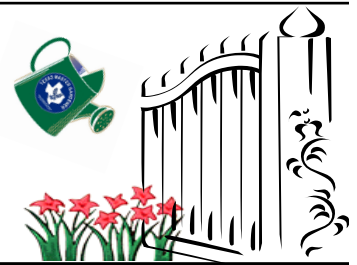




# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume VIII, Issue Six

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

June, 2015

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) and click on subscribe. It will be sent around the first of every month. Best of all; it's FREE! Susan Clark, Editor

## Every Saturday from April to October from 8am-1pm.



410 S. Rogers (across from City Hall in the old lumberyard building)  
Visit the Master Gardeners' Booth!

- ☼ Different theme every week with samples or activities for adults/kids
- ☼ 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!

## Here's what's happening at the Farmers Market in June

**June 6th is What's Baking Day.** We have several bakers at the market who offer great treats. Stop by Temptingly Sweet Confections to sample the decadent cream cheese brownies and take some home along with fruit muffins, pecan tassies and more. At Jim's Produce, come early, buy a fried pie and Jim will treat you to free coffee plus he'll have all your favorite breads and more. At We Garden you'll always find coconut-blueberry muffins, shortbread, chocolate chip cookies and sourdough English muffins. Yellow Farmhouse has wonderful grains if you are a baker. So come visit and see what's baking.

**June 13th is second Saturday of the month, which means Kid's Activity Day.** Master Naturalists will help kids make bird cookies. If you have kids or grandkids, be sure to stop by. The selection of veggies is growing now that the sun is shining so come by and visit everyone. The master gardener booth will have sedums for sale...a good no fuss plant option especially good for those claiming not to have a green thumb!

**June 20th is A Healthy You Day.** The Farmers Market is a great place for lots of healthy items from locally grown vegetables, fruits and whole grains to tamales made with good-for-you ingredients to essential oils, sun protecting hats, plants and more. Check out the Master Gardener booth for new varieties of sedum...Remember Father's day is Sunday, the 21st so consider having Dad's favorite knives sharpened by Vance.

**June 27th is Eat Your Greens Day.** Sample great tasting salads and take home recipes at the Master Gardeners booth. We love sharing with you and hearing what you like. The market is overflowing with locally grown produce so bring your Waxahachie Farmers Market bag and fill up! The MG booth will have more sedum...new varieties are hard to resist.



Join the **Indian Trail Master Naturalists** at their monthly meeting on **Monday, June 22**. Attend the program **Wildlife Management Tax Evaluations** by **Brett Johnson, Urban Wildlife Biologist**. Looking for a way to maintain your "open space" tax valuation, other than just cattle or haying? The program will cover the basics of enrolling and maintaining a "wildlife" tax valuation. **NOTE Location Change:** Waxahachie Parks and Recreation Building, 401 S. Elm St. (corner of S. Elm and W. Madison), Waxahachie. The program is free and follows the 6 p.m. Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email [ellis-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:ellis-tx@tamu.edu)



One of our sponsors, **The Greenery in Waxahachie** will be holding a summer auction on Friday, June 26 and Saturday, June 27. For details, call The Greenery at (972) 617-5459 or check their website at <http://www.thegreenerytx.com/auction.html>.

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## Listen to KBEC

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

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

Melinda Kocian

## Inside this issue:

<i>It's June, What Needs to be Done?</i>	2
<i>Wildflower of the Month</i>	3
<i>Recipe of the Month</i>	3
<i>In the Vegetable Garden</i>	4
<i>Beautiful Natural Landscapes</i>	5
<i>Lavender</i>	6
<i>ECMGA Awards and Specialists</i>	7
<i>ECMGA 2015 Scholarship Awards</i>	8
<i>Growing Smart!</i>	9
<i>Landscape Gardening</i>	10
<i>ECMGA Garden Tour 2015</i>	10



## MINT

Mint is available all year-round, but it is most abundant in the warm summer months. Make the most of this versatile herb's cooling and refreshing properties. Mint comes in over 30 varieties. It gets its name from *Menthe*, a Greek mythical character.

Mint is as tasty as it is healthy. The essential oil is widely used in manufactured products such as toothpaste, shower gel and medicines for its naturally antibacterial and cooling qualities. In cooking, add mint sprigs to cooking water or incorporate the chopped leaves into a dish to make the most of this herb's aromatic, flavorful and digestive abilities.

## WATERMELONS

**Watermelons** are members of the cucurbit group, first cousins to squash, cucumbers and gourds. They prefer sandy soil, but will grow in most types. They need warm weather and plenty of water. It is best to mulch your melons to keep the fruit from coming in contact with the soil and to also conserve moisture. Watermelon vines will climb and spread to over 20 feet and therefore need lots of room. To harvest, check the white spot under the melon. When it turns a dull yellow, it is time to pick.

