



Ellis County Master Gardener's Ellis-Gardening Newsletter



Volume I, Issue I

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

February, 2007

Welcome to the Ellis County Master Gardener's **Ellis-Gardening** newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to give you a month by month agenda of what you should be doing in your landscape. We will be featuring horticulture articles that we hope you will find interesting, important dates where you can find the Master Gardeners speaking, demonstrating and passing out information relative to your landscape.

What's Happening in February

Saturday, February 10, 9:00 am - The Greenery. Talk on EarthKind Roses by James Kocian and Nancy Fenton

Monday, February 12, 7:00 pm - The Greenery, "Butterfly Identification and Plants That Attract Them", presented by Caroline Burlington. Caroline has been involved with butterfly gardening at the Butterfly Habitats at the South Carolina and Florida Zoos, and has volunteered in the butterfly gardens at Waxahachie's Scarborough Faire.

Saturday, March 3 - The Greenery. All Day Organic Day - Line up will include rain water harvesting, Lady Bugs Organic Products' rep. talking about their produces, The Rep. from Harvest Supply Co., out of Ft. Worth, discussing the organic products they have available. For further information please contact Marilyn at The Greenery, 972-617-5459

Rose Pruning With Jim Suggs

Ellis County Master Gardener

It is the time of the year to prune rose bushes. The Master Gardeners have set up a demonstration by Rosarian, Jim Suggs on Wednesday, February 7, 2007 at 10:00 am. Ellis County residents are invited to attend. The rose bed is part of a garden, "The Living Classroom", created by the Master Gardeners on the campus of the Presbyterian Children's Home. It is located on the west side of Interstate-35 at Brookside Road (Exit 401A).

Also at "The Living Classroom" there will be tree pruning by Master Gardeners Robert Shugart and Bill Abbott. Please join us!

On every stem, on every leaf,.....and at the root of everything that grew, was a professional specialist in the shape of grub, caterpillar, aphid, or other expert, whose business it was to devour that particular part.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

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Lawn and Garden Expo - Learning at Its Best!

Our Sixth Annual Lawn and Garden Expo is scheduled for Saturday, March 17, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Waxahachie Civic Center. This year, the range of learning opportunities for the public has expanded to include fun gardening activities for children and a broader selection of activities for all others.

Keynote speakers. The day includes three keynote speakers offering information sought by regional lawn and garden enthusiasts.

9:00 a.m. *EarthKind* - **Dr. Steve George** (Statewide Extension Coordinator of EarthKind Environmental

Landscape Management Program)

12:30 p.m. *Plants That Take the Heat and Keep on Blooming* - **Dottie Woodson** (Tarrant County Extension Horticulturalist)

2:00 p.m. *Perfecting the Landscape* - **Neil Sperry** (Horticultural expert, gardening author)

Breakout Programs. The breakout programs feature four experts with practical information on quite different topics.

9:00 a.m. *Container Planting* - **DeAnn Bell** (Ellis County Master Gardener)

11:00 a.m. *Composting* - **Linda Clemens** (Master Composter, Grand Prairie)

1:00 p.m. *Insect Pests and Treatment* - **Mark Arnold** (Ellis County Extension Agent)

3:00 p.m. *Rainwater Harvesting* - **Shirley Campbell and Arlene Hamilton** (Ellis County Master Gardeners)

Plant Sale. The popular Plant Sale is the first stop for many regular attendees. The sale features native plants and those with low-water use requirements - all propagated/grown by Master Gardeners. We will be there in force, answering question, consulting resources when needed, and of course, selling plants! There is learning for everyone here.

Master Gardeners' Information Booth. Located adjacent to the Plant Sale area, the Information Booth is where attendees pose their most troublesome questions. In turn, members - both experienced and those in training - provide answers, distribute pertinent Extension publications and/or take notes when further research and later contact is required. We'll also be selling selected gardening-related products here (e.g., our aprons, cookbooks, butterfly and flower wheels).

Children's Gardening Workshops. Several fun hands-on educational opportunities for children will be available at 10 a.m. and repeated at noon, 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. To participate, children need to be accompanied by an adult.

Exhibitor Booths. This aspect of the Expo is packed with learning opportunities. By strolling the aisles of over 100 profit and nonprofit booths you see the latest gardening products, meet those who can help implement gardening ideas, and talk with club representatives who share your interests.

We make learning lots of fun at the Expo! Yes, don't forget to put your name on the sign-up sheet. Your assistance is needed on Friday to help set up and Saturday, to work during our extravaganza. We always have a great time working together. With your help, we can make this the best Expo ever!

GARDEN TALK

By Homer McCain

Ellis County Master Gardener

Still time to make those New Year resolutions

Can you believe it's 2007 already? It seems like 2006 just went by in a flash. However, it's not too late to make those resolutions.

Here are some that I came up with after reflecting on this past year. I call them the "walk the talk resolutions". I'm sure you will know what I mean when you read them.

- Don't send plant material from your yard to the landfill. What grows in your yard stays in your yard. Yes, that includes grass clippings, leaves, and tree and shrub trimmings. Send it to the compost pile or use it for mulch.
- Be kind to the environment. Use only plants that are known to grow, or better yet, thrive in our climate and difficult soils. Select plants that use less water, fertilizer and pesticides. Strive for a low maintenance garden. For example, just to name a few: salvias, herbs, nandinas, hollies, Turk's cap, lantanas, Russian sage, Earth-Kind roses, and other plants with the Earth-Kind designation.
- Learn new ways to conserve water in your home and garden. Install a drip irrigation system or use soaker hoses in beds separate from the lawn area. Devise some method to capture rainwater to water your plants. Even if it means using buckets and containers and pouring rainwater into a barrel for storage. There is a lot of good information available on water conservation.
- Conduct a soil analysis to determine the condition of your soil. Find out what additional nutrients, if any, are needed and which nutrients exceed recommended levels. This takes the guesswork out of trying to determine what the soil needs. It gives you the soil pH, major elements, and some minor ones. You may find that you have over fertilized and not know it. Separate analysis should be done on lawn and bed areas. Soil sample kits can be obtained from your local Extension office, 701 S. I-35E, Suite 3, Waxahachie, phone number 972-825-5175.
- Use native or adapted plants that attract birds, bees and butterflies. For instance, just to name a few: butterfly bush, butterfly weed, milkweeds, lantanas, passion vine, pipe vine, parsley, dill, fennel, berried perennials such as yaupon holly, possum haw holly, coralberry, and American beautyberry.
- Finally, have fun. Try some new and improved plant varieties and cultivars. Grow something you haven't planted before and let others know how it did. Was it a success or failure?

Happy gardening!

When you have a garden, you have a future.
When you have a future, you are alive.
If you wish to be happy all your life, become a gardener.

It's February - What Needs to be Done?

Planting and Sowing

- February is an excellent time to select and plant container-grown roses to fill in bare spots in your rose garden.
- Begin sowing seeds for cool-season vegetables. Sow cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower mid-month. Lettuce, radishes, spinach, beets, chard and turnips can be sown from mid- to late-month. Cucumbers can be started late in the month.
- Plant onions and English peas directly into the vegetable garden early this month. Two- to three-year old asparagus roots should also be planted in a well-prepared, permanent location in the garden at about the same time.
- Start planting your gladiolus corms late this month, then every two weeks to prolong flowering. Dahlia tubers can also be planted now.
- Dig and divide warm-season perennials (cannas, coneflowers, perennial salvias, mums, fall asters) before they break winter dormancy.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- Prune bush roses mid-month. Cut out dead, dying and weak canes. Leaving 4 to 8 healthy canes, remove approximately one-half of the cane's growth above an outward-facing bud.
- Prune shrubs by first removing any dead or damaged branches; then, thin out by cutting about one-third of the oldest stems at ground level. Finally, shape the rest of the plant, but avoid cutting everything back to the same height.

Garden Watch

- Follow the "Homeowner Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule" to protect fruit crops from pests and disease. Contact your County Extension Office to obtain a copy of the schedule.
- Drape lightweight landscape fabric over tender, new plants to protect those at risk from late freezes.

Monthly Tip: Drip irrigation is the most efficient and effective watering technique.

Featured Plant for February

Texas Red Oak (Native) *Quercus buckleyi*, 'Texas Red Oak'

Deciduous tree with finely lobed leaves and rounded form. Fast growing, graceful spreading tree that is drought tolerant but needs good drainage. Outstanding fall color from orange to yellow to red leaves.

Exposure: Sun
 Size: Ht 30-40' Spread 30-40'
 Spacing: 20-40'



Did you Know?

By Betty Reuscher, Ellis County Master Gardener

Tomato: The World's Most Popular Fruit

The tomato is the most popular fruit in the world. Over 60 million tons of them are produced each year. Botanically, a fruit is the part of the plant that contains the seeds, while a vegetable is the edible stems, leaves, and the roots of the plant. The scientific term for the tomato is *lycopersicon lycopersicum*, which mean "wolf peach." First cultivated in 700 AD by the Aztecs and Incas, tomatoes made their way into Europe by the 1600s. Dubbed "the apple of love" and "the apple of paradise" by the Europeans, tomatoes are the cousin of eggplant, red pepper, and the potato. Making up the top five fruits in popularity are tomatoes, then bananas (44

million tons), apples (36 million tons), oranges (34 million tons) and watermelons (22 million tons). There are more than 10,000 varieties of tomatoes.

Tomatoes are a boon to health nuts and dieters alike. Rich in vitamins A and C and fiber, an average size tomato contains 35 calories. Its red color comes from the *lycopene* that scientists think may prevent cancer. *Lycopene*, a carotenoid which is not produced by the human body, is the most powerful antioxidant that protects us from the free radicals that degrade many parts of the body. Cooked tomatoes have a higher concentration of *lycopene* than fresh tomatoes.

GOOD WATER DOWN THE DRAIN ???

By Nancy Fenton, Master Gardener

Have you and your yard recovered from last year's drought yet? It's time to begin thinking about what this next growing season is going to be like. Hold off on replanting for another month and check out the drought hardy plants at the Master Gardeners' EXPO, March 17, at the Waxahachie Civic Center. Earthkind guru, Dr. Steve George will be there to talk about multiblooming roses that really do grow in Texas heat needing no water or fertilizer after the first year!

From what I hear our dry weather will continue for at least several more years as a part of an ongoing cycle of drought. This makes how we use our available water more important than ever and Grey Water a viable option for some of us. (I did say I would let you know more about it last month!) Grey Water is used in gardening circles to mean water that was first used for some other use such as washing dishes, clothes floors, etc. In today's environmental climate it is defined as nontoxic wastewater. Grey Water today can be a ready source of the precious liquid for our plants! The soaps and cleaners today need a bit of screening by reading the labels, but other than watching that it gets onto the plants and not into the fresh water supply, we can hark back to the pioneer days and pour the dish water on the roses!!

I checked with my washer's instruction guide and found I am using 20-30 gallons a load. Even for the two of us, at 7- 10 loads a day that means 200-300 gallons down the sewer a week that could go on my thirsty trees! According to Mariana Greene, gardener deluxe, trees need from 30 to 250 gallons of water a week depending if they are in their first year or rugged old veterans like mine. The 300 plus gallons coming from my washer may not be enough, but it will help and certainly reduce the load on our sewer treatment plant somewhat. The City Governments where some of us reside have no objection if the water is properly plumbed out of the house and not going to leak into any fresh water sources like creeks, etc.

We don't want to pollute our fresh water so human and cooking wastes are unwelcome in Grey water. The easiest connections are the washers and dishwashers on the outside walls or with a crawl space access. There is perforated drainpipe that puts water out gently so it can soak down to those thirsty roots. If you haven't thought about Grey Water, think about it. I am hearing rumblings about new construction incorporating some of these simple ideas to aid foundation life. It would be a beginning!

2007 Gardening Calendar Now Available!

The Ellis County Master Gardeners are proud to announce the publication of their first Gardening calendar. The full color calendar features a plant of the month, along with helpful information on planting, fertilizing, pruning and maintenance of your lawn and gardens each month.

A special **Thank You** goes out to our sponsors; it would not have been possible without them. Many of the sponsors also include money saving coupons on the coupon pages in the back of the calendar. You may contact our sponsors for your *free calendar*.

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Action Fire Alarm, LLC
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EarthKind™ News

by James Kocian, Ellis County Master Gardener

What is Earth Kind?

Earth Kind uses research-proven techniques to provide maximum gardening and landscape enjoyment while preserving and protecting our fragile environment.

The objective of Earth Kind is to combine the best of organic and traditional gardening and landscaping principles to create a new horticultural system for the 21st Century, a research-proven system based on real-world effectiveness and environmental responsibility.

Earth Kind goals are to reduce the volume of water, fertilizers, pesticides used in the landscape and the volume of yard wastes entering landfills.

Earth Kind employs the latest scientifically-sound, research-based information and techniques of plant selection and culture to avoid pest problems before they occur. We recommend use pesticides only as a last resort. If a pesticide becomes absolutely necessary, then select the most Earth Kind or environmentally responsible product available.

Putting Earth Kind techniques into everyday practice will help your family, your business, your community and your environment. Remember, "Earth Kind to benefit humankind."

Each month this column will offer Earth Kind recommendations.

Next month:

Landscape Development

Developing an Earth Kind landscape for homes and businesses can pose unique challenges. Careful attention to improving environmental conditions through soil preparation, proper after-planting care, and efficient irrigation practices are essential. There are no hard and fast rules, since conditions vary from location to location but by following some basic Earth Kind principles your chances for success will be greatly increased.

Ferns

By Diane Hopkins

Ellis County Master Gardener

Among the most ancient plants on earth, ferns can transform a shady spot in your landscape into an oasis of delicate foliage. Native ferns of different types can bring the beauty of the natural woodland into your garden or they can be interspersed with shade-loving perennials, such as hostas and violets. Daffodils can be used with large ferns, which will cover the flowers' untidy leaves after they have finished blooming.

Over 12,000 species of ferns grow throughout the world. Most are found in tropical countries, although about 360 species grow naturally in North America.

To look their best, ferns should be grown far enough apart to prevent the fronds from intermingling. They need a location that is shaded from midday sun and

protected from wind. The north side of a house or fence will provide the right kind of shade, protecting them from prolonged sunlight but leaving them open to the sky.

The best time to plant ferns is in autumn or spring. Before planting, dig the planting bed to a depth of one foot, and break up the soil. Sprinkle bone meal over the surface at the rate of a cupful per square yard. Add three inches of good compost on top of the bone meal and fork it all in.

Ferns can be divided into three types: crown forming, those with rhizomatous roots, and rock ferns.

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A crown-forming fern is one whose fronds emerge from a stout rhizome in the form of a vase or a crown. When planting crown-forming ferns, place the fern in a hole the depth of the fern's root system and fill with soil so that the crown is flush with the surface, not below. Firm the roots in well.

Rhizomatous ferns produce fronds along the rhizome without forming a crown. Make a shallow depression in the soil, place the rhizome in the hole, fill with soil and firm down.

Rock ferns grow best tucked tightly among rocks, often horizontally. They are ideal for rock gardens or dry-stone walls. Remove a stone and place the fern on its side in the gap and cover its roots with leaf mold. Then replace the stone.

After planting, cover the entire surface around the ferns with three inches of garden compost, leaf mold,

or peat moss. This will help to conserve moisture during dry spells. Reapply this mulch each autumn and spring. Also in spring, scatter bone meal around the plants at the rate of a cupful per square yard, prior to spreading the mulch.

Most ferns prefer a moderately moist soil but a few will grow in a bog. Once established ferns will need watering only during hot periods when the soil may dry out.

Weed ferns by hand, since forking or hoeing can damage the root system, which in established ferns is near the surface of the soil.

Each spring remove the dead fronds with a knife or clippers, as near to the crown as possible. This will encourage new shoots to form.

(This series of articles appears in the Waxahachie Daily Light weekly)

Onions

By Melinda Kocian

Ellis County Master Gardener

Bulb onion transplants (also called slips or sets) should be planted in the garden four to six weeks prior to the last frost date. Here in North Central Texas, the last frost comes around the middle of March. Plan on planting your onions from mid-to-late January in this area. A week or so longer will be fine. Onions require this period of cool weather in order to produce good green top growth. Warmer temperatures and longer days of spring will trigger the bulb development. The final size of the onion bulb is dependent upon the number and size of the green leaves or tops at the time of bulb maturity. For each leaf there will be a ring of onion, the larger the leaf, the larger the ring will be. The earlier you get your onions in the ground, the better the top growth and the better the bulb development.

You should be able to find slips at the local nursery now. The slips that are about an inch in diameter will produce the best results. Before planting have your garden soil prepared. Work soil to a depth of 8-10 inches and then work organic compost into at least the top 3- to 4-inches of soil. Full sun and decent drainage is necessary for the optimum results. Slips should be planted 1-inch deep and 3- to 4-inches apart.

Onions need water at least once a week. If rainfall is scarce, supplemental watering will be necessary. Once the longer days and warmer temperatures begin, and bulb development is initiated, supplemental watering can be decreased.

Plants need additional side dressing of compost, or other organic high-nitrogen fertilizer, applied about three weeks after planting. You can continue your fertilizer of choice about every two to three weeks until about four weeks before harvest: when the neck of the bulb begins to soften.

Bulbs should be ready to harvest by the end of May or early June. The bulbs are ready when the green tops begin to fall over. Pull plants up carefully and let them dry for two to three more days. Leave them in the garden to dry or in a cool dry place like a shed or garage. Cut off both the roots and tops once they have cured, leaving about 2-inches.

The best varieties for our area are Texas 1015Y (Texas SuperSweet), Grano 502, Yellow Granex, White Granex and White Bermuda.



KBEC Radio Spots for the month of February

KBEC
classic country
1390

Week 1 - Earth Kind

Hello, I'm Nancy Fenton, Ellis County Master Gardener here with some gardening tips that can save you money as well as make your plants more of what you want them to be. Our plant experts at Texas A&M have been working for some time on making things grow with less and less water. They have developed a landscaping system they have labeled Earth Kind that requires no fertilizer and no extra water other than natural rainfall after the first year. It's really not a difficult plan to follow and the savings can really add up. Planning the areas you want to use as well as choosing the plants that have strong genes are two important components of the system as well as the addition of 3 inches of mulch to insulate and hold water.

The first step; planning, is a vital part of getting things to grow. Knowing how much sun an area gets as well as where you want to put walks and where the water naturally flows are all important to plant growth. You can check on the amount of sun by observation or do like I did and buy a sun meter that you put out in the morning and look at that night. It will tell you how many hours of full sun you get and if that particular area is considered full or partial sun or shady.

That's the first part. The next is to check your drainage. If your area is near a downspout from your roof it may hold water. This is great for moisture loving plants but quick death for some of our natives. Of course being in the middle of a path for dogs or children doesn't do much for longevity either. The easiest way for me is to sit down with a pencil with a good eraser and paper. Working out in the yard with a long hose to be the "outline" works too. The key is to get it firmly fixed in your head what will work for your yard. Once all this is in mind you are ready to begin thinking about plants. More about that next week.

Keep in mind that the Ellis County Extension Office is available to answer questions and provide information on a variety of subjects. They can be reached Monday through Friday, 8:00 to 5:00 at 972-825-5175.

Week 2 - Earth Kind

Hello, this is Nancy Fenton, Ellis County

Master Gardener, back again with more information about Earth Kind ways to save you time and money.

Plants are always a question in any of our landscapes. Just because our local nursery or retailer has them doesn't mean that they will grow in our local alkaline soils well. There is a new tool out on the internet through Texas A&M's website called EK Plant Selector that will give you a list of plants adapted to conditions in your zip code. You input information on what you want as to size, amount of sun, if you want it to bloom and when and then sit back and watch the pictures come up. You not only get a visual but can further refine it to water requirements! It may take some looking around to find some of these plants, but they are there and they have been tested in areas similar to ours!

If you would rather talk with a person, call our local Extension Office at 972-825-5175. They stock materials on plants for almost every need including lists of native plants that are not all grasses. The Master Gardeners will return your call and/or send out materials on plants adapted for our area. Next week we'll talk about soil preparation; the third step in Earth Kind landscaping.

Week 3 - Earth Kind

Hello, I'm Nancy Fenton, Ellis County Master Gardener back again with some gardening tips that can save you money as well as make your plants more of what you want them to be. We've been talking about landscaping with Earth Kind techniques and have covered planning, plants and are now ready to get the soil ready for all those great plants.

The third step is soil preparation and that's what we'll talk about today. Basically it is the addition of 3 inches of expanded shale and 3 inches of sifted compost tilled into the soil. The shale helps aerate the soil and provides more pore space for the water and roots to do their thing. The compost gives the plants an immediate boost plus contributes the active ingredients to the soil that help the plant roots absorb the nutrients they need. We're talking about new beds and new plantings here, but in established beds, shale can be gently worked in as

well as compost.

If you can't wait to finish your new bed using Earth Kind techniques, check out the Aggie horticulture website at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind> or call the Ellis County Extension office at 972-825-5175, Monday through Friday 8:30-5:00. Master Gardeners will love to visit with you about ways to make things bloom!

Week 4 - Earth Kind

Hello, I'm Nancy Fenton, Ellis County Master Gardener, back one last time with Earth kind gardening tips that can save you money and time. We've covered planning where to put beds and flowers, selecting the plants, and preparing the soil. It's time to put the plants in and start the process to being the best looking yard around.

If you've tilled in the compost and the expanded shale, the bed should be several inches higher than the surrounding area. That's good! Plants can go into the ground at the top of this "mound" of dirt and not have to worry about drowning. It will settle, but you still want the plants not to be buried too deeply. The final step is the addition of three inches of mulch over all the bare ground. Mulch will protect the plant from the stress of extreme heat and cold as well as slow down evaporation of water from the soil.

I prefer coarse mulch so rains can penetrate easily. I have always thought it had to be aged or composted, but when I attended a seminar this fall I learned that 5-year studies have shown that freshly chipped limbs are used just as effectively as my year old mulch. Which ever is used it breaks down and provides fertilizer for the plants as they grow. It is important that you don't remove the old mulch but just keep adding it on top keeping the depth of the mulch at about 3 inches. It does its thing and continues to enrich the soil and hold the water.

In closing, I must say how important it is to all of us to try to save the clean water we do have. Earth Kind techniques are but one part of the larger solution. Touch base with our local Extension Office at 972-825-5175. Monday through Friday, 8-5 for more information on Earth Kind or other topics.

Luther Burbank Home and Gardens

by Pamela Montgomery
Ellis County Master Gardener

My husband, Dale and I lived north of San Francisco for about 4 ½ years. Missing Texas and my Ft. Bend Co. MG group, plus needing an outlet for my love of gardening, led me to Luther Burbank Home and Gardens located in downtown Santa Rosa, CA about 30 minutes from our home in Novato. If you've never been to the gardens, you should consider a trip someday.

Nearly 2 acres of beautiful gardens surround the Burbank Greek-Revival style home place, now a museum and open to the public daily - free! Luther Burbank, 1849-1906, famous botanist and horticulturist was considered a gardening genius. He's credited for introducing more than 800 varieties of plants, vegetables, fruits, nuts, flowers, etc., including the Burbank Russet potato, circa 1872, the Santa Rosa plum, the pluot (plum-apricot) - which I have gotten at HEB, the spineless cactus and the Shasta daisy – it took him 17 years to perfect the daisy.

At his request, Mr. Burbank is buried in an unmarked grave under his beloved Cedar of Lebanon tree, which he planted from seed in 1893. Unfortunately, the tree succumbed to root disease in 1989 and had to be taken down. A wonderful bench made from the tree, now sits in the same vicinity.

After 8 hours of training, I became a garden volunteer and it was a joy – most of the time. The worst task I had was taking out 2 demonstration beds of 6 ft. tall tobacco, by myself – not fun. My favorite time was spent deadheading in the fragrant rose gardens. Once I collected rose hips and together with pineapple sage and chamomile from my own garden, enjoyed a lovely pot of tea on our deck overlooking the mountains.

If a trip to Northern California is not in your future, then check out this website for a virtual tour of the gardens. www.parks.sonoma.net/burbank.html Enjoy!!

It's Time to Feed The Birds!

With the increased popularity in feeding birds, specialty shops have popped up to met the demand. These stores are basically delicatessens for birds. You can't imagine all the different foods.

For instance, there is one called Birdola. It's something like a form of granola. And There are several different types of suet cakes. These are basically bird foods mixed with beef fat and other things such as almonds. One variety is actually packed with insects and another is made with papaya and orange.

Now the reason for all the mixtures is that each one offers food appealing to different kinds of birds. But I have an easy to make general recipe you can try at home and it starts with a trip to the grocery store.

Suét Cakes

Ingredients:

- 1 pound beef fat (súet)
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 cup corn meal
- 1 cup birdseed

Directions:

The key ingredient or "glue" that binds these suet cakes together is the meat fat trimmed and discarded by the butcher. Most butchers will be happy to give this to you and some will even grind it up, which makes it easier to

use. Other ingredients you'll need to pick up - corn meal, oats and some extra crunchy peanut butter, and you'll also need a small bag of birdseed of your choice.

To prepare this recipe melt one pound of beef fat over a low heat until it is in liquid form. Remove the saucepan from the stove then mix in the rest of the ingredients. Pour the mixture into a form, any disposable container will do, and let it cool and solidify.

Once cooled, fit the suet cake in a wire cage or net bag and hang it in a tree branch you can see from a window. If a few days you should be able to see some fine feathered friends enjoying this home cooked meal.