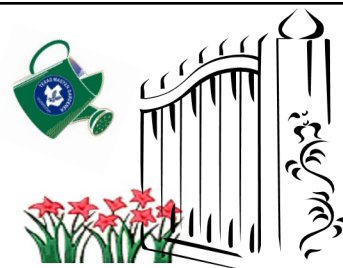




# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VII, Issue Nine

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

September, 2013

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](http://www.ECMGA.com), click on subscribe, and it will be sent around the 1st of every month. Best of all; it's FREE! Susan Clark, Editor

## What's Happening in September



**Every Saturday from March to December 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**!

**Thursday, September 5, 9am-5pm, Dogwood Canyon—Free First Thursday.** Enjoy FREE admission all day. Take part in guided hikes, animal encounters, and children's arts, and crafts activities. Located at 1206 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill, just south of Cedar Hill State Park entrance. For more info, go to: <http://tx.audubon.org/Dogwood.html>

**Sunday, September 15, 9am-11am, Dogwood Canyon—Photography Class.** Bring your camera and learn basic nature photography skills. Learn how to capture birds in flight, bugs on the ground, and perfect nature scenes. Free for members; \$10 for non-members. For more info, go to: <http://dogwoodcanyon.audubon.org/events>

**Monday, September 16, 8am, Wildflower & Bird Walk.** Members of the Indian Trail Master Naturalists will lead a combined Wildflower and Bird Walk. Please bring drinking water and binoculars. 1361 Onward Rd, Midlothian. Free to the public. Visit <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/> for info.

**Saturday, September 21, 9am-12pm, Cedar Ridge Preserve—Conservation in Action Workday.** Volunteers help remove non-native plants, restore trails, and work in the butterfly garden. Water, snacks, pruning shears, shovels, and work gloves provided. Contact: [info\\_CRP@yahoo.com](mailto:info_CRP@yahoo.com) or visit [www.audubondallas.org](http://www.audubondallas.org). Location: 7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas.

**Saturday, September 21, Dallas Arboretum to open Rory Meyers Children's Adventure.** The 8-acre garden will feature over 150 interactive exhibits including areas to explain how energy comes from water, the sun and wind; a wetland; a Texas Skywalk; a Discovery Center that will include a 30-foot globe that will show Pangaea, the solar system, and major weather events. Visit <http://www.dallasarboretum.org/> for more info.

**Monday, September 23, 7pm-8pm, Indian Trail Master Naturalists presents "Defining Wildscapes, their value, and how to implement and maintain your own!"** with Derek Broman, Urban Wildlife Biologist for Texas Parks and Wildlife Texas Wildscapes. The program is free and follows the 6 p.m. Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. It takes place at the Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Parkway, Red Oak. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email [ellis-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:ellis-tx@tamu.edu)

**Botanical Research Institute of Texas**  
1700 University Drive, Fort Worth  
(817) 332-4441 <http://www.brit.org/>

**Saturday, September 7, 10am-2pm, BRIT First Saturday.** Enjoy tours, children's activities, vendors and booths, farmers market, and a special program. September's pro-

(Continued on page 9)

TEXAS A&M  
**AGRI LIFE**  
EXTENSION



## Listen to KBEC

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

The Ellis County Master Gardeners have a 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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### Earth-Kind® Landscape: Fertilizers

- ☼ Lawn and garden experts have long-known that plants, especially turfgrass, benefit from the regular application of supplemental fertilizers. Balancing the benefits of plant fertilizers with their environmental impacts has become an important issue for communities throughout Texas and the U.S.
- ☼ Eutrophication is the term used to describe an increase in the concentration of chemical nutrients entering an ecosystem. Depending on how much eutrophication occurs in surface and groundwater, negative environmental impacts like depleted oxygen levels (anoxia) and decreases in water quality, fish, and other animal populations may occur.
- ☼ To learn more about Earth-Kind® Landscape Fertilizers, click on the Resource tab at [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com). Click on Earth-Kind® for detailed information.

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

### Planting

- ☼ Plant fall-blooming annuals from bedding plants such as marigolds, petunias, asters, dianthus, pincushion flowers (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 flowers, and lantana). Likewise, vines such as coral, honeysuckle, cross vine, trumpet vine, and wisteria can be planted.
- ☼ Dig and divide spring-blooming perennials such as iris, daylilies, cone-flowers, 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.

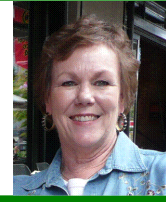
### Garden Watch

- ☼ Spray roses for black spot and mildew, which 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.



## Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



### **Broomweed**—Sunflower Family (Asteraceae)

*Amphiachyris dracunculoides* (DC.)

**Region:** 1 – 10 (Ellis County is Region 4)

**Size:** 6 – 36 inches

**Blooms:** June through November, Annual

Broomweed grows from a single slender stem, branching to form a loose mass in the upper part. Its tiny, yellow, daisy-like flowers measure about a half-inch across and are scattered over the plant. From seven to fifteen ray flowers surround the yellow disk flowers.

Very narrow, linear leaves alternate up the stem, becoming fewer and shorter toward the top. Often an indicator of overgrazed pasture, broomweed can cover hundreds of acres. It is toxic to livestock, remaining where more palatable plants are no longer seen.

## Rose Pruning: Now or Later?

*By Jackie Wilhite  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



Ask a dozen gardeners when to prune a rose and there are likely to be a dozen different answers. Ideally, pruning should take place any time in the month of February for most roses in our area. (This does not apply to climbing roses or miniatures.) So, why are we talking about February gardening chores in September? We have all noticed roses that become overgrown for their surroundings or missed a good pruning. These are the ones we are talking about.

This standard of pruning in February has recently been challenged by rose growers in states with severe heat issues (probably tired of looking at rose bushes suffering in the heat). They say that the roses benefit from pruning during the hot summer months because it induces a kind of dormancy that benefits the rose.

They also believe this improves their appearance for the cooler temperatures of fall thru winter in their milder climate state. This is the opposite of what we

have always been told. So, if it needs to be pruned, prune it. Keep in mind that taking off one third of the plant is adequate at any time.

The plant does not need fertilizer at this time. Keeping the plants mulched is a much better way to maintain their health. Save the fertilizer to awaken them in the spring time.

The techniques for pruning can be almost as varied as the ones on timing. Most plans for cutting back roses begin at the base of the plant. If you can't see the ground beneath, this is the best place to start.

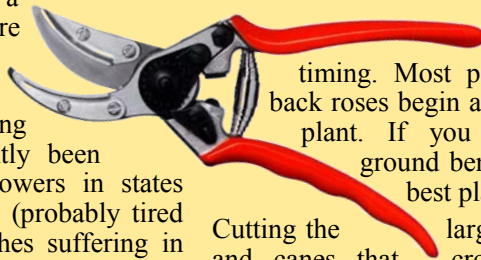
Cutting the larger older canes and canes that cross or rub will improve air and sunlight to the bottom of the plant. Take off any limbs or eradicate growth that overhang walkways or threaten people passing by. When these canes are removed, it doesn't take long for the shape of the plant to improve. Most of the time, it is hard to detect where limbs were removed because the

overcrowding has been replaced with limbs relaxing into a natural form.

When deadheading roses (taking off only the spent blooms), a hedge clipper or garden shear works great. When deadheading Knock-Out roses (always optional), you have to be fast. If you wait too long, the plant puts out new shoots and gets ready to re-bloom.

Training or trimming climbing roses or rambles will require waiting until they have finished their bloom cycle, which can range from spring until late summer.

Think of rose pruning as an experiment that you must try for yourself. According to the American Rose Society, when in doubt—cut it out. To quote my mother when she gave us haircuts, "it will grow back". You be the judge as you develop your own methods and timelines.



## Herb of the Month

By Arlene Hamilton  
Ellis County Master Gardener



### Herb of the Month—Goldenrod (*Solidago odora*)

Goldenrod, Sweet Goldenrod, is a perennial herb producing beautiful golden flowers in the late summer and early fall. Goldenrod has always held a special place in my heart. It is the official flower of September, my birth month, and in the mountains of western Pennsylvania where I grew up, it filled the pastures with a blanket of color as a prelude of the autumn colors to come.

The fresh green leaves and flowers of the fall-blooming, sweet goldenrod smell and taste like licorice or anise. After the colonists dumped the British tea into Boston Harbor in 1773, they used *Solidago odora* as an ingredient in what came to be known as Liberty Tea. Today one of America's best and most unusual herbal teas is all but forgotten.



The flavor of the fresh plant is far superior to the dried leaves and flowers. Goldenrods are perennials, so don't pull the roots. For sweet goldenrod tea, collect and rinse several cups of

leaves and flowers. Place the fresh herbs in a pot and pour boiling water over them. For two cups of fresh plant, use four cups water. Let the tea

steep for 20 minutes, then strain. Drink it hot or cold with a bit of honey or lemon.

To make Sweet Goldenrod

Jelly, use a cup of tea, two tablespoons of powdered pectin, and 3/4 cup sugar. Add the pectin to the tea and heat to a rolling boil, stirring continuously. Add the sugar and reheat to a rolling boil. Stir and boil one minute. Pour into sterilized jelly jars and seal. If you like licorice, you will love this.

If you are allergic to pollen, use only the leaves. Hay fever sufferers frequently blame goldenrod, and alt-

hough the pollen is an allergenic, these plants do not generally produce enough airborne pollen to be a problem. Ragweed and molds cause most of the fall hay fever problems.

The oil extracted from the sweet goldenrod leaves has been used in perfumes. Besides producing a delightful beverage and aroma, the yellow flowers yield a bright yellow dye for wool and yarns.

When I have had the pleasure of visiting my family farm in Pennsylvania in September, I have gathered flowers and brought them to Waxahachie for a dye bath. The resulting golden wool

fleece is part of the display in Bethlehem Revisited, in the shop of Anna, the Dyer and Spinner of Cloth.

Thomas Edison promoted the use of the latex of several gold-

enrod plants for rubber production. At least one Texas variety, *Solidago altissima*, contains enough hydrocarbons to have commercial potential. Goldenrod grows throughout the eastern United States. More than 20 varieties are at home in Texas.



Save The Date!  
Saturday, March 29, 2014



The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt,  
head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture  
a garden is to feed not just the body,  
but the soul.

Alfred Austin



## Landscape Gardening

From: Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener

Ellis County Master Gardeners have a website at [www.ecmga.com](http://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.

### Sowing Seed for Fall Transplants

by Bill Adams, County Extension Horticulturist, ret'd TX AgriLife Ext. Service

If you haven't already done so, this is the time to begin sowing seeds for fall transplants. By starting seeds now, you can have pansies, calendulas, Johnnie-jump-ups, flowering cabbage, and flowering kale, as well as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, lettuce, and other cool-season transplants ready to plant in the garden in September or early October.

If starting your own transplants has been disastrous for you in the past, especially in the spring, then take heart because starting fall transplants is easier. Since the soil is not as cool as it is in spring, there is not much damping-off disease. Gardeners are able to start the transplants outside where they can get plenty of sunlight. However, it is best if the transplants don't get too much sun—morning sun and afternoon shade make a good combination.

Although many containers can be used to grow seeds in, the most convenient I've found is the foam coffee cup. Simply poke three to four holes in the side at the bottom of the cup. Write the name of the variety being planted on the side of the cup; it will remain there without getting lost, as so often happens if you use labels. An additional advantage of the coffee cups is that they're white and reflect heat.

The next major concern is a potting soil mix. Many standard potting soils will work fairly well, but you can make your own. To one bushel each of vermiculite and peat moss (finely ground pine bark can be substituted for peat moss), add 10 tablespoons of 0-20-0 (superphosphate) and 1/2 cup of a garden fertilizer such as 12-24-12.

Mix the material thoroughly, scooping into the bottom and throwing each shovelful on the top, pyramid fashion, or roll the mixture back and forth in an old tarp. The soil should be watered down slightly so it's damp but not soggy.

Most seeds should be barely covered with the soil mix, but some tiny seeds like lettuce need not be covered at all. Water them in thoroughly by setting them in a pan of water and allowing the cup to soak from the bottom. After they drain, put them in a plastic bag out of the sunlight. Within a few days, the seedlings will begin to make growth. As soon as this happens, you'll need to get the containers out of the bags and into a well ventilated area. As the seedlings begin to grow, use any soluble houseplant fertilizer to keep them growing vigorously.

If you've had problems with disease in the past, you might want to use a fungicide twice, once at planting and again at germination. Before you know it, you'll have a pot full of tiny seedlings that can either be transplanted into individual containers or, if there aren't too many in a pot, you can hold them until it's time to go into the garden.

Perhaps the simplest technique is to plant two or three seeds in each pot, then thin them to one plant after a few weeks.

If you go the transplanting route, be sure that you handle the young seedling only

by the leaves. If you grasp the stem and damage it to any extent, the young seedling will be stunted. Pots for transplants should be filled to within 1/4 inch of the rim. A pencil can be used to make a hole in the center of the potting soil mixture. This is where a little moisture is critical, since a dry soil won't allow the hole to stay open. Carefully lower the seedling roots into the hole, and then use the pencil again to firm the soil against the root system. Be sure to water the plants carefully, uprighting any that get buried in the soil. Before you know it, you'll be eating your own delicious homegrown broccoli.

### Garden Checklist for September

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

◆ Keep a good lookout for pests at this time. As old vegetables, bean vines, etc. are pulled up and discarded in the compost heap, insects such as stink bugs and leaf footed bugs will disperse to linger on nearby plants.

◆ Now is the time to fertilize clumps of established warm-weather, small-flowered narcissus such as 'Grand Primo' or 'Earlicheer' (pictured left). They will send out fresh roots first, then the foliage will appear.

◆ Rejuvenate heat-stressed geraniums and begonias for the fall season by lightly pruning, fertilizing, and watering.

◆ Break off healthy shoots of such annuals as coleus, ornamental chardreuse or maroon sweet potatoes or geraniums (pelargoniums) and pot them to provide new plants to carry through the winter in the greenhouse or enclosed porch area.

◆ 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, liriope, and ajuga. Reset divisions into well prepared soil with generous amounts of organic material worked into the top eight to ten inches.

◆ 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

(Continued on page 6)



## "Whew, are we done yet?"

By Carolyn Foster  
Ellis County Master Gardener



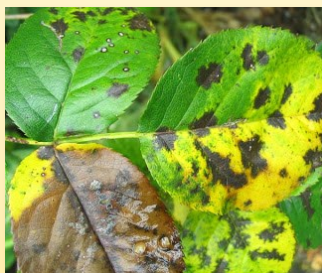
As we began to wind down from the heat, planting, plucking and maintaining, thoughts turn to, "What's next, after I rest?" As we sit and marvel at what withstood the heat and drought and what didn't, our minds drift toward what we will do differently next time.

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.

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 also the time to divide and transplant daylilies, irises, peonies, cannas, violets, and many ground covers. We can start taking cuttings of our favorites to overwinter at this time.

To keep our gardens looking good year-round, look for any dead, damaged, or diseased wood in trees and shrubs and prune it out. Also include suckers and water sprouts. But no hard pruning now so we don't encourage new growth prior to frost.

Keep deadheading roses and remove weak, unproductive growth and seed heads from crape myrtles and roses. This will stimulate a burst of beauty for the fall, but stop 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 (*left*) and mildew (*above*) can really damage them in September and October.

If you haven't ordered your bulbs, get to it!

The best and most unique bulbs go fast. Plant lilies as they arrive and 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 also 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, coneflower, black-eyed Susan and evening primrose.

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

Now is a good time to repot, if needed. 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 for minimum environmental relocation shock.

Keep growing smart and enjoy the cooler weather! It will be here soon.

### Landscape Gardening (Continued from page 5)

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 (*pictured right*), and violas (from seed).



- Continue a disease-spray schedule on roses, as blackspot and mildew can be

extremely damaging in September and October. Funginex, used every 7 to 14 days, will usually give excellent control.

- 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, and water every three to five days.

- Start cool-season vegetables, such as mustard, lettuce, arugula, broccoli, carrots, and turnips, from seed in well pre-

pared beds.

- Harvest okra, peppers, squash, and other vegetables often to encourage production.



Okra and Arugula

## 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](http://www.wisd.org/default.aspx?name=CO_LighthouseforLearning)



**Monday, October 7, 6:00–7:30 Herbs, From the Garden to the Kitchen** If you are interested in growing and using herbs, please join us for an evening of aromas, flavors, and unique ways to enjoy herbs. Learn to make herbal blends, compound butters, party dips, and more. The instructor will bring plants to share and maybe a tasty sample. Instructor: Arlene Hamilton Cost: \$12.00

**Thursday, October 10, 6:00–7:30 Best Trees for North Texas** Marilyn will share her favorite trees, teach you when to plant, and help you with location, size of tree at maturity, planting tips, trees for fall color, and trees for spring flowers. This workshop is especially designed and directed to the residents of Ellis County and the North Central Texas growing area. Instructor: Marilyn Simmons Cost: \$12.00

**Monday, October 21, 6:00-7:30 Firewise Landscaping** If you live near a rural area, or an area with a history of fire, you know that wildfires are a part of nature. There are things you can do to increase the chances of your structures surviving a nearby fire in the absence of firefighters. Leave class with a list of resources and materials that will help you evaluate your surroundings and take responsibility for reducing the available fuel around your home. Instructor: Lee Dann Cost: \$12.00

**Monday, October 28, 6:00–7:30 Adding Bulbs to Your Garden** This class will deal with the various types of flowering bulbs that are available, how to make the best selections for your garden and location, when to plant them, and how to maintain them. Fall is the best time to plant your bulbs to bloom in spring! Instructor: Monica Nyenhuis. Cost: \$12.00

**Monday, November 4, 6:00–7:30 pm Drip Irrigation–The Basics** Drip irrigation is the most efficient way to water gardens and trees and it is the system that makes the most sense in terms of conserving and limiting water use. In this hands-on class you will learn the types of equipment used in drip systems, how to design a drip system, and how to install and maintain the system. Instructor: Jim Goss. Cost: \$12.00

**Tuesdays, October 8-29 four classes 6:00-8:00 “Ag 101”–Beginning Farmer/Rancher** Join this experienced instructor as you cover topics: soils and soil fertility, soil testing, pasture management, basic live- stock productions and pond management. This class will be held at the Ellis County Texas A&M Agri Life Extension Office at 701 S. I-35E, Suite 3. Instructor: Mark Arnold, County Ext. Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources Cost: \$22.00



## ECMGA Amateur Photo Contest

The Ellis County Master Gardener Association's annual photo contest is underway beginning September 1, 2013. **The last date for submissions is March 1, 2014.**

Time to 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 a complete list of contest details, go to [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com) and click on the **Photo Contest** link on the front page. 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.

## Two Ways to Grow Spinach – From Seed to Table

With Susan Knapp  
Ellis County Master Gardener



I love spinach! Well, maybe love is a strong word, but I sure do like it and it goes well with lots of other things. Plus, spinach is super easy to grow! This year I'll be growing spinach in my winter garden; some in the ground and some in containers.

Central Texas is the perfect place to grow spinach because of our slightly alkaline soils, 6.5 to 7.5 pH. Spinach is a cool season crop and one of the best times to plant in our area is between September 15 and October 25. The soil needs to be below 75 degrees for good germination.

### Types of Spinach

There are three types of spinach: Flat, Crinkled (Savoy) and semi-crinkled (semi-Savoy.) The flat and semi-crinkled are best for canning, while the crinkled and semi-crinkled are best for using fresh.

Some of the varieties known to grow well in our area are Bloomsdale, Tyee, Fall Green, Melody, Hybrid 7 and Samish. I plan to plant Bloomsdale in my raised bed and Melody in my containers.

### Growing Spinach in the Ground

Of course, the foundation for a good spinach crop starts with a rich soil full of organic matter. This is a great place to use your compost. Add a good dose of organic fertilizer to your soil and you'll be set. \*Caution: Spinach has a delicate flavor and it's best to use a slow release fertilizer to avoid a metallic, off-taste often produced by fast-acting chemical fertilizers, especially those high in nitrogen.

Some gardeners soak the spinach seeds in water for 8 to 10 hours prior to planting to boost germination. Plant the seeds ½ inch deep in rows and cover with fine soil. Once planted the soil should be kept moist but don't over water. Spinach will quickly rot if left in wet soggy soil. In about a week to ten days you should see the first signs of

germinating seeds. When the seedlings are about two inches tall, thin to six inches apart. To keep fresh spinach coming, I plan to plant a new crop every week during the winter as I harvest. Spinach is quite cold hardy and established plants can take temps down into the low 20s. Use a lightweight row cover fabric to keep your spinach growing throughout the winter.

### Growing Spinach in Containers

The same rules apply when planting spinach in containers, with a few exceptions. Potting mix, which is a mix of

bagged loopers and general leaf eating caterpillars and beetles as well as aphids can be a problem. Using a lightweight row cover will help prevent or minimize pest damage.

### How to Harvest

Plants should be ready for harvest in six to eight weeks. If you have a large plot or have been planting succession plants, you may want to pull the whole plant. Otherwise, you should cut the leaves about one inch from the ground to encourage a new flush of leaves.

### My Favorite Uses for Spinach

Spinach is one of the *superfoods*, which means it is low in calories and high in nutrition. Use it raw in salads or on sandwiches. Steam it with a little olive oil and you'll never buy another can of

spinach. It's a great addition to soups, stews, pizzas, pastas, and the list goes on.

**Pan Steamed Spinach.** Spinach cooks quickly! Use a dutch oven or large pan and add 1 to 2 tablespoons of butter or olive oil, place over medium heat. Add 1 lb. of well cleaned spinach to the pan. Turn and toss the spinach frequently for about a minute using two spatulas. Place a lid on the pot for two to three minutes. Remove from heat, toss again, season and serve. Remember that spinach will reduce considerably as it cooks. Enjoy!



sterile soil, perlite, vermiculite and mature compost, should be used in the container. Don't use garden soil in a container because it contains clay and has a tendency to hold too much water, which will prevent the plants from getting oxygen at the root level, in other words they will rot. For best result, the pot should be at least 8 inches deep and 10 to 12 inches wide. Spinach plants are known to be heavy feeders, so give them 15-15-15 or 19-5-9 slow-release fertilizer according to package instructions every 2 weeks. For the organic gardener, a side dressing of compost manure or feeding with compost tea about every two weeks is recommended. When watering be sure water comes through the holes in the container to avoid a buildup of nitrogen.

### Pests and Diseases

Like other plants, spinach may be susceptible to fungal diseases. One of the best ways to avoid this is to plant a disease-resistant variety such as those listed earlier. Cab-



*What's Happening (Continued from page 1)*

gram is **Kochi Makino: An Amazing Botanical Garden in Japan**. Activities will include: a kimono fashion show, a Bonsai tree exhibit, a traditional tea demonstration, origami, calligraphy and more! For more info, visit <http://www.brit.org/events/more-children-families>.

**Saturday, September 7, 10am–12:30pm, Salsa with the Expert.** Learn the secret to making your own fabulous, fresh, organic salsas. Doug Renfro from Renfro Foods will teach us how to make classic red, fruit, and verde salsas to take home in decorative containers. Tasting during class IS allowed! Members: \$55/Non-members \$50. To register, visit <http://www.brit.org/education/more-learners>

**Tuesday, September 10, 6pm, BRIT presents the documentary “The New Frontier: Sustainable Ranching in the American West”.** This special event is being co-hosted by the Lone Star Film Society and BRIT. Both of the Directors, Dr. Irene Klaver and Melinda Levin, University of North Texas, will be onsite to answer questions! Free to the public.

**Brumley Gardens, Bishop Arts Location**

700 West Davis, Dallas, (214) 942-0794

<http://www.brumleygardens.com/home/>

**Thursdays are Senior Citizen Day!** Receive 25% off your purchase! \*May not be combined with any other offer.

**Saturday, September 7, 10am, Brown Thumb Gardening.** Free class! Confused about gardening? Let us show you how to start on a budget and have success! Learn about easy plants and vegetables for beginners to grow. Learn how gardening can be a relaxing and fulfilling hobby.

**Saturday, September 14, 10am, Composting.** Free class! Learn how easy composting can be and all the benefits it can bring! We will teach you the easy steps to laying a good foundation to composting so it can create its magic and keep it hassle free for you! **Please pre-register** for classes by calling Charlotte at (214) 343-4900 or email [cmartin@brumleygardens.com](mailto:cmartin@brumleygardens.com).

**Texas Discovery Gardens**

3601 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Dallas

[TexasDiscoveryGardens.org](http://TexasDiscoveryGardens.org)

**Sunday, September 8, 2pm, Discovery Stroll and Book Signing featuring Geyata Ajilvsgi.** Renowned author and naturalist, Geyata Ajilvsgi presents her brand new book, Butterfly Gardening for Texas. Enjoy a stroll through our butterfly house and gardens, followed by a Q&A and book signing at 2:30. Books available for sale at our Gift Shop. Free Admission. RSVP to [SGardner@TexasDiscoveryGardens.org](mailto:SGardner@TexasDiscoveryGardens.org) if you'd like to reserve a book (\$37.89).

**Saturday, September 14, 9am–10am, Plant Sale Safaris.** This pre-sale tour our Director of Horticulture, Roger Sanderson, shows you how to incorporate native and adapted plants into your landscape. Learn about the environmental conditions they thrive in and the beneficial insects they attract. \$15, \$10 for TDG Members. Advance registration strongly encouraged.

**Saturday, September 14, 10am–2 pm, Fall Plant Sale.** Rare native pollinator-friendly plants are our specialty. Enjoy native and adapted plants that are hard to find in local nurseries! Members also receive 10% off plants.

**Saturday, September 14, 11am, Garden Explorers Walk.** Get out in the garden on this family friendly walk! Take a garden tour with our garden docent and search for squirrels' nests, hungry caterpillars, frogs and butterflies in the great outdoors. It ends in time for you to catch the Butterfly Release talk at noon in our conservatory. Included with admission.

Lawn & Garden Expo



Ellis County Master Gardener

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Contact James Kocian at  
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**Reserve the date: March 29, 2014!**

What have your Ellis County Master Gardeners been up to this summer?

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in the 4th of July Parade!**



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