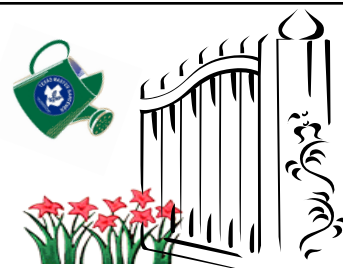




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VIII, Issue Five

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

May, 2014

Welcome to the Ellis County Master Gardener's **E-Gardening** Newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to give you a month-by-month agenda of what you should be doing with your landscape. We will feature horticultural articles that we hope you will find interesting, and important dates where you can find the Master Gardeners speaking, demonstrating, and passing out information relative to your garden. If you would like to receive this newsletter monthly via your email address, log onto our website www.ECMGA.com and click on subscribe. It will be sent around the first of every month. Best of all; it's FREE! Susan Clark, Editor

What's Happening in May

IT'S BACK! Every Saturday from April to October from 8am-1pm.
410 S. Rogers (across from City Hall in the old lumberyard building)
Visit the Master Gardeners' Booth!



- ✿ Useful gardening tips
- ✿ Plants and herbs for sale
- ✿ Free handouts...Some items for a fee
- ✿ Tell a friend to sign up for the **E-Garden Newsletter**... it's **FREE!**
- ✿ **NEW! Look for the plant of the month on sale-see page 8.**

Saturday, May 3, 8am-1pm, BRIT First Saturday-Prairie Day. Enjoy tours, children's activities, vendors and booths, farmers market, and a special raffle! Events include: plant walks, free tours, Birds of Prey presentation, Bella's Story Time for children and more! For complete details, visit <http://brit.org/prairieday>.

Sunday May 4, 9am-4:30pm, Level 1, Introduction to Native Landscapes presented by the Native Plant Society of TX. Learn the value of including and preserving native plants in landscapes, understand the differences between sustainable and conventional development, learn your Texas vegetation region and soil type, and learn 50 native Texas plants recommended for your landscape. Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center, Cedar Hill. Visit <http://npsot.org/wp/nlcp/north-texas-classes> to register.

Monday, May 5, 7pm-9pm, Kaufman County Master Gardeners present "Basics of Invasive Plant Species" with North TX Master Naturalist Dana Wilson at their monthly meeting. Learn which plants to avoid, why they are considered invasive, and some good native plants to choose instead. The event is free and the public is welcome. Light refreshments will be served. Location: First Community Church, 103 S. Main St., Crandall. Visit <http://www.kcmga.org/> for info.

Sunday, May 11, 1pm and 3pm, Peak-of-the-Season Wildflower Walks. Take a hike at Ash Grove Cement in Midlothian. Two walks led by MN Dana Wilson. The walks are free and open to the public, but RSVPs are required as this is private property. Participants will be e-mailed a map and parking instructions after signing up. RSVP to Dana Wilson, danawilson59@yahoo.com

Saturday, May 24, 9am-12pm, Dogwood Canyon—Fourth Saturday Workday. Located at 1206 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill. For info, contact Julie Collins at jcollins@audubon.org.

Indian Trail Master Naturalists

For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email ellis-tx@tamu.edu
Visit: <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/>

Saturday, May 10, 9am, Wildflower Walk. Members of the ITMN will be leading a walk at Mockingbird Nature Park. Join in this ½ mile stroll along the trails to identify wildflowers. Free to the public. Participants should bring drinking water. The walk will be canceled if raining. The park is located at 1361 Onward Road, at the corner of Mockingbird Lane and Onward Road in Midlothian. Info at: <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/> or email: Information@itmnc.com

Monday, May 19, 7pm, Indian Trail Master Naturalists present "The Future of Wildlife"

(Continued on page 3)

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION



Listen to KBEC

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

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

Melinda Kocian

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Bluebonnets & Wildflowers

Bluebonnets (*Lupinus subcarnosus*), upright to sprawling spring wildflowers, were designated the state flower of Texas (<http://www.statesymbolusa.org/texas>) in 1901. The state designation was amended in 1971 to include *L. texensis* and "...any other variety of bluebonnet not heretofore recorded". They are also called buffalo clover, wolf flower, and el conejo (Spanish for "the rabbit").

Named for their color and sunbonnet shaped petals, bluebonnets have a wonderful fragrance. The state also designated the Ellis County city of Ennis as the official bluebonnet city, as well as origination of the official bluebonnet trail. The four other species of bluebonnets that grow in Texas are not considered native. Seeds should be sown in the fall to allow plenty of time for germination.

Once established, plants re-seed profusely. Plants resemble a small rosette in the winter landscape. In the spring, mowing should be postponed in areas where the rosettes are maturing to start blooming.

Final Tips and Little Known Facts

Ellis County is home to a glowing variety of wildflowers including the most popular: Bluebonnet, Indian paintbrush, Mexican hat, pink evening primrose, Texas thistle, Indian blanket, and Cut-leaf daisy. Native to Ellis County where soils are alkaline, the wildflowers prefer well drained areas in full-sun. Seeds for early spring flowers are sown in fall—September 1 through November 15.

To take advantage of the spring rains, plant fall-blooming wildflowers in mid-spring. The seed can be broadcast over undisturbed soil; however, seed to soil contact is essential. Cover seed with no more than one-quarter inch soil. Water thoroughly, but gently to keep birds from an easy feast. Continue to water every three days for about three weeks if rain is not present to allow for good germination and root growth.

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

Planting

- ☼ Plant hot-weather and sun-tolerant plants that bloom all summer. These include: purple fountain grass, esperanza, hibiscus, plumbago, purslane, moss rose, Mexican petunia, angel's trumpet, and allamanda. For shade use: "Texas Gold" columbine, elephant ears, impatiens, and caladiums.
- ☼ 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.
- ☼ Maintain a two to three inch layer of organic 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.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- ☼ For larger fruit, manually thin peaches, apples, pears and plums to be six to eight 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.
- ☼ Deadhead roses and other re-blooming 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.
- ☼ Hornworms on tomatoes are common and can devastate a crop and many flowers. Remove by hand or control with Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*). Use Bt with care on any plant because 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 using an appropriate pesticide. 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



Blue Star Dogbane Family (Apocynaceae)
Amsonia spp.
Region: 1 – 10 (Ellis County is Region 4)
Size: 1 – 4 feet
Blooms: April through November, perennial

Amsonia is stiffly upright, with dark green, shiny foliage setting off the inflorescence. Blue, pale blue, or white star-shaped flowers are loosely clustered at the top of each stem, often barely surpassing the alternate leaves. Normally, blue star grows in a moist environment, often in marshes, ditches, bogs, or flood plains. It is recommended for use in the garden where it thrives with a little extra water, but *A. ciliata*, a western species of this lovely plant, lives in drought-prone habitats, growing on limestone and chalky hills in Regions 4, 5, 7, and 8.

What's Happening (Continued from page 1)

Conservation in Texas. Derek Broman, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department Urban Wildlife Biologist, will examine the challenges, present potential solutions, and discuss the public's role in conservation. The program is free and follows the 6 p.m. Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. Meeting location: First United Methodist Church, Family Life Center 505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie, TX. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email ellis-tx@tamu.edu NOTE date adjustment because of Memorial Day holiday.

Cedar Ridge Preserve

7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas
www.audubondallas.org/cedarridge.html

Saturday, May 10, 7am–10:30am, 4th Annual Hike on the Wild Side Hike-a-Thon at Cedar Ridge Preserve. Each hiker will receive one raffle ticket for every trail they complete. Hike all four trails and increase your chances of winning. Last year's raffle included tickets to local sports teams, movie tickets, gift cards to retailers and more. Prize drawing at 11am. Must be present to win. \$10 per person, \$5 per child (6-12 years old). Children five and under are free. *Cash Only–Rain or Shine*. Registrants will receive an event t-shirt (while supplies last). For more information, contact: Robert Rinker at (817) 881-2736 or info_CRP@yahoo.com.

Saturday, May 17, 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.

Texas Discovery Gardens

3601 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Dallas
TexasDiscoveryGardens.org

Saturday, May 10, 1pm–3pm, Make Your Own Salsa Garden. Your garden is about to get “Hot, Hot, Hot!” Discover the tricks to growing and making your own salsa. Take home starter plants. \$25; \$20 for TDG Members. Register in advance.

Sunday, May 11, 2pm–4pm, Mother's Day Concert & Butterfly Release. The hour-long concert concludes with a live butterfly release in the Conservatory. Purchase the “Butterfly Release Gift Package” from Texas Discovery Gardens for \$25 (\$20/members). It includes releasing a butterfly into the conservatory, a butterfly plant, and goodies to take home. Concert tickets are available at www.TheWomensChorusofDallas.com.

Saturday, May 17, 3pm–5pm, Flower Arranging 101. Marilyn Simmons, host of The FarmGirls Organic Gardening Radio Show, will teach you how to make a beautiful bouquet of flowers. The class includes the flowers and you will take home the arrangement you make in class. \$25; \$20 for TDG Members. Register in advance.

Saturday, May 31, 10am–1pm, Edible Wild Plants. Many of our local plants – especially common weeds – are extremely nutritious! Director of Horticulture Roger Sanderson is here to tell you which are tasty – and which are not! Sample some of the native fare at the end of the workshop. \$25; \$20 for TDG Members. Register in advance.

Saturday, May 31, 3pm–5pm, Kitchen Herb Garden. The FarmGirls guide you through a summer kitchen herb garden. Learn how to grow tasty basil, oregano, parsley and more right outside your kitchen door! Bring home ready-to-plant herbs. \$25; \$20 for TDG Members. Register in advance.

Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



May Herb of the Month – Chives

If you are growing **onion chives** (*Allium schoenoprasum*) in your garden you should be enjoying beautiful lavender-pink blooms this month. The flowers are edible and can be added to salads, cottage cheese, and deviled eggs. Try floating the petals on cream soups. Chive blossoms make a beautiful pink, chive-flavored vinegar when steeped for a few weeks in white wine vinegar.



Onion chives are the most common kind of chives and thrive in the culinary herb garden. They are easy to grow, impart a more delicate onion flavor than regular onions and provide year-round green to the landscape in this part of Texas. This pretty little perennial grows to about 12 inches, in small clumps and makes an attractive border.

Onion chives like rich moist soil. They grow slowly from seed but seedlings are widely available from garden centers. Chives should be planted in early spring or fall. Cutting promotes thicker leaves and quick regrowth.

When harvesting chives cut the leaves all the way to the ground. New green shoots will quickly emerge. A thick

layer of mulch promotes winter hearty plants and helps protect during the dry heat of late summer. In my Waxahatchie garden, the plants protected from the hot afternoon sun tend to be healthier.

Cooking can destroy the flavor of the tubular leaves, so finely chop raw chives and sprinkle over eggs, add to cottage cheese, cream cheese or butter spreads. Sprinkle over baked potatoes and vegetables just before serving.

Garlic chives (*A. tuberosum*) are very similar to onion chives but grow a little larger and have flat leaves rather than hollow, tubular ones. Plants produce white flowers in late summer that are attractive to bees. Garlic chives will tolerate more shade than onion chives and do not stay in nice little clumps. Expect lots of sprouts if you allow the seeds to remain on the plant. Both plants do quite well in containers. Be sure to keep them near the kitchen door for quick harvesting year-round.

In the organic garden, chives are used as companion plants for roses and tomatoes since they act as a deterrent to black spot and powdery mildew. Many people believe that stronger tasting herbs have greater healing power, so chives were believed to improve appetite, kidney function, and blood pressure.



Chives have been used since 3,000 BC and can be found growing wild in Asia, Europe, and North America. Marco Polo brought chives to Europe from China and early European settlers brought them to America. Dutch settlers in America obtained chive scented milk for cheesemaking by planting them in the pastures for the cows, sheep and goats to feed on.

I can attest to this growing up on a dairy farm. There were times when the cows broke into my grandmother's herb garden and enjoyed the fresh greens. The milk may have made a flavorful cheese, but it did not improve the taste of our morning cereal!

Chive New Potatoes

6–7 new red potatoes
1 ½ cups sour cream
3 tbs. butter
1 tsp. salt
½ tsp. cayenne pepper
½ cup snipped chives
½ cup parmesan cheese

Boil potatoes until just tender, but firm. Melt butter and stir into sour cream with salt and pepper. Drain the potatoes and break up leaving the skins on. Stir in the sour cream mixture and half of the chives. Spread potatoes in an 8- or 9- inch casserole dish, sprinkle with remaining chives and parmesan cheese. Place under the broiler for two minutes or until cheese is golden brown.

Recipe from "Seasonings for a Colorado Afternoon" Evergreen Poets & Writers Women's Press.



In the Vegetable Garden

With Susan Gilliland
Ellis County Master Gardener



Radishes! We all love them, but often forget to plant them in our garden and now is a great time here in Ellis County. Not many vegetables provide such instant gratification—they sprout quickly and mature in just a few weeks. Radishes are a red, edible root vegetable that were domesticated in pre-Roman times. They have no fat and provide some potassium. Radishes are a tasty, colorful, crisp addition to any salad or sandwich.



A pack of radish seed will cost you less than \$2 and they come in a variety of shapes and sizes. I planted the Burpee Salad Rose shown here in the picture and they are firm and zesty. Plant your radishes today in a sunny, well-drained location and it's very likely they will be sprouting in two days, sometimes even overnight. They require consistent moisture

for the best taste. Follow the spacing directions on the package. Do NOT forget to thin them. Thinning to two inches apart is necessary for the root to expand to the plump shape we expect and enjoy.

You will have edible radishes in 21-35 days, depending on the variety.

Sow seeds every couple of weeks and you will enjoy fresh radishes continuously. The best planting times in our area are Feb-May and Aug-Nov since rad-

ishes are considered a cool weather crop. Summer often is too hot for them to do well, but I have successfully grown the smaller ones throughout the summer.

Harvest promptly. Radishes are mature when the tops bulge slightly above the ground, but don't delay because they will deteriorate rapidly. For storage, cut the tops off short, wash and dry them thoroughly, and store in plastic bags in the refrigerator.



Special Note: If you are trying to teach young children about growing plants, this is an ideal vegetable. The seeds are large and easy to handle, they sprout quickly, harvest is ready in a short time, and they are fun to pull.

ECMGA GARDEN TOUR 2014

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



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

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

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

Texas Superstars – Strong and Stunning Plants

By: Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener



For over twenty years, horticulturists with Texas A&M AgriLife Research and A&M AgriLife Extension Service have conducted statewide evaluations of landscape plants, searching for outstanding plants for the gardeners of Texas. Plants identified with superior characteristics, including great garden performance in all areas of Texas, reduced need for chemicals or sprays, and a relative ease of propagation and culture, are then designated as Texas Superstars™.



The Rio Series Mandevilla, a new Texas Superstar, works better as a container ornamental than a landscape plant, say Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas A&M AgriLife Research horticulturists. Photos by Dr. Brent Pemberton

Thomas Jefferson grew bachelor buttons at Monticello and wrote about them in his garden journal. What's new is the increase in varieties with different colors and varying mature heights, all with the same sun and heat tolerance as the old-timey gomphrenas.

Besides the traditional light purple and white colors, new breeding has resulted in pink, orange, and red hues being added to the available color pallet. Some varieties are more compact, getting no taller than six inches, while other varieties, like 'Fireworks', are taller, up to four feet, giving the gardener many options for ways to use these tough plants in the flower

sistible and are attracted to the plants in small flocks.

Bachelor Buttons make great cut flowers and are very easy to dry. Gather in the fall, hang upside down in a dry area, and they will hold up for months in floral arrangements. Dried flower heads can later be crushed up and sown in late spring and early summer in a sunny location.



Rio Series Mandevilla (*Mandevilla* syn. *Dipladenia*) Did you know that mandevillas now come in plants that are compact enough to grow in a container? The Rio mandevillas are here. What could be better?

