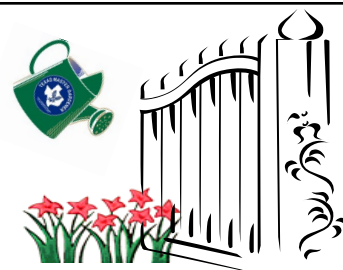




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VI, Issue 8

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

September, 2012

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, 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?

- Saturday mornings 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**!!!

Saturday, Sept. 1, 8am—6pm and Monday, Sept. 3, 8am—5pm. Labor Day Blowout Sale at the Greenery. Closed Sunday. New location: 3671 N. Highway 77, Waxahachie. For info, call (972) 617-5459 or visit www.thegreenerytx.com/.

Thursday, Sept. 6, 9am—9pm. Dogwood Canyon FREE First Thursday. Enjoy FREE admission all day and join in throughout the day for guided hikes, animal encounters, and children's arts and crafts activities. Located at 1206 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill; south of Cedar Hill State Park Entrance. Visit <http://tx.audubon.org/dogwood.html>

Saturday, Sept. 15, begins 8:30am. Tex-Scapes Greenery Annual Auction. Auction Item Sheets available for pickup on Thur., Sept 13. Located at 2705 South Kaufman Street, Ennis. Call (972) 875-1716 or visit <http://texscapesgreenery.com/> for info.

Saturday, Sept. 15, 9am—12pm. Cedar Ridge Preserve Conservation in Action Work-day. Wear sturdy boots or shoes with good ankle support and bring gloves. And bring a friend! Located at 7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas. For info, call Jim Varnum at (214) 543-2055 or email jevvarnum@aol.com or visit www.audubondallas.org.

Saturday, Sept. 15, 10am—1pm. BRIT presents "Parsley, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme". Learn the rich history of herbs and their medicinal uses, how to grow/cultivate, and how to personalize favorites for daily use. The hands-on portion of the class includes creating your own customized infused oil blends and decant into a decorative amphora bottle to take home. Cost: \$50.00 per person; \$45.00 per member (refreshments included). Pre-Registration is required. Go to <http://www.brit.org/education/more-learners> to register.

Tuesday, Sept. 18, 6pm—8pm. Dinner Tonight Healthy Cooking School brought to you by Texas Agrilife Ext. to be held at Midlothian Conference Center, 1 Community Center Circle. Cost is \$20/person. Visit <http://ellis.agrilife.org/events/> for info and to register.

Saturday, Sept. 22, 9am—12pm. Dogwood Canyon "4th Saturday". Volunteers are invited to join the trail building and habitat management activities. For more information, please contact Dana Wilson, Volunteer Coordinator at dwilson@audubon.org.

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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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Rose Photo by Mox Moxley

Roses

Ellis county homeowners can have a beautiful, diverse rose garden with little of the fuss that maintaining a rose garden traditionally entailed. With over two dozen varieties of EarthKind® roses now available, the possibilities are nearly endless. While these roses still suffer bouts of powdery mildew or black spot, they are highly resistant and rarely require the homeowner take action. Visit the Ellis County Master Gardeners' test rose garden at Getzen-daner Park or go to <http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/> to learn more.

History: According to fossil evidence, 35 million years old and was first grown in China, then Rome and Greece. Rome invented the greenhouse for growing roses. The era of modern roses was established with the introduction of the first hybrid-tea rose, "La France" by the French breeder, James Baptiste Guillot in 1867. The world's oldest living rose bush is thought to be 1000 years old. Today, it continues to bloom on the wall of the Hildesheim Cathedral in Germany, Lower Saxony, Germany.