Spring planting is March 25–May 1 and fall planting is June 15–July 1. Recommended varieties: Crimson Sweet, Sugar Baby, Legacy 800's, Royal Sweet, Orange Golden, Star Brite, Tendersweet (orange meat), Desert King (yellow meat), Black Diamond, Royal Jubilee.

Triplod or seedless (transplants only): Jack of Hearts, Supersweet 5032 and Tiffany.

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

### Planting

- ♦ Buy and plant crepe myrtles in bloom to be certain you have the desired color. They come in a wide range of varieties, colors and sizes. Look for ones that are resistant to powdery mildew. Aphids can cause a sticky sappy substance on leaves; control with a strong spray of water.
- ♦ Plant seeds for fall tomato transplants in containers; however, get the type that mature early.
- ♦ This is the best time to plant vinca (periwinkle) in full sun. They like the hot weather, but DO NOT overwater! Cora is a vinca that is resistant to soil-borne diseases. It comes in many colors except yellow. A new caladium called Red Flash is worth trying. Aaron is a white variety that can take some exposure to the sun. Water with drip irrigation or soaker hose to keep water off the foliage.
- ♦ Warm season color or foliage plants can still be used in containers or in the ground. Use four-inch or larger nursery stock and keep them well watered. Containers may need water twice a day.

### Fertilizing and Pruning

- ♦ Prune back autumn sage and mealy cup sage by one-third their size. Deadhead salvias, as well as annuals and perennials, to stimulate more growth to allow the plant to continue re-blooming until late fall.
- ♦ Continue to prune as necessary, fall blooming plants such as Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*), Mountain sage (*Salvia reglia*), Mexican mint marigold, copper canyon daisies, asters and mums to keep them compact and prevent buds from forming prematurely. Don't prune after September when buds begin to form.
- ♦ This is the second time to use an all-nitrogen, slow-release fertilizer on turf grasses. Cut the amount by half to prevent excessive growth, which means more water and more mowing!
- ♦ Fertilize container plants and hanging baskets with a water-soluble fertilizer every one to two weeks.

### Garden Watch

- ♦ Insects and diseases will be prevalent this time of the year. Spider mites can be especially troublesome at this time. Treat with an appropriate organic or chemical pesticide, if needed.
- ♦ Vegetable plants that cannot be salvaged should be pulled up and destroyed.
- ♦ Look for small, spindle-shaped bags hanging from trees. These are bagworms. Pull them off by hand. Insecticides are not effective once the bag has formed. They are usually found on cedars, cypress and other cone-bearing trees. However, they can be found on other plants including oaks and barberries. They multiply, can defoliate a tree and eventually kill it.





## Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



Blackfoot Daisy, Sunflower Family (Asteraceae)  
*Melampodium leucanthum* T. & G.

Region: 5, 7-10

Size: 1 foot

Blooms: March through November, Perennial

Blackfoot daisy is one of the most drought-tolerant plants in Texas. It blooms from spring through summer, on gravelly or rocky soils, in cracks of rocks and on slopes and ledges.

In flower, it looks like a little white bouquet along the roadside. Each branch of the woody stems ends in a single, one-inch flower head, centered with a yellow disk. The seven to thirteen petals are notched at the tips. Look just under each petal to see a small bract, shaped like a foot. These bracts turn black at maturity; thus the common name. The linear leaves of blackfoot daisies are opposite, narrow and may be slightly lobed. Short, rough hairs coat the leaves and stems.

### Watermelon Pie

*By Melinda Kocian*

3 oz. package watermelon Jell-O  
¼ cup boiling water  
12 oz. container Cool Whip  
2 cups cubed watermelon, seedless  
1 graham crust

Warm a bowl by pouring hot water into the bowl; pour water out.

Pour boiling water into bowl, add Jell-O, stir until dissolved. Cool to room temperature.

Wisk in Cool Whip; fold in watermelon. Spoon into the crust. Refrigerate 2 hours or until set.



Find us on:  
**facebook®**

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

Use our page as your point of contact to ask us gardening questions or get information about flowers, vegetables and herbs...we cover it all! Some of the recent articles posted have helpful info regarding the recent heavy rains, strategies to control mosquitoes, info about the upcoming garden tour, taking care of your trees and ways to use herbs to care for your pets. You can also post pictures and let us know what is happening in your gardens and landscape.

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

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



**Save The Date!**  
**Saturday, March 26, 2016**



## IN THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

*With Robert Shugart*  
*Ellis County Master Gardener*



### SWEET CORN

As every 5th Grader knows the Indians introduced corn to the pilgrims in the 1500's. The plant was probably a mix between field corn and maize. It was very starchy and lacking in flavor. Our field corn was produced primarily for livestock. Today's corn is used for cornstarch, corn syrup, and alcohol products (for fuel, not to drink). I digress. Sweet corn was probably brought up to us from South America.