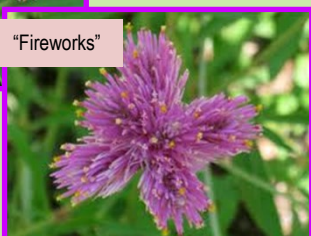
Texas Superstars have proven themselves in trials conducted across Texas, from Beaumont to Lubbock, and Overton to El Paso. Only the best performers are selected for the Texas Superstar name, which are then marketed through cooperation with growers and retailers and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. So, if you're looking for something colorful for the landscape that will beat the Texas heat, you can't go wrong with Texas Superstars.

Gomphrena, also known as **Globe Amaranth** and **Bachelor Buttons**, was introduced in 2012 to the Superstar lineup.

These sun and heat-loving colorful annuals are no newcomer to the gardening world. Rather, they have been a reliable, easy-to-grow annual flower for generations of gardeners.



"Fireworks"



In addition to the wide range in sizes and flower colors of the various cultivars, plants can be obtained with open informal habits, such as "Fireworks" with flowers that resemble purple sparklers on larger, more open plants. If an informal look is to your liking, try "Strawberry Fields", with its more sprawling, relaxed habit. Give these heat loving plants a sunny spot in the garden with good drainage and avoid setting them out until night temperatures warm in the spring and they will give you season long color that builds all summer to a peak just before the fall frosts arrive.

Globe amaranth looks great in combination with later season flowers such as fall blooming salvias and Mexican mint marigold. Small seed-feeding birds find the tiny amaranth seeds irre-



These summer annuals sport glossy foliage and broad, showy, trumpet-shaped flowers that come in pink, hot pink, and deep red.

Unlike their rampant relatives, these mandevillas grow upright with little or no twining. They

flower heavily on compact plants that are actually best grown in large patio containers—no trellis needed. They can be grown alone or mixed with other summer annuals and moved about the deck or terrace wherever a splash of color is needed. They thrive in the heat of summer, but will benefit from some mid-to-late afternoon shade. They won't flower as heavily when light becomes limited. Plants will tolerate sub-

(Continued on page 7)

Texas Superstars (Continued from page 6)



stantial heat and some dryness, but regular water and fertilization keeps them at their best.

Although the Rios perform better in containers, they can be grown in the ground also and do best in a bed nicely worked with organic matter in a location with some afternoon shade. They

grow one to two feet high and about as wide, should be planted in spring or early summer, and make excellent plants around pools or wherever a colorful, tropical effect is needed.

Texas Superstar plants are usually identified with a plant tag in retail outlets. See www.TexasSuperstar.com for more information on all aspects of the program.



Interested in becoming a 2015 Expo Sponsor Or Expo Exhibitor?

Contact James Kocian at
expo.ecmga@yahoo.com

Reserve the date: March 28, 2015!



Find us on:
facebook®

Are you a Facebooker? You should be! Ellis County Master Gardeners are now on Facebook and we'd love to have you join us. Check in to find out where and when our local events will be held—events like the Downtown Waxahachie Farmer's Market or Earth Day in Ferris. Drop by our page after an event to see pictures.

Use our page as your point of contact to ask us gardening questions or get information about flowers, vegetables and herbs...we cover it all! Some of the recent articles we posted described how to create a straw bale garden, how to prune your roses, and how deep to plant bulbs. You can also learn about new varieties of plants such as the Tycoon tomato, a new Texas Superstar that produces fruit that can grow up to one pound or larger!

You'll find us at this link, and all you have to do is click the "Like" button to see our daily posts! We look forward to hearing from you with questions and comments. If you have a QR Code reader on your smartphone, you can scan our code and be taken directly to our Facebook page.



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

From Facebook Administrator and ECMG Intern, Kim Cole

Texas Water Facts

Water in Texas comes from two sources—groundwater and surface water. BOTH of those sources are declining with the continued drought we are experiencing. Coincidentally, surface water quality also declines when surface waters are at low levels.