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

Planting

- Plant fall-blooming annuals from bedding plants (for example: marigolds, petunias, asters, dianthus, pin cushion [*Scabiosa*], and snapdragons).
- Wait until October when the weather is cooler to plant pansies and violas.
- Most spring- and summer-blooming perennials can be planted (like salvias, roses from containers, butterfly weed, phlox, cone flower, and lantana). Likewise, coral honeysuckle, crossvine, trumpet vine and wisteria can be planted.
- Dig and divide 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.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- Apply an all-nitrogen fertilizer on Bermuda and St. Augustine lawns or wait until the first week of October after the grass has stopped growing.
- Use a pre-emergent on lawn grasses to prevent germination of winter and spring weeds.
- Continue to deadhead summer-blooming perennials to prolong seasonal color.
- Root-prune trees and shrubs (cutting the roots around the plant with a spade to stimulate new growth) to be transplanted this winter.

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. They start as small webs at the ends of branches. Cut off the ends of those branches as soon as the webs appear. They are difficult to control once established. Tear open large webs to expose worms for the birds.

Odds and Ends

- Try to reduce the lawn area that uses the most water in your landscape. Instead, plant ground covers, expand bedding areas, and use mulch.
- Learn to recognize poison ivy which has leaves with three leaflets and is usually found climbing trees and fences. Remove mechanically or spray with a glyphosate weed killer. Wear gloves and protective clothes. All parts are toxic and can cause severe skin irritation. Get the roots or it will come back.



Rose Photo by Mox Moxley

Book Selection of the Month

HERBS MADE EASY

Article by Kathleen Phillips

COLLEGE STATION – Herbs can be fun to buy and easy to grow, but how to use them sometimes puzzles home gardeners, Texas AgriLife Extension Service specialists note.

Now a new set of informational materials called “Herbs Made Easy” may help. The set includes an illustrated wheel with information about growing, preserving, and using 10 common herbs, as well as a recipe booklet with examples of herb-laden foods.

“We created this herb wheel to help us do a couple of things,” said Dr. Jenna Anding, AgriLife Extension nutrition and food sciences program leader. “It gives us ideas for how we can use the herbs in everyday cooking, and it gives us ideas on how we can preserve these herbs so we have them available after the growing season is over.”

The wheel works like this: turn the inner circle until the cutout meets with the picture of a herb of choice. Inside the cutout appears a list of foods in which the herb might be used.

“Let’s say I had some oregano. When I turn the wheel to oregano, it tells me that Mediterranean food, meats, tomatoes, poultry, stews, soups, and sea-

food are good combinations with oregano,” Anding said. “And it can help add some flavor, without having to add extra salt or fat, which is something that many of us are trying to watch the intake of.”



A 23-page recipe booklet was created to accompany the wheel, Anding said, because often a herb plant will produce so much that the gardener doesn’t know how to make use of the product.

“The booklet was put together to inspire budding cooks or even seasoned cooks on different ways to use the herbs that they are growing,” Anding noted. “It is just a starting point, but it does give some good ideas and tips on how to use herbs in everyday dishes.”

Each recipe has the complete nutritional value per serving. The booklet also includes information on drying and freezing herbs so they are availa-

ble after the growing season, she said, adding that this helps save money versus purchasing these herbs retail.

The 10 herbs featured on the wheel and in the booklet are those most commonly available from garden centers, home improvement stores, and farmers markets, and are among those easiest to grow, according to Dr. Joe Masabni, AgriLife Extension vegetable specialist, who co-authored the material with Anding. They include bay, chives, basil, Italian parsley, oregano, thyme, sage, rosemary, cilantro, and mint.

Masabni said people need to consider space, soil, and sun requirements of each plant when growing herbs.

“Many herbs can be grown in small areas,” he noted, adding that all 10 of the herbs need full sun. He said most herbs do not need to be saturated with water and that few pesticides are needed because the plant parts will be eaten.

“Hand-pick caterpillars and wash off other small insects or use a safe, organic insecticide to remove bugs,” he said.

“Herbs Made Easy” wheel and cookbook are available from the AgriLife Bookstore by ordering B-6202 at \$15 for the set.

Go to: <https://agrilifebookstore.org/>

What's Happening (Continued from page 1)

Monday, Sept. 24, 7pm. Indian Trail Master Naturalists presents “Exotic Insects of the World”. Bob Osborne, entomology enthusiast, will speak and have a time for questions and discussion. The program is free and follows the 6 p.m. Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. It takes place in the banquet hall of the First United Methodist Church, 505 West Marvin Ave, Waxahachie.

Saturday, Sept. 29, 9am—4pm. Progressive Fall Garden Tea Tour, benefitting the Green Garden Club (on behalf of Garden Inspirations). Five beautiful perennial gardens in Waxahachie, Ovilla, and Ennis. Three local Chefs, including Chef Kevin Stewart. Tickets are limited...Sign up today! Please visit <http://greengardenclub.org/> for more information, the menu, and to register.

Fall 2012, Garden Inspirations Various Classes including Grow It, Eat It, Store It. Go to <http://gardeninspirations-tx.com/classes.html> for class descriptions and to register.

Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



September – A Perfect Month for Enjoying the Herb Garden

September doesn't always feel like fall in Texas, but cool weather is coming. Now is the perfect time to prepare your garden for cool weather herbs. Get out there and survey the summer damage. Pull up sad looking, brown sticks and bushes that once were colorful calendula, nasturtiums, dill and other annuals that did not survive the summer. Cut back your mints and lemon balm; and be sure to keep dead-heading to promote more green growth. Give the garden a light coat of fertilizer and work it in. I use mushroom compost and worm castings from my very own worm farm. Let the area rest for a few weeks until it's time to plant cool weather herbs.

One of the busiest plants in my garden is the Bronze Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), loved by butterflies, bees, insects and moths. It is a favorite nursery for the black swallowtail butterflies that lay their eggs on the leaves. Their larva feed on the leaves while the bees and butterflies



feast on the nectar from the flowers. A stroll down the path stirs up a flurry of activity as their dining is interrupted.

The flavor of fennel is a sweet anise or licorice taste. I sprinkle the flowers on salads and have seen a number of recent recipes calling for fennel pollen. Fennel leaves add a wonderful flavor to fish dishes. Simply stuff the leaves and green stems into the cavity of the fish and grill. Fennel features prominently in Mediterranean cuisine, where bulbs and fronds are used, both raw and cooked, in side dishes, salads,

pastas, vegetable dishes, and risottos. Fennel seed is a common ingredient in Italian sausages and meatballs and European rye breads. Our favorite Indian restaurant in Oklahoma serves roasted fennel seeds as an after-dinner digestive and breath freshener.

Another superstar in the September garden is basil. Remember to keep cutting yours back to keep it producing and sweet tasting. Now is a perfect time to make some basil pesto. I freeze mine in ice cube trays then dump them into a zipper freezer bag. Next winter, when we are preparing pasta, soups, or stews I will pull one or two out of the bag and drop it in the pot near the end of cooking. The aroma fills the house with the smell of summer!

This year my sweet basil doesn't look so good, but a friend gave me a large, beautiful bunch from her garden. Here is my favorite pesto recipe: In a food processor, using the steel blade, process one bunch basil, one bunch parsley, and four cloves garlic for about 30 seconds. Add 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese and 1/2 cup pine nuts. With the processor running slowly, add 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil. Process until well mixed. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Refrigerate or freeze.

Both my Italian and Greek oregano flowered and set seeds, which are still green, so it's not too late to cut the stems back severely. I harvest the long stems, cut off the seed heads, tie the stems into bundles and hang in my

potting shed to dry. After they are crisp dry, a quick pull of the stem through my hand will strip all of the leaves off the stem. The spicy smelling leaves are ready to bottle and store in the spice cabinet or on a dark shelf.



Pests seem to get a second foothold on plants as the nights cool down. Keep checking for caterpillars. Pick off the caterpillars unless they are one of our beautiful butterflies. Aphids and scale can be controlled with insecticidal soap sprayed upward from underneath the leaf. And remember, there are still plenty of hot days in September so frequent and deep watering is necessary.



**A weed is a
plant that has
mastered every
survival skill
except for
learning how to
grow in rows.
Doug Larson**



The Master Gardener Program

By: Shirley Campbell, Ellis County Master Gardener



What is a Master Gardener?

Master Gardeners are trained members of the local community who take an active interest in their lawns, trees, shrubs, flowers, and gardens. They are enthusiastic, willing to learn and to help others, and be able to communicate with diverse groups of people.

Master Gardeners contribute time as volunteers, working through their Texas A & M AgriLife Extension Service office, to provide horticultural information to their communities.

IS THE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM FOR ME?

To help you decide if you should apply to be a Master Gardener, ask yourself these questions:

- ◆ Do I want to learn more about the culture and maintenance of many types of plants?
- ◆ Am I eager to participate in a practical and intense training program?
- ◆ Do I look forward to sharing my knowledge with people in my community?
- ◆ Do I have enough time to attend training and to complete the volunteer service?

Training

If accepted into the Master Gardener Program, you will attend a training course that offers a **minimum of 56 hours of instruction**. Topics covered include: lawn care, ornamental trees and shrubs, insects, disease and weed management, soil and plant nutrition, vegetable gardening, home fruit production, garden flowers, and water conservation.

The Master Gardener training course will be held each Tuesday and Thursday throughout the month of October 2012. Hours will be from 8:30a.m. to 5:00p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin Street, Waxahachie, Texas. **Class size is limited** and attendance is required at all sessions to complete the program.

The cost of the training is \$200.00. This includes: cost of the manual, speaker fees, and lunch that will be provided each day of class.

Volunteer Commitment

In exchange for training, participants are asked to volunteer at least **75 hours of service in eleven months** following training to earn the title of "Texas Master Gardener". The volunteer time will take place during the normal work week with the exception when we have the Annual Lawn & Garden Expo, which is on a Saturday in the spring.

The type of service done by Master Gardeners varies according to community needs and the abilities and interest of the Master Gardener. Some Master Gardeners answer telephone requests for information related to gardening. Master Gardeners may speak to local groups and conduct workshops. They may help establish school and community garden projects, work with 4-H youth, or assist their agent with news or radio releases related to gardening. The Master Gardener Coordinator in the county Extension office decides how volunteer time can be best used. Master Gardeners are representatives of the Texas A & M AgriLife Extension Service in all volunteer work related to the program. Master Gardeners follow the research-based recommendations of the Texas A & M AgriLife Extension Service. The title "Texas Master Gardener" can be used by volunteers only when engaged in activities sponsored by the Extension Service.

Certification

Participants become certified Master Gardeners after they have completed the training course and fulfilled their volunteer commitment.

Application forms are available on the Ellis County Master Gardener website at www.ecmga.com or by calling (972) 825-5175. Classes fill quickly and applications are accepted on a first-come, first served basis. Applications must be returned by **September 4, 2012**, after which you will be called to schedule an interview.

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin. The Texas A & M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

In the Vegetable Garden

With Ginger Cole

Ellis County Master Gardener



September, A Month of Transition

The mornings have started to be cooler with a crispness that is inspiring. It's very refreshing and a great time to have a cup of morning coffee on the patio and observe what is happening around the yard. Our tomatoes, peppers and eggplants that have survived the heat are starting to pick up production again as the days



cool. A top-dressing of compost and watering, as needed, will help them produce until frost. While I love to hang onto the taste of summer vegetables and my favorite summer herb, basil, it's time make the transition to cool season crops that will make it through frost and some all through the winter. We eat like Mediterraneans in the summer using lots of fresh basil. In the winter, cilantro fills the basil void and our menu takes on a Mexican or Thai flair.

Our garden is more of a kitchen garden, or as the French call it a *potager*. The perimeter is lined with dwarf fruit trees. Below the fruit trees are perennial herbs such as sage, thyme, chives, and tarragon with space for seasonal herbs such as basil, parsley, and cilantro. This perimeter of herbs invites beneficial insects and pollinators to the garden for a healthy balance of life. In the center of the garden, in full sun, are raised beds for vegetable plants with drip irrigation added for ease of maintenance.

We've already planted blue lake (pictured right) and Kentucky wonder green beans



where lettuce had been. These should mature in just over two months, so they will be harvested before frost gets them.

After our squash plants were ravaged by heat and squash bugs, those plants were removed and the bed was given a rest under a layer of mulch. It's time to plant spinach, beets and carrots and other cool season crops where the squash had been. These crops should produce through the winter.

We'll just move the mulch aside to create rows and plant cool season crops into directly into the bed. Did you notice tilling the soil was not mentioned? Now that our raised beds have been in place for three years, they do not require tilling. We follow nature's pattern by adding compost and mulch to the top of the soil and allow it to decompose and build healthy soil. We also use liquid fertilizers once a month to give plants a boost. Weeds have been much less of a problem than

when we used traditional gardening methods with in-ground rows that needed tilling. We still do get weeds, but with a little bit of "yard yoga" a few times a week, the gar-

den can be maintained in good order.

If you don't have room for a garden, consider tucking a few vegetables into your landscape. Kale, Swiss Chard and beets are all quite attractive and provide great flavor and nutrition.

In recent years, we have found our best successes and surprises with our fall gardens and have been able to harvest some of the most marvelous vegetables even in the cold of winter. Some plants such as broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower may be started in pots for transplanting. We have had good success starting transplants using flowerpots with water reservoirs underneath. This helps to keep tender

sprouts moist. However, the easiest way to get healthy transplants is to purchase them from local garden shops.

Many vegetables such as spinach, carrots, beets, collard greens, kale, mustard greens and turnips are best sowed directly into a prepared garden bed. Don't forget

to include herbs in your garden. Each year, I try to add at least one new vegetable in our garden. Last fall, Florence fennel was a huge success. It was prolific and we have come to love its flavor, especially with fish. This year we will be giving parsnips a try. Parsnips are supposed to be a great winter crop and take much the same care as carrots, to which they are related.

It takes from 120 to 180 days for a parsnip to go from seed to root. Seeds germinate in about 18 days, so keep them moist and don't give up on them. When planting parsnips, plant the

(Continued on page 7)



Landscape Gardening

From: Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener

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

Garden Checklist for September

Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist, TX AgriLife Extension Service

- ✓ Sustaining adequate moisture in the garden and landscape is the number one priority for late summer and fall. Water trees and shrubs by giving them at least one inch of water per week, delivered slowly, around the plants as far out as the "dripline" extends.
- ✓ Rejuvenate heat-stressed geraniums and begonias for the fall season by lightly pruning, fertilizing, and watering.
- ✓ Don't allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture. Hollies will frequently drop their fruit under drought conditions.
- ✓ Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning until midwinter. Pruning now may stimulate tender growth prior to frost.
- ✓ Divide spring-flowering perennials such as irises, Shasta daisies, gaillardias, cannas, day lilies, violets, liri-ope, and ajuga. Reset divisions into well prepared soil with generous amounts of organic material, worked into the top 8 to 10 inches. Water in thoroughly.
- ✓ Prepare the beds for spring-flowering bulbs as soon as possible. It is important to cultivate the soil and add generous amounts of organic matter to improve the water drainage. Bulbs will rot without proper drainage.
- ✓ Plantings at this time can provide landscape color for three seasons in central, east, and south Texas. Annuals set out early enough will bloom as soon as Thanksgiving, and frequently last until Memorial Day. Annuals that

should soon be available in nurseries and garden shops include petunias, calendulas, pansies, snapdragons, stock, sweet peas, and violas (from seed).

- ✓ Christmas cactus can be made to flower by supplying 12 hours of uninterrupted darkness and cool nights (55 degrees F.) for a month, starting in mid-October. Keep plants on the dry side for a month prior to treatment.
- ✓ Replenish mulches around trees and shrubs.
- ✓ Start cool-season vegetables, such as mustard, lettuce, arugula, broccoli, carrots, and turnips, from seed in well prepared beds.
- ✓ Harvest okra, peppers, squash, and other vegetables often to encourage production.

In the Vegetable Garden (Continued from page 6)

seeds ½ inch apart and ½ inch deep into the soil in rows. The rows should be at least 12 inches apart. This gives the growing parsnips room to grow



good roots. The tops of the plants may be up to three feet tall, so keep this in mind when you are planning for their mature size. The flavor of parsnips is enhanced with cold weather so they should be a great addition to a fall garden.

Remember, good soil preparation is a must for successful gardening. Com-

post and rainwater are invaluable to a garden. Master Gardeners will be offering composting and rainwater harvesting classes through Lighthouse for Learning this fall. See page eight for class descriptions and registration information.

Over the past 40 years of gardening here in Texas, we have tested many methods. We have found that with a little planning, we can have something to harvest in every season. So try not to work so hard in your garden. Let nature help you out. Take a little respite from labor and observe your space. Check out a few garden books from the library or surf ECMGA.com and other sites for ways to make your gardening easier and more productive. We've come to the conclusion that we do not make anything grow. We facilitate an environment in which seeds and plants appropriate to our area and

soil type have the best chance to flourish. Our garden is always evolving. There is a vegetable for every season, so select your favorite cool season varieties and get them planted in your garden.

For a list of vegetables appropriate for your area, go to http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/publications/veg_variety/ and select your county of choice. From there, you can search for specific vegetables or get a complete list of recommended varieties.





Light House for Learning

(With the Ellis County Master Gardeners)

For reservations, call Melissa Cobb at (972) 923-4631.

Register online at http://www.wisd.org/default.aspx?name=CO_LighthouseforLearning



Monday, September 24, 6:00—7:30 Basics of Plant Propagation. Learn how to start plants from seeds, from cuttings, or from simple plant division. Learn how to propagate your favorite rose bushes. Learn how to have more of the plants that you love for your garden and landscape at a fraction of the cost of purchasing them in a nursery. **Instructors:** Robert Shugart & Susan Norvell, Cost: \$12.00

Monday, October 1, 6:00—7:30 Herbs, From the Garden to the Kitchen. Which herbs do best in North Texas? What are some new varieties and how can I use them? How do I start an herb garden? What is the best way to preserve my fresh herbs to enjoy their flavors all winter? If you are interested in growing and using herbs, join us for an evening of aromas, flavors, and unique ways to enjoy herbs. You will learn to make herbal blends, compound butters, party dips, and more. Sample some yummy treats, such as lavender flavored strawberry jam, rose petal vinegar, and dilly jelly. You may even go home with some harvested herbs from the instructor's garden. **Instructor:** Arlene Hamilton, Cost: \$12.00

Monday, October 15, 6:00—7:30 Backyard Composting. Wondering what to do with all those leaves and grass clippings? Don't bag them! Fall is the perfect time to start a backyard compost pile and have rich organic matter for your garden and landscape next spring. Come learn how to get started. **Instructor:** Ginger Cole, Cost: \$12.00

Monday, October 22, 6:00—7:30 Turf Grasses for Ellis County. Do you have questions about your grass and how to care for it year round? This class will 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 and 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 29, 6:00—7:30 Tough Texas Plants. In North Texas, we have weather conditions that force us to choose plants that have extra fortitude. We either have too much rain, or no rain at all; and no one can forget about our extreme temperatures and lack of rain last summer. Come see a PowerPoint presentation on selected ornamental plants that have been designated "Flameproof" and have made the "North Texas Winners Circle" in the trial gardens at the Dallas Arboretum. **Instructor:** Maureen Nitkowski, Cost: \$12.00

Monday, December 3, 6:00-7:30, Vermi-Composting. 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. During the class, you will assemble your own worm bin, complete with worms, to take home so you can get started right away. There is a \$12.00 fee payable to the instructor at the beginning of class for supplies. **Instructor:** Susan Clark, Cost: \$12.00 + \$12.00 supply fee

ECMGA Amateur Photo Contest

The Ellis County Master Gardener Association announces its annual photo contest is under way beginning September 1, 2012. **Last date for submissions is March 1, 2013.**

Grab your cameras and get out in your yard, garden, and Ellis County and take your best shot! **You can submit up to five photos**, so you may want to submit photos from different seasons, as well as, your personal favorite. Vegetables and summer garden pictures are great, but don't forget to include beautiful fall and winter photos, too. Please **do not include** people in your photos.

For contest details and submission of entries, go to **Photo Contest** at www.ecmga.com. There is **no cost to enter** the contest, and photographers can enter up to **five photographs per category**. Prizes will be awarded to first, second, and third place in each of two categories: "single specimen" and "in the garden". Each winner will receive a gift certificate from one of the following businesses: Roland's Nursery or The Greenery in Waxahachie or EarthTones Greenery in Midlothian.

"Whew, are we done yet?"

*By Carolyn Foster
Ellis County Master Gardener*



As we begin to wind down from the heat, planting, plucking and maintaining thoughts turn to, "what's next, after I rest?" As we sit and marvel at what withstood the heat and drought... and what didn't, our minds drift toward what we will do differently next time. But first we need to clean the beds and prepare for the coming season. Many plants will last into the coolest days of fall with some TLC and tough love.

As annual flowers and veggies fade, pull them out. If you want to collect seeds or let some plants reseed, don't deadhead faded perennials, biennials, and annuals. Now is the time to divide and transplant daylilies, iris, peonies, cannas, violets, and many ground covers. You can start taking cuttings of your favorites to overwinter.

To keep gardens looking good year round, prune out any dead, damaged, or diseased wood in trees and shrubs. Also, prune suckers and water sprouts, but don't do any hard pruning at this time. You don't want to

encourage new growth prior to frost.

Keep deadheading roses. Remove weak, unproductive growth, and seed heads from crape myrtles and roses. This will stimulate a burst of beauty for the fall, but discontinue feeding. After that, as fall fades, roses will need to prepare themselves for winter dormancy. Continue a disease spray schedule on roses, as black spot and mildew can really damage them in September and October.

If you haven't ordered your bulbs yet, get to it. The best and most unique bulbs go fast. Plant lilies as they arrive. Plant bulbs that bloom early, middle, and late season for a constant, prolonged show. Rest indoor amaryllis bulbs in a dry, dark place, with no watering for a couple of months.

It's a good idea to prepare the beds for the spring-flowering bulbs as soon as possible. It's important to cultivate the soil and add organic matter to improve drainage. Bulbs will rot without proper drainage.

Plant wildflowers in early September and October. Some favorites are bluebonnet, Indian paintbrush, cone-flower, black-eyed Susan, and evening primrose.

Let's talk about getting houseplants ready to come back inside. Move them inside gradually in order to condition them before nights get cold. First, move them to a less sunny area for a couple of weeks. They will get used to less sunlight and will have less leaf drop and shock when moved indoors.

Now is a good time to repot, if necessary. It's also a good time to scrub pots and clean foliage with a good water bath. Pots and plants may need to be sprayed with an insecticide, except for citrus plants, scented geraniums, or other edibles. We want our plants clean and pest free before coming inside. The first week try to provide some fresh air to minimize environmental relocation shock.

Keep growing smart and enjoy the cooler weather!



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