**Figure 1. Plant corn in several short rows, not in one or two long rows.**

I hope you have had the experience of eating a good sweet corn fresh from the garden. Good quality sweet corn can't be purchased from the "big box" grocers because it begins to lose its flavor within hours of harvest.

I hope you decide to try sweet corn in your garden. Good quality soil is always important, but corn has shallow roots so deep tillage is not as important as for other crops. Corn is a heavy feeder and about one pound of complete fertilizer per 100 square feet should be turned into the soil before it is planted.

One of the most important procedures is to plant corn in blocks rather than in one or two long rows. Corn is wind pollinated so good density increases the potential for good pollination and full ears.

Begin planting as soon as the soil temperature reaches 50°F with rows about 30 inches apart. Early farmers used the old saying, "Plant your corn when the leaves on your oak tree are the size of a mouse's ear." (obviously not a Live Oak Tree).

Planting dates: For spring, after all danger of frost has passed (Mar 15–Apr 30). Extra sweet varieties should be planted when soil temperature reaches 60 to 65°F. For fall crop, plant 80-90 days before first average frost date (Jun 1–Aug 15). Fall maturing sweet corn will almost always be the highest quality since cool nights increase sugar content.

If the soil is dry, water two to three days before planting. Plant three to four seeds per foot and thin to one per foot. This is important to improve yield and quality.

When plants are about 12 inches tall, "dirt" them. That means to pull dirt up on to the roots to help them stand up to the wind better. Follow up with side dressing with a nitrogen (21/0/0) fertilizer at the rate of about a third of a cup per 35 feet of row. Work it into the soil about six inches on both sides of the row and water it in. Do this again when they are about half grown.

Make sure your plants don't suffer from moisture stress. Leaves will sometimes curl in the early part of the day if they need water. Mulching will help with moisture and weed control.

Corn Ear Worms are a problem and will infect most ears unless controlled. The ears can be treated with Sevin dust on the silks as soon as the silks appear and every week till harvest. Some folks prefer a few drops of a "food quality" mineral oil or BT (*bacillus thuringiensis*) instead of Sevin dust. That said, a fellow Master Gardener (Bob Osborne) recommended G90 sweet corn because it seems to be resistant to ear worms. I am glad to say that it worked well for me last year. If you do have ear worms, they are usually limited to the very top of the cob and it can be broken off when shucking.



Corn will be ready to harvest about three weeks after the silks appear and the silks have darkened. To test, press your thumb nail into a plump kernel. It will burst with a milky white juice if it is ready. It is best harvested in the cool of the morning.

To cook: Bring water to a rolling boil, add corn, bring back to a boil and cook for three to four minutes. With or without butter and salt, sweet corn is a rare treat.



Creating Beautiful Natural Landscapes  
With Susan Knapp  
Ellis County Master Gardener



As I'm writing this, I look out at my yard covered with one to two inches of standing water, and it's hard to imagine that we will be searching the skies for rain clouds in a short month or two. Because I know this, it's important to write an article about xeriscaping now.

Xeriscape, pronounced zera-scape, is derived from the Greek word Xeros meaning "dry." The term was coined by Denver Water Department in 1981 as they developed seven principles for low water landscaping and water conservation.

Although the term is familiar now, many people continue to have the idea that xeriscaping means a landscape limited to cactus and rocks. Fortunately that is not true and many are learning that xeriscaping is an environmentally friendly, water-conserving form of landscaping that uses a variety of native and drought-tolerant plants, shrubs, and ground cover.

It's estimated that at least 25 percent of water use in urban areas is for lawn care during the hottest part of the year. The seven xeriscaping principles that were developed in Denver in 1981 are the same principles we continue to use today. Each principle is listed below:

1. **Planning and Design.** This is the foundation for any landscape and no less in xeriscaping. Draw a plan on graph paper, making special note of direction (north, south, east, west). Observe your landscape for areas of sun, shade and limiting structures such as hardscapes or trees. Will there be areas for seating, dining or walkways?
2. **Soil composition.** The ideal soil for xeriscaping will drain quickly and yet retain adequate amounts of water. The solution to this is lots of organic matter. Incorporate plenty of compost into the soil. It's a good idea to have your soil tested. You can pick

up a soil testing kit at the Extension office.

3. **Limit the turf area.** Turf needs to be a planned element in landscaping and turf selection is important. Avoid long narrow swaths of grass and choose the variety based on the most water saving species for your area.

4. **Appropriate Plant Selection.** There is a huge variety of native and exotic plants that work well with xeriscaping, