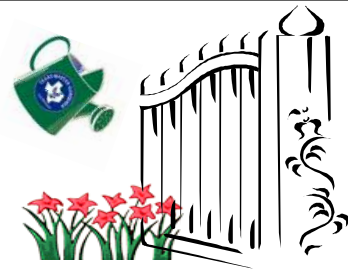




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume V, Issue 8

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

September, 2011

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 to 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 garden. If you would like to receive this newsletter monthly via your email address, log onto our website www.ECMGA.com, click on subscribe, and it will be sent around the 1st of every month. Best of all; it's FREE! Melinda Kocian, editor/Susan Clark, co-editor

What's Happening in September

Every Saturday, through Oct. 15, Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market - Visit the Ellis County Master Gardener's booth! There are lots of free handouts, plants for purchase, as well as some products to purchase. Pick up a printed copy of the E-Garden Newsletter for yourself or to pass on to a friend. Sign up to receive the newsletter **free** via your email.

**** Notice - The Waxahachie Farmer's Market will move to Singleton Plaza for the duration of this year. Located at 216 N. College St., across the street from the Waxahachie Police Department. The hours are still 8-1:00.**

Saturday, September 10, 10:00 - Val's "Fall Veggie Garden" Class. 1007 W. Belt Line Rd., Cedar Hill, TX 75104. More info: call 972-207-2938.

Saturday, September 17, 8:30 - *Tex-Scapes Fall Auction* - 2705 S. Kaufman, Ennis.

Indian Trail Master Naturalists

<http://txmn.org/indiantrail>

Meetings held at First United Methodist Church - Banquet Hall
505 W. Marvin, Waxahachie

Monday, September 26, 7-8 p.m. - "*Bee Alert! What can you do to save our pollinators?*", presented by T'Lee Sollenberger: author artist and beekeeper. Find out how to alleviate some of the problems by simply changing the way you manage your landscapes and gardens.

Monday, October 24, 7-8pm - Ricky Linex, "*Riparian Management*"

Monday, November 8, 7-8 pm - Marilyn Sailee, "*Invasives*"

Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center

1206 West FM 1372 (directly south of Cedar Hill State Park)
Cedar Hill, TX 75104

<http://tx.audubon.org/Dogwood.html>

Wednesday, September 7, 2-7:00 - Behind-the-scenes, invitation only sneak-peek, first look!! Open to the public for guided hikes, building tours, light refreshments, and relaxation. Please RSVP to Dana Wilson at 214-309-5850 or dwilson@audubon.org.



Listen to KBEC.....

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

The Ellis County Master Gardeners have a 5-minute segment every week, offering you helpful information on what you need to be doing in your landscape, as well as "happenings" around the county. Be sure to listen in!

Melinda Kocian

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Rosemary photo by Linda Moxley

Rice and Herbs

By Jean Wammack

4 c. water	2 beef bouillon cubes
2 T. butter	1 sm. onion, minced
1 tsp. basil	2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. tarragon	½ c. vermicelli
½ tsp. thyme	1 ½ c. rice
½ tsp. pepper	

Bring the water, butter, basil, tarragon, thyme, pepper, bouillon cubes, onion, and salt to boil in large kettle. Simmer 15 minutes. Add vermicelli and rice. Cook as directed on rice package. I use brown rice and start checking at 50 minutes. Serves 12.



Basil photo by Linda Moxley

It's September - What Needs to be Done?

Planting

- Gain fall annual color from bedding plants, such as: Pincushion flower (*Scabiosa*), petunias, asters, dianthus, ornamental cabbage, and kale, snapdragons, calendula and phlox.
- Wait until October when the weather is cooler to plant pansies and violas. Dusty miller is a good foliage plant to use with them.
- Most spring and fall-blooming perennials like salvias, roses from containers and vines (honeysuckle, trumpet and wisteria) can be planted at this time.
- It is time to dig, divide and replant spring-blooming perennials such as iris, daylilies, coneflowers, gaillardia, violets and ajuga. Amend the planting bed with compost and replant.
- Plant trees, shrubs and perennials from containers. Fall planting will allow them to establish roots before hot and dry weather arrives next year.

