends upon the mordant used. Winecup often grows in mixed stands with other wildflowers.



What's Happening (Continued from page 1)

are due by July 17. For more information and to receive an application, please e-mail ellis-tx@tamu.edu, or contact the AgriLife Extension Service Office by phone at (972) 825-5175.

Saturday, May 20, 9am, Wildflower Walk. Members will be leading a walk at Mockingbird Nature Park. Join in this half-mile stroll along the trails to identify wildflowers and birds. Free to the public. Participants should bring drinking water and binoculars. The walk will be canceled if raining. Info at: <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/> or email: Information@itmnc.com



EARTH TONES GREENERY SPRING CLASSES

810 E. Main Street, Midlothian ♦ (972) 723-0702

Saturday, May 20, 10am–11am, Keeping It Green! Seminar. Learn how to keep your lawn and garden green and healthy all season long. Learn strategies and techniques with the best fertilizers and organics and when to use them! Free to the public.

Saturday, May 27, 10am–11am, Just for Kids! Gardening Workshop. Kids will learn how to create potted arrangements of their own. \$20 per child. Small children may need the help of parents. Children keep their creations to take home after workshop! This workshop will also aim to teach kids how to respect the environment and appreciate nature! Reserve your child's spot at (972) 723-0702.

Monday, June 5–Thursday, June 8, Kidside Gardening Camp! Children will create something every day to bring home and learn about plants and the environment. Topics they will learn about include miniature gardening, container gardening, succulent gardening and butterfly gardening along with soil choices, potting skills, and maintaining plants for years to come! **Kids aged 4-12 welcome!** Cost will be \$75 per child. Camp will run from 10am–11:30am with registration at 9:30am on the first day. Call (972) 723-0702 to reserve your spot!

Monday, June 12–Thursday, June 15, Kids Gardening Camp! Children will create something every day to bring home and learn about plants and the environment. Topics they will learn about include miniature gardening, container gardening, succulent gardening and butterfly gardening along with soil choices, potting skills, and maintaining plants for years to come! **Kids aged 13 and up welcome!** Cost will be \$75 per child. Camps will run from 10am–11:30am with registration at 9:30am on the first day. Call (972) 723-0702 to reserve your child's spot!

GARDEN CHECKLIST FOR MAY

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

- ✿ 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.
- ✿ 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.
- ✿ Roses have high fertilizer requirements. For most soils, use a complete fertilizer for the first application just as new growth starts, then use ammonium sulfate, or other high nitrogen source, every 4 to 6 weeks, usually just as the new growth cycle starts following a flowering cycle. For organic sources use cottonseed, rotted manures or alfalfa meal.



- ✿ Continue to spray rose varieties susceptible to black spot, using a spray recommended for fungus control every seven to ten days. Many of the Old Garden Roses and some of the newer ones, especially the 'KnockOut' series, have considerable resistance to black spot.
- ✿ Climbing hybrid tea roses may be pruned as soon as they complete flowering.
- ✿ Prune climbing roses as they complete their spring bloom season. Remove dead or weak wood as needed.
- ✿ Removing spent flowers, trimming back excessive growth, and applying fertilizer to an established annual bed can do wonders towards rejuvenating and extending the life of the planting.
- ✿ As soon as azaleas have finished flowering, apply an acid type fertilizer at the rate recommended. Don't over fertilize, as azalea roots are near the surface and damage can occur. Water thoroughly after fertilizing.
- ✿ 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 consuming, it pays to conserve the moisture around plants. This is

best done by mulching. Replace or replenish mulch materials in flower beds and shrub borders to conserve moisture and reduce weed growth.

✿ 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.



White form of Ipomoea fistulosa

- ✿ Now is a good time to create summer containers exhibiting succulents such as echeverias, sedums, or house leeks (sempervivums). The larger rosettes of the echeverias and sempervivums may be situated in the container with edgings of smaller-leaved sedums.
- ✿ Cut off old blossoms on spring flowering annuals, such as pansies, snapdragons, stock and calendulas, to prolong the flowering season.
- ✿ Set out plants of hybrid portulaca (purslane) in sunny areas. Make rooted cuttings of your favorite colors by placing three to four inch stems in moist, sandy soils.
- ✿ Remove or cut back frost-damaged crape myrtle and other ornamentals as soon as the extent of the injury can be determined.



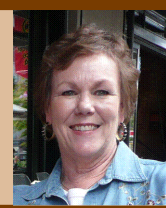
Save The Date!
Saturday, March 26, 2018

**WE ALL HAVE OLD POTS THAT ARE BROKEN...
RATHER THAN THROW THEM AWAY,
WHY NOT ADD SOME WHIMSY TO YOUR GARDEN!**



Crape Myrtle Bark Scale: A New Exotic Pest

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



A relatively new exotic scale pest is threatening the use and appearance of crape myrtles in urban landscapes in and near Texas, causing concern because it is spreading fast and crape myrtles are ubiquitous in landscapes throughout the South and in many other parts of the United States.

When first discovered in the United States, this insect was identified as the azalea bark scale; however, crape myrtles have never before been reported as a host plant for azalea bark scale. This scale lives and thrives on crape myrtles, suggesting a different identity for it.

The most likely culprit is a scale insect found in China, Japan, and Korea. In its native range, this scale tentatively identified as crape myrtle bark scale (CMBS, *Eriococcus axalea*) feeds on crape myrtles and pomegranates. DNA studies are underway to determine its true identity.

Since the initial discovery in 2004 by a landscape company in Richardson, TX, the insect has blemished many crape myrtles in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. It causes extensive honeydew deposits and the growth of black sooty mold.

By 2012–2014, it had spread to Ardmore, OK, Shreveport, LA, Tyler, TX, Houma, LA, Germantown, TN, and Little Rock, AR. It is relatively easy to identify since it's the only scales known to infest crape myrtles. Adult females are felt-like white or gray encrustations that stick to crape myrtle parts ranging from small twigs to large trunks. When crushed, these scales exude pink "blood"-like liquid.

On new growth and in heavy infestations, the scales may be distributed more uniformly on the branch. Look closely and you may see dozens of pink eggs or crawlers. The presence of the white adult scales on the bark and twigs and the pink blood exuded when crushed distinguishes this aphid from crape myrtle aphids, which have the appearance of black sooty mold on the bark.

Control: Based on our limited experience with this pest, CMBS appears to be difficult to control. Soil-applied neonotinoids can suppress it significantly. The current suggestions for controlling this insect include:

- ☛ Inspect nursery crop carefully before buying crape myrtles. Avoid any with significant mechanical damage.
- ☛ If plants are heavily infested, wash the trunk and reachable

limbs with a soft brush and mild solution of dishwashing soap and water. This will remove many of the female scales and egg masses, making insecticide control more effective. It will also remove much of the black mold that builds up on the bark of infested trees.



☛ Horticultural oil has not yet been shown to be effective against this insect. However, it may be beneficial to apply horticultural oil in the winter at **dormant season rates** to the bark and crotches of the plants where the scales shelter. Winter is an especially good time to treat for scales because the higher (dormant season) application rate can be used without damaging the plant. Cover the tree thoroughly with pesticide, especially when using oil.

☛ Systemic insecticides have shown the most promise in tests to date. Apply them to the root zone as a soil injection.

☛ The best control was achieved between May and July by applications of clothianidin, dinotefuran (Greenlight Tree and Shrub Insect Control with Safari), imidacloprid (Merit or Bayer Advanced Garden Tree and Shrub Insect Control), and thiomethoxam (Meridian).

☛ When drenching the soil with a systemic insecticide, allow several weeks for the product to reach throughout the plant. In one test, acetamiprid applied as a bark spray was ineffective.

☛ Some insect growth regulators (IGR) are recommended for control of other types of scales in woody ornamentals, but have not yet been evaluated on CMBS.

☛ Some lady beetle species, especially the twice-stabbed lady beetle are effective predators of this scale. How-

ever, control by lady beetles is often too late in the season to prevent aesthetic damage from sooty mold.

For more general information about scale insects and their control, see Extension publication B-6097, *Scale Insects on Ornamental Plants*, available from the Texas A&M AgriLife Bookstore at <http://www.agrilifebookstore.org>.

Although heavy scale infestations are seldom fatal, the aesthetic impacts are significant. Nurseries will incur higher costs to control the scale and maintain clean plants.

If you notice symptoms of scale insect infestation on your crape myrtles in areas of Texas not mentioned in this article, please contact Mengmeng Gu at mgu@tamu.edu or (979) 845-8567, Mike Merchant at m-merchant@tamu.edu or (974) 952-9204, or your local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office. In Ellis County, the phone number is (972) 825-5175.



**Interested in becoming a
2017 Expo Sponsor Or
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Contact James Kocian at
expo.ecmga@yahoo.com

Reserve the date: March 26, 2018!



Find us on:
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Ellis County Master Gardeners are on Facebook and we'd love to have you join us. Check in to find out where and when our local events will be held—events like the Downtown Waxahachie Farmer's Market or Lighthouse for Learning and Pop-Up Horticulture Classes. Drop by our page after an event to see pictures.

Use our page as your point of contact to ask us gardening questions or get information about flowers, vegetables, herbs, and trees. Some of the recent articles posted include How to Build a Rain Garden, Juniper and Cypress Blight, Tomato Tips by Neil Sperry, and updates on local events that gardeners will find interesting and educational. You can also post pictures and let us know what is happening in your gardens and landscape.

You'll find us at the link below, and all you have to do is click the "Like" button to see our daily posts!

We look forward to hearing from you with questions and comments. If you have a QR Code reader on your smartphone, you can scan our code and be taken directly to our Facebook page.



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





Eclectic Gardening

With Jane Slone, Ellis County Master Gardener

THIS MONTH:

Ornithology and Gardening



How Does Birdwatching Relate to Gardening?

When I was younger I wanted to be an Ornithologist. That means studying birds. So I thought about it, and then it hit me... why would someone hire me with this knowledge?

Birds?? After researching the subject, I decided to pursue other employment options and learn about birds for fun, so my knowledge of birds comes from years of study.

Through my experiences, I discovered that gardeners have two conflicting views:

1. How do I attract birds to my garden?
2. How do I keep birds out of my garden?

These are reasonable questions because birds bring both benefits and drawbacks in the home landscape. Let's look at ways to manage birds and some of the ups and downs of having them as part of your outdoor living space.

Attracting Birds to Your Garden

Master Gardener Mary Yurokich wrote: "Birds need water, food, cover, and nest sites. Provide these four needs, and they'll come to your garden. Plants can provide three of their four requirements." Sometimes nature may need a little help from us when food is scarce and the dry Texas environment lacks water sources.

Benefits of Insect Control

Like us, birds have a preference for certain foods. Many birds will eat both insects and seeds.

In North Texas, blackbirds, sparrows, crowns, and wrens will feed on beetles, grubs, and many insects that are found on the ground. Bluebirds, Robins, Sparrows, and Meadowlark will help reduce the grasshopper population. Red-winged Blackbirds eat both seeds and insects. Starlings and some sparrows will feast on ants. Many birds feed on the big caterpillars, beetles, grubs, and other medium to large insects and spiders they find near the ground. Birds are able to consume a lot of protein by hunting out these bugs.

The downside is that birds may eat the good insects, as they do

not know that we consider some insects good and others not so good.

Different types of seeds, nuts, nectar, and protein are important for many species of birds. Plants and shrubs can provide seeds, nuts, and flowers, as well as nectar that is used for nutrition. For this reason, gardeners should plant a variety of plant species in the garden for the bees, butterflies, and of course, the birds.

So why do we use feeders to attract birds? Feeders will give them immediate access to food if they are seed eaters or prefer nectar, especially when there is a shortage of natural food available during the coolest and hottest part of our seasons.

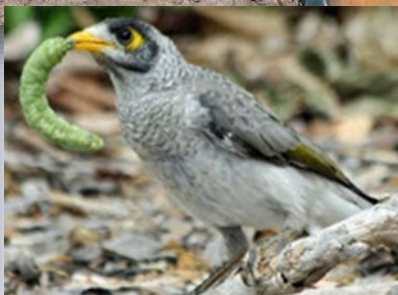
Second, some birds will be transient and the feeders may supplement them on their journey. Many birds migrate long distances each year and will follow the same path each time. One example of this is the hummingbird. Both feeders and plants are important in providing the nutrients they need.

Birds need water as well as food. Remember to add a birdbath or two for water. This provides both a spot to drink from and to take a quick bath before they take off again. The birds that are native and live in the area year-round will need provisions in the winter as well as the summer.

Native trees will provide a canopy, food, and a nesting place for our fine feathered friends. Some bird species have become extinct or on the verge of extinction due to a lack of nesting places. For example, Kirtland's warblers face two significant threats: lack of crucial young jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*) forest habitat and the parasitic brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*). You can help by providing a welcome environment in your yard for birds.

How to Keep Birds Out of the Garden
On the other hand, you may find that you are experiencing

(Continued on page 9)



Eclectic Gardening (Continued from page 8)

problems from the birds visiting your landscape. One method I read stated you should use nail spikes. I am not sure I want to place nails all along my fence to keep birds from landing, but it was a suggested method. Another interesting method was to place a cat or dog wooden image in the garden with glaring eyes.

Snakes, owls, and other methods such as netting have been suggested. Be aware that the netting could be hazardous to our fine feathered friends if they become tangled. Then there is the Christmas tree ornament theme. Red ornaments that resemble a ripe tomato. Lastly, some folks suggest tying a CD near garden areas to scare birds away.

So what is a gardener to do? My suggestion would be to provide for the birds so that they do not need the garden vegetables for food. Bird feeders and water should help the birds complete their needed diet to survive. Why not plant a small space just for the birds? Seeds that fall to the ground and germinate will provide a natural food source for the birds.

If we look at the benefit of birds helping control insects, perhaps we should be okay with sacrificing a couple of vegetables for their survival.



HELPFUL LINKS:

<http://ellis.agrilife.org/>
<http://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu/2014/07/25/attracting-birds/>
http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/attracting_birds.htm
<http://www.birdsandblossoms.com/birding/attracting-birds/plants-and-trees-that-attract-birds/plant-native-bird-garden/>
<https://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/birds/Kirtland/kiwafctsht.html>

What's Happening This Week at the Farmers Market

By Arlene Hamilton, Market Volunteer

Lot's happening at the Waxahachie Downtown Farmers Market. New sellers are arriving weekly. Look for more produce, baked goods and crafts. This is the last Saturday for the ladies from SAGU Auxiliary who have been selling Texas pecans along with California walnuts and almonds as a fund raiser for the university. Be sure to stop by and support them. L-egg-ett Farms has plenty of eggs, potted plants, produce, windchimes and vintage collectables. Corbin's Sweet House has custom cookies and cakes. Backyard Eggs, in addition to eggs, offers handmade aprons, microwave potato bags, casserole covers and more, all in beautiful fabrics. You can find fragrant goat's milk soap, floral wreaths, fiber art, women's and children's clothing, essential oils, jewelry, toys, pet supplies, and art glass, all handcrafted.

Take home locally grown produce, first of the season blackberries, squash and onions. You will find plants, herbs, beef, pork, honey, flour, cheese and grain products. Shop for your favorite baked goods, cheeses, salsas, pickles, jams and more. Try a variety of tamales, warm and ready to eat, or everyone's favorite: fried pies and whoopie pies!

The Ellis County Master Gardeners will make their first appearance with their "Pop-Up Horticulture" tent featuring the exciting world of container gardening. Master Gardener Micki Roark will be on hand to teach you how to create a sunny and a shady garden in a container. Two demonstrations are planned during the morning at 9am and 11am. Just look for the big white tent.

The Waxahachie Downtown Farmers Market is located at 410 South Rogers Street across from city hall and is open every Saturday from 8am to 1pm. Be sure to "Like" us on Facebook: Waxahachie Downtown Farmers Market. For information on becoming a seller, contact Anita Brown at (469) 309-4111.

Thank You All!

Thanks to the sponsors, exhibitors and visitors for making the
2017 Ellis County Master Gardener's Lawn & Garden Expo
a great success!

Gold



Bronze



Green

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Brim Seed
Brookside Landscape & Tree Service
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