SOME FACTS

- ◆ Of all the water we use in Texas, about 60% is groundwater; the other 40 percent is surface water. In the next 25 years, the fastest growing users of water are projected to be cities and industry. YOU are part of those cities, so embracing water conservation now would be a good thing.
- ◆ Statewide, groundwater comes from some 32 Texas aquifers. According to the Texas Water Development Board, nine aquifers supply about 97% of the groundwater that we use. Although the percentages vary slightly from year to year, about 80 percent of all groundwater used in Texas is for irrigating crops. Texas has about 6.3 million acres of irrigated land.
- ◆ In Texas, there is an extensive surface water network. This network consists of 23 major river basins that are confined within the state, shared with neighboring states, or shared along an international border. Texas has 188 major water-supply reservoirs, and over 20 additional major reservoirs that serve no water-supply function. The major reservoirs of the state vary in size from 5,200 acre-feet conservation storage capacity for the Upper Nueces Lake to 4,472,900 acre-feet for the Toledo Bend Reservoir.

For more information, visit <http://www.twdb.state.tx.us> or <http://www.twdb.state.tx.us>

Look for TX Water Facts monthly from Susan Gilliland, Ellis County Master Gardener and help conserve water!

Book Review

Garish Gardens Outlandish Lawns

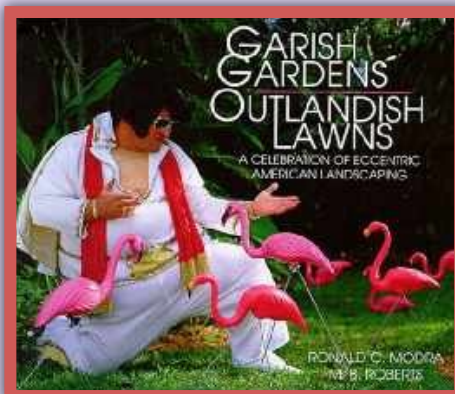
by Ronald C. Modra and
M.B. Roberts

Garish Gardens Outlandish Lawns is a celebration of eccentric American landscaping. This little 112-page book is full of pictures and stories about garden and yard art, some iconic and some just plain weird.

The authors begin with the familiar pink plastic flamingo, first introduced in 1957. Their creator, Donald Featherstone, used poses from the famous National Geographic photograph "flock of flamingos" to create one "up neck" and one "down neck" flamingo to be sold in pairs.

Over 20 million have been sold since they were intro-

Submitted by Charlie Grindstaff
Ellis County Master Gardener



duced. "Before plastics," Featherstone says, "only rich people could afford to have poor taste." Florida has the highest number of yard flamingos per capita in the continental United States.

Before there were plastic flamingos though there were two-dimensional wooden

flamingos, cows, donkeys pulling carts, dogs, and most other animals you might want or could draw on a sheet of plywood.

There is a chapter on whirligigs, weathervanes, and windmills fashioned with a great diversity of materials, some recycled or repurposed, like coke cans for a whirligig and bleach bottles to make a wind spinner.

Due attention is given to the plastic yard critters that make sound when anyone walks past. Croaking frogs seem to be popular as well as guitar-playing flower rock bands.

How to decorate tree stumps; what to do with old toilets, bathtubs and bed frames; yes, you can have a

car coming up out of the ground; gardens in garden boots; gargoyles and dressing your concrete goose for holidays are all topics covered in this fun book.

The authors took most of the pictures for the book on a trip from Connecticut to Wisconsin, but the South is well represented too. The duplication of some pictures, even on consecutive pages is my only real complaint about this book.

I must admit it makes me want to add a little more art to my yard that is already overflowing with bottle trees, silverware flowers, a four foot tall metal heart, and a fairy ring of doorknob mushrooms. Hmm...there must be something I can do with that bowling ball.

1998 Willow Creek Press ISBN 1-57223-140-8. Can be found on-line at several retail outlets.



NEW this year: Farmers Market Plant of the Month

Each month, the Ellis County Master Gardeners will feature a "plant of the month" for sale at the farmers market. May's featured plant is the Dwarf Mexican petunia (*Ruellia brittoniana*), a Texas Superstar called 'Katie' with purple blossoms. Recently, a dwarf pink version of Katie called 'BonitaTM' was introduced into the market. Under proper growing conditions, dwarf Mexican petunias tend to reseed and produce tall upright clumping, dark green plants. In full bloom during the hottest part of the summer, they produce lance-shaped leaves and bright, tubular flowers.

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

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



Stop by our booth at the Farmers Market. We love to talk plants and hear your gardening stories.



Landscape Gardening

From: Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener

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

The Frugal Gardener

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

As spring turns into summer, new opportunities arise for color in our gardens. Let's look at some of the plants you can purchase and increase, providing a bonanza of extra plants for filling in open spaces where cool season annuals, bulbs, and perennials have completed their cycles. Below are some tips about propagating them from cuttings, seeds, or division.

By now, pansies, violas, snapdragons, and stock are finishing up, because they resent the approaching heat. We can remove spent flowers, cut them back a bit and prolong the season a few weeks but it will soon be time to pull them up and replace with more heat tolerant choices.

Begin by working in several inches of compost, pine bark or similar organics to aerate the soil and add water holding capacity for the dry times ahead. Addition of five pounds of alfalfa, cottonseed meal, or a time release commercial fertilizer will also pay big dividends.

Shady or partially-shaded sites are ideal for fibrous rooted begonias, fancy leaf caladiums, impatiens and coleus. Last summer, I found some really beautiful coleus and planted them in drifts of single colors. I was so pleased with them that I added additional plantings by direct sticking cuttings from the first set.

With careful monitoring of irrigation, I got an almost 100% take. One was a

dark red, almost maroon color, lined with a bright green edge. I combined that with the golden sweet potato vine that also roots almost overnight.

I purchased one large hanging basket of the sweet potatoes and took a couple



Seedling Zinnias

dozen 3/4" cuttings. This was not only easy and successful, but also a very economical way to provide lots of color. I also added pots of setcreasea (Wandering Jew) and masses of it within the broad sweeps of sweet potato vine. The plantings continued until the first hard frost last fall.

Other possibilities for easy summer color include zinnias. The 'Profusion' series are compact single flowers in a rainbow of beautiful colors. I also like the large, double flowering types like 'Cut and Come Again'. They are a joy as cut flowers and attract hordes of butterflies.



Caladium Border



Coleus

Gomphrena is another heirloom choice that seems to get better and better. Our grandparents knew them as "bachelor's buttons" and dried the flowers in bouquets each fall. The next spring they shredded the flowers and planted them for the "new crop". Look for them in dark purple, pink, white, and orange. The new 'Fireworks' series are as easy as the originals and have a slightly different look.



Gomphrena or "Bachelor's Buttons"

Celosias are available in spike and crested forms. The old red/purple form is hard to beat but they are now available in pinks, yellows, and whites. Our grandparents called the crested forms "cockscombs" and competed with neighbors and friends to see just how big they could grow them.

Dwarf forms are now available in the spike or crested forms. They all thrive in the summer heat, but do appreciate occasional watering. Shake a few mature flowers over an open paper envelope and you will collect enough hard, shiny, small seeds to create next year's flower bed.

Torenia, or wish bone flowers, are another old fashion favorite. They appreciate a little afternoon shade and come in a variety of pleasing colors.

(Continued on page 10)

Landscape Gardening (Continued from page 9)

Angelonias are enjoying a wave of interest. First thought to be a little heat sensitive, newer ones are proving very useful. One common name is "summer snapdragons" because they do resemble snaps. Purslane and portulaca are old standbys for heat tolerant, sunny areas. If you find a color you are pleased with, take three to four inch cuttings and stick them in pots or beds. They will quickly spread and bloom till frost.

Succulents are becoming increasingly popular because of their low water requirement and interesting foliage. They are especially nice in containers. Look for tried-and-true varieties of some of the unusual and common types at your local garden center that are easy to propagate and require little management. Mixtures of succulents with rain lilies, purslane, and portulacas can be easy.

Beautiful pottery makes these combinations valuable as accessories in the garden. It's easy to propagate succulents, as usually a gardener can snap off "heads" that have grown too long, and simply poke them into newly prepared containers of good potting soil mixed with sand. They will be rooted in no time.

Garden Checklist for May

Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist TX AgriLife Ext Svc

- ✧ 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

Save The Date!
Saturday, March 28, 2015



before a burst of new blooms.

- ✧ It is not too late to sow directly into the soil seeds of sunflower, zinnia, morning glory, portulaca, marigold, cosmos, periwinkles, and gourds. Achimenes (a spring-flowering bulb), 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.



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

Thank You All!!

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