Pruning and Fertilizing

- Dead-head spring and summer blooming perennials and prune their stalks back to basal foliage.
- Root-prune trees and shrubs to be transplanted this winter.
- Apply a fertilizer on lawns using a complete (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium) analysis with 3-1-2 or a 4-1-2 ratio.
- Apply a pre-emergent on lawn grasses to prevent germination of winter and spring weeds.

Garden Watch

- Spray roses for blackspot and mildew that can be extremely troublesome in September and October.
- Check for spider mites on fall tomatoes and newly planted transplants. Treat with a strong stream of water or insecticidal soap.
- Webworms are prevalent on pecan trees. Spray with Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) or tear open the webs to expose the worms for the birds.

Odds and Ends

- Use your garden to attract bees, birds and butterflies. Bees are one of our best pollinators. To attract butterflies, you need a host and a nectar plant. They lay their eggs on the host and feed on the nectar plant. Some of the best butterfly plants are: blue mist flower, butterfly weed, salvia, abelia, lantana, Turk's cap, dill, parsley, flame acanthus and fennel. Many of these plants are also food for hummingbirds.

Herbs - The use of herbs as a medicine predates written history. Rosemary stimulates the central nervous system and circulation making it beneficial for low blood pressure and sluggishness. Rosemary also contains chemicals called *quinones* which have been shown in laboratory studies to inhibit cancer.

Basil has long been used as an embalming and preserving herb; it has even been found in mummies of ancient Egypt. Basil oil is a good source of vitamin A, magnesium, potassium, iron and calcium.

Fennel was thought to be a cure for obesity in Renaissance Europe. The entire fennel plant is edible, including the roots.

My Plants are not Looking So Good!

By Shirley Campbell
Ellis County Master Gardener



Question: My plants are not looking good in all the heat. Would it help them to add some fertilizer when I water?

Answer:

No, now is the worst time to add fertilizer to any plant showing stress from the heat and lack of water. All plants are struggling for survival in this extremely dry and hot summer. When survival mode kicks in, most plants stop growing, flowering and producing fruit. It is not just the daytime heat that is harmful, but the nighttime highs are particularly damaging to plants. Energy is made in the leaves from the sun during the day, but not at night. Plants consume energy both day and night and the amount used is related to the temperature; the higher the temperature, the more energy used. Usually there is enough cooling at night to allow conservation of the energy use may outrun daytime production. If one adds fertilizers to a stressed plant, it forces the plant to produce new growth and this requires a lot of extra energy. This can be the "straw that breaks the camel's back" for a struggling plant. Wait until the plants and soil have cooled and water is available before fertilizing. Most plants do well with fall fertilization if they need it.



Question: There are no tomatoes on my vines and the cherry tomatoes that are producing have tough skins. What am I doing wrong?

Answer: Tomatoes do not set fruit well when the overnight low temperature is above 70 degrees F, or when the daytime temperature is consistently above about 92 degrees F. When these conditions occur, flowers will drop or fruit will be misshapen. Hormone-type "blossom-set" sprays have very little effect on the set of tomatoes during hot weather. Avoid excessive nitrogen fertilization. Dry or very hot summers tend to produce thick skinned tomatoes. Even if you are watering regularly, when the air temperature is hotter, it can result in thicker skins as the plants

try to conserve moisture. Inconsistent moisture levels in the soil can also contribute to the problem of tough skins. Tomatoes require two inches of water per week in July, August, and September or apply enough water to penetrate to a depth of 12 to 18 inches. Use mulch to keep the soil moisture even.

Question: How can I prolong the shelf life of a tomato?

(This advice courtesy of Cook's, America's Test Kitchen)

Answer: We've heard that storing a tomato with its stem end facing down can prolong shelf life. To test this theory, we placed one batch of tomatoes stem-end up and another stem-end down and stored them at room temperature. A week later, nearly all the stem-down tomatoes remained in perfect condition, while the stem-up tomatoes had shriveled and started to mold. Why the difference? We surmised that the scar left on the tomato skin where the stem once grew provides both an escape for moisture and an entry point for mold and bacteria. Placing a tomato stem-end down blocks air from entering and moisture from exiting the scar. To confirm this theory, we ran another test, this time comparing tomatoes stored stem-end down with another batch stored stem-end up, but with a piece of tape sealing off their scars. The taped, stem-end-up tomatoes survived just as well as the stem-end-down batch.

On every stem, on every leaf,.....and at the root of every-thing 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

(Continued from page 1)

Saturday-Sunday, September 10-11, Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center, Cedar Hill, Highway 1382 is having their grand opening. Saturday 9-5, Sunday 12-5.

Friday, September 16, 3:30 - Talk on 2011 Hexalectis Orchids at Cedar Ridge Preserve by Tim Gesner of the University of Dallas.

Thursday, September 24, 9-12noon - Dogwood Canyon, volunteer to work on trail building and habitat management. Contact dwilson@sudubon.org.

Light House for Learning

(With the Ellis County Master Gardeners)

For reservations, call Melissa Cobb, 972-923-4631

Monday, September 26, 6:00-7:30 - *Vermi-composting 101* - Worm your way into composting by using worms to eat your food scraps! Vermicomposting, or worm composting, is an easy way to recycle your kitchen waste and produce rich compost to use in your garden and house plants. Worms can recycle, or eat, half of their weight per day in food scraps. This class will teach you the basics of vermicomposting. You also will assemble your own worm bin to take home, so you can get started right away. **Instructor:** Susan Clark. Cost: \$12.00.

Monday, October 3 - 6:00-7:30 - *Vegetable Gardening 101* - Learn how and when to start your own vegetable garden. Includes creating the space, adding all the necessary amendments for our Ellis County soil, planting, caring for and finally harvesting your bounty. **Instructors:** James and Melinda Kocian. Cost: \$12.00.

Tuesday, October 4 - October 25, 6:00-8:00 pm (four classes) - "Ag 101" - Designed for New or Small Acreage Landowners. Join this experienced instructor as you cover topics such as soils and soil fertility, soil testing, pasture management, basic livestock productions and pond management. Classes will be taught at the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Office, 701 S. I-35 East, Waxahachie 75165. **Instructor:** Mark Arnold, County Extension Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources. Cost: \$22.00.

Thursday, October 6, 6:00-7:30 - *Care of House Plants* - Have your plants been enjoying the outdoors this summer? Now is the time to prepare them for the move indoors. This class will cover basics about getting house plants ready for the move. It will include how and when to repot as well as suggestions for best growth and pest management in the home. **Instructor:** Nancy Fenton. Cost: 12.00.

Monday, October 10 - 6:30-8:00 - *Backyard Chickens* - Before you start your backyard flock, come learn some tips on how to successfully manage backyard chickens. We'll discuss city ordinances, neighborhood associations, neighbors, as well as housing, predators, sanitation and raising or obtaining laying hens. **Instructor:** Ginger Cole. Cost: \$12.00.

Monday, October 17 - 6:00-7:30 - *Turf Grasses for Ellis County* - Do you have questions about your grass and how to care for it year-round? Join this class as you cover the following topics: Turf grass selections for Ellis Co., Preparing the soil for planting. Spring and Summer lawn care, Proper watering in dry times, Disease control in lawns, Weed control in lawns. There will be a question and answer session and handouts will be given on each topic. **Instructor:** Jim Tachias. Cost \$12.00.

Monday, October 24, 6:00-7:30 - *Gifts from the Garden - Jams, Jellies & More* - Have you ever tasted Strawberry-Lavender Jam or Cranberry-Sage Jelly? How about Rose Infused Sugar or vinegar infused with fruits and herbs? Learn how easy it is to make your own blends of flowers, fruits and herbs to create unique gifts for your family and friends. You will take home some treats! **Instructor:** Arlene Hamilton. Cost: \$12.00 + \$5.00 supply fee pay to instructor.

Monday, November 14 - 5:30-8:00 - *Plant Propagation* - Students will learn the basics of plant propagation, increasing and multiplying plants for the house, landscape and garden. After a short presentation in the classroom, students will have hands-on experience in the WISD High School greenhouse. **Instructors:** Walt Friis and Maureen Nitkowski. Cost: \$12.00.

Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



- September 2011 Herb of the Month - Chile peppers

You are probably as tired of talking about the weather as I am. So let's talk about a wonderful little plant that loves the long hot summers of the Southwest and inspires a passion around the world. Chile Peppers (*Capsicum* spp.) are favored in our gardens, on our plates and even in our medicine cabinets.

Like beans, corn and avocados, chile peppers are a New World plant, found in South America by Christopher Columbus as he searched for a route to India, home of the black pepper (*Piper nigrum*), the most expensive spice in the world at that time. Columbus returned to Europe with the holds of his ships filled with plants, seeds and peppers. Within a very short time chile peppers had spread throughout the world as their flavor and heat contributed to bland tasting diets. Even the poorest could easily cultivate this inexpensive flavor enhancer.

There are hundreds of varieties of chile peppers in many shapes, sizes, colors and flavors, from sweet to searingly pungent, hot and sweet at the same time, green and vegetal, earthy, and fruity. Some favorites for the Texas garden are habanero, Anaheim, Hungarian banana, cayenne, Tabasco, Thai, and of course jalapeño. The tiny piquin has been brought to my garden by the birds that frequent the tender

perennial plant in the fall then deposit the seeds throughout the area. It is a very fiery hot pepper that makes a wonderful condiment when the ripe peppers are added to a bottle of vinegar, aged, and then enjoyed splashed over salads, eggs and vegetables. September and October are peak times for harvesting chiles from your garden or shopping the local farmers' market. My very favorite chile is the Hatch, grown in Hatch New Mexico. We first came across this large, mild to hot



New Mexico Hatch Chiles

pepper as we crossed southeastern Colorado several years ago. The markets, roadside stands and parking lots lining highway 50 boasted large tumble roasters grilling up bushels of Hatch chiles. You could catch the aroma long before you saw the grill. I have already made one pilgrimage to Central Market for the first batch and will surely return for more before their short season is over.

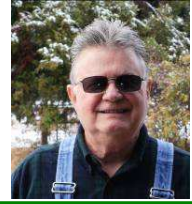
Once you get past the pain of cleaning and seeding chiles you are rewarded

with not only the wonderful flavor but also the healthful benefits of chiles. They contain large amounts of vitamins C and A. By weight, fresh peppers have about three times as much vitamin C as oranges and as much vitamin A as carrots. The capsaicin oil that causes your fingers to burn while cleaning them is being studied as a medicine. Capsaicin is the active ingredient of creams for painful skin and nerve conditions including shingles and neuralgia. It is being tested in cream form for diabetic neuropathy, osteoarthritis, and rheumatoid arthritis.

Pepper plants should be planted in the early summer after the soil has become warm. They grow best in loamy soil with organic matter and a little greensand added. Good drainage is important. Water frequently and feed once or twice during the season. My favorite way to preserve peppers is to blacken the skin on the grill, remove the black and seeds then lay flat between sheets of waxed paper. Place these in zip topped freezer bags and freeze. These packets lay flat, taking up very little room. A few pieces make the base for Chile Rellenos casserole, chopped in salsas and chili, or added to all foods ding a bit of a kick.

Vegetable Gardening

By Robert Shugart
Ellis County Master Gardener



September in the Vegetable Patch

I have never been much of a fall gardener. We usually wait till the grandkids go back to school to take our vacation. We don't want to miss an opportunity to visit or be visited by them. That said, I usually encourage my spring tomatoes to start producing again and usually do get a reasonable response. The *Juliette* tomato, introduced to most of us by Master Gardener Susan Norvell, has consistently been a good producer in the fall along with the dependable *Celebrity*.

Have you noticed that the *Celebrity* plants we have been sold the last two years are determinate? The last two years they haven't reached the top of my 5-foot tall cages and in the past they hung over the top some. I noticed in the seed catalogues they are listed as "*Bush Celebrity*" as opposed to just *Celebrity* in the past. Let us hear from you about this difference, as well as your preference.

In the past I have also put out a few cabbages, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts. I would like to have a few rows of lettuce, spinach and Swiss chard. But all of these may be difficult to get started unless we get a break in the heat. And some of these might make it if our rabbits concentrate on only one or two in the row.

We encourage critters and have been putting out water in low and high locations to help them make it through the drought. But our fox is back and he may thin the other critters out some this fall.

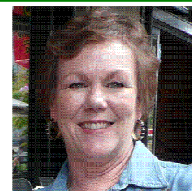
If you have never mulched your plants, it is a good time to start. Water conservation has encouraged me to plan for a smaller fall garden that I can afford to water. I usually plant a large garden but I plan to concentrate on important vegetables so that when drought comes I will be able to afford, to water the ones we favor. I have used "drip irrigation" in the vegetable garden on tomatoes and peppers. I also catch rainwater to use whenever possible. I find that rainwater starts plants better than city water and the animals seem to prefer it too. Watch this publication for future classes on "Rainwater Harvesting". I think a class is planned for October.

I noticed much more activity around the hummingbird feeders this morning as our two regulars have been invaded by three new "friends". Talk about ornery little guys! Hope this means cooler weather is on the way.

Please Pray for Rain!

Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Texas Lantana

Lantana horrida Kunth in H.B.K.

Verbena Family (Verbenaceae)

Size: 3-5 feet

Blooms: March through October, perennial

Range: 1-7 and 10 (Ellis County is range 4)

Lantanas are often seen along fence rows, or under telephone or power lines where birds perch. The shiny, blue-black, fleshy, eighth- to quarter-inch fruits are potentially lethal to people and livestock. They are, however, readily eaten by birds, which subsequently drop the seeds in fertilized pellets to sprout and beautify the countryside. Additionally, lantana is an important source of nectar. The three- to five-foot woody plants have small, funnel-shaped, orange flowers surrounding yellow flowers, all in densely clustered small globes that turn red as they age. The stems, square when young, become rounded with maturity, and may become slightly prickly. Oval to triangular leaves are one to three inches long and have coarsely toothed margins. *L. camara* is pink- and yellow-flowered plant from the West Indies that has escaped cultivation and is now found throughout much of Texas.

Some Like It Hot!

By Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener



No, I'm not referring to the movie made in 1959, starring Marilyn Monroe, Jack Lemmon, and Tony Curtis. Oh, what a good movie! Now I'm telling my age.

Some like it hot -- the weather, that is -- and ornamental peppers fall in that category. These annuals provide fiery color to the horticultural palette, not your palate; the new peppers are HOT! HOT! even to a Tex-Mex jalapeño-adjusted tongue. Rely on them to fire up containers and flower borders with reds, oranges, and yellows. Ornamental peppers and colored foliage plants are the most neglected and underused plants by Texas gardeners, yet they are some of the most useful and easy-to-grow. Nurseries will be rolling out their fall plants and ornamental peppers should be among them.



The trend started several years ago with the pepper, 'Black Pearl', whose leaves are inky enough to be called black and whose round, deep-purple, shiny fruits mature to holiday red. An All American Selections Winner, it's a wonderful cut flower growing up to 18" tall x 18" wide. It likes full sun but will tolerate light shade.

'Explosive Embers' is one of the best of the ornamental peppers with purple foliage and multi-colored fruit. It continues to grow as it fruits. It has done so well at the Dallas Arboretum that it has made the North Texas Winner's Circle. Grown in the sun, it reaches a height of 10 to 14 inches.

'Garda Tricolor' ornamental peppers resemble tiny Dr. Seuss Christmas lights. Touted as a rising star at the arboretum, it's an absolutely beautiful annual that has all of the following qualities: flourishes in 100 percent full, burning, infernal Texas summer sun, is drought-tolerant enough to earn Water Wise designation, is deer and rabbit proof, 100 degree weather makes it more colorful, is beautiful from late spring until the first frost, is even edible, works equally well in containers or planted *en masse*, and is easy to grow from seed or 4-inch pots. Mature size is 24" x 24". Mix it with 'Profussion' zinnias or purple fountain grass.



'Chilly Chill', only 12" x 12", is a smaller ornamental pepper; grow in full sun. Its peppers are sweet!

Jimmy Turner at the Dallas Arboretum has had great success with these ornamental peppers in his trial gardens and uses them in the garden's displays. He likes them in hanging baskets and in whiskey barrels. They look great massed alone, or try mixing them with crotons or sweet potato vines. One of his favorite combos in a pot is with 'Black Seeded Simpson' lettuce growing around them -- ornamental and edible.

When pumpkins become available in autumn, Mr. Turner offers another decorative use. "Set a large pumpkin in a container and plant peppers around it. The pumpkin costs less than a mum and usually lasts longer." He says, "Marigolds are still one of my favorite fall flowers: cheap, easy to grow, and bloom until first frost." 'Zenith' and 'Sunburst' are his bullet-proof marigold choices to complement the ornamental peppers.



There's one more I want to be sure to mention as it is a Texas native. 'Chile Pequin' is a Central Texas native whose red peppers are very hot. The plant reseeds and often is a perennial in mild winters, and birds love the fruit. It grows to 24" x 24" in sun or part shade.

Gardens are not always about flowers. Join the new trend -- use ornamental peppers with their colorful foliage. Add some "kick" to your yard.

Online calculator helps homeowners preserve lawns while saving water

By Robert Burns

Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Drought or no drought, homeowners typically over-water their lawns, according to a Texas AgriLife Extension Service irrigation engineer. It's an expensive practice anytime, but during an extended drought, it's particularly wasteful "and may lead to further water-use restrictions by communities if done by everyone, which is often the case," said Dr. Guy Fipps, AgriLife Extension irrigation engineer.

Moreover, it's unnecessary as there is an online calculator that will allow Texas homeowners to apply within a tenth of an inch of exactly the amount their turf grass needs, said Fipps, who is also the director of the [Irrigation Technology Center](#) at the Texas A&M University College Station campus.

"I guess a lot of people don't know this sort of information and tools exist," he said. There is also a lot of misinformation circulating about, Fipps said. "Look at garden sections in newspapers and elsewhere, you'll typically see recommendations like water 1-2 inches a week, or that you should water infrequently and deeply — vague concepts like that," he said. There are lots of reasons such an approach isn't appropriate, Fipps said. One reason is climatic variation.

"For example, this year we are having a very hot and dry summer, and water requirements are 30 percent to 50 percent higher than they would be in a more normal year," he said. In reality, the amount of irrigation a given variety of turf grass needs at any time depends upon many factors, such as temperature, humidity levels, wind, solar radiation and, of course, recent rainfall, if any, he said. "The way you determine how much water grass actually needs is a fairly complex process, but fortunately, we have this website that does all that for you," he said. "All you need to do is put in a little info about your location, the type of grass you're growing, and what your goal is."

Personal goals vary, he said. Some people don't worry about the expense of watering and want a lawn as green as a golf course even during the drought. Others may want to strike a balance with the amount of water they apply, just wanting "pretty decent" turf quality. Others may want to conserve water and economize during drought restrictions and put on just enough water to keep the turf alive, he said.

"This choice greatly affects the amount of water you use and will double or triple the amount of irrigation water (in most parts of the state) from about 0.6 to 1.7 inches a week during August, and in West Texas from 0.9 to 2.2 inches a week," Fipps said.

To use the online-calculator tool, go to the TexasET Network website at <http://texaset.tamu.edu/>. The calculations are based on current weather data from nearly 30 automated scientific weather stations located throughout the state. Users must first pick one of these weather stations either from a drop-down menu or by simply clicking on the nearest one to them on the webpage's Texas map. They then must click on one of three buttons: "home watering," "turf/landscape irrigation" or "crop irrigation."

Beginners should choose "home watering," Fipps noted. "But once they are familiar with how it works, they should move to the turf/landscape calculator as it provides more options to customize recommendations for their grass and includes other plants as well," he said. From there on, it's a matter of choosing the type of grass in the lawn, whether it's in full sunlight or partial shade, and the amount of rainfall received in the last week.

The next decision is how long to irrigate. The parameter, "sprinkler precipitation rate" in inches per hour may give some homeowners some pause, but it's easy to figure the rate, Fipps said. "One simply puts out containers and run the irrigation system for a specified amount of time, usually 10 to 30 minutes," he said. "Everything from tuna cans to cups are often used, but the results must be converted to inches of water applied over the area per unit of time."

To make the process easier, Fipps designed the Aggie Catch Can. The catch can is cone-shaped and has graduated markings in both inches and millimeters to take the guesswork out of measuring, he said.

Aggie Catch Cans may be purchased as a kit on the AgriLife online bookstore at <http://agrilifebookstore.org>. For the Homeowner Kit, search for item number SP-424. Each kit comes with five cans and stands, as well as an instruction sheet, and costs \$18.

"Unlike tuna cans, catch volumes may be read directly without the need for rulers or graduated cylinders," Fipps said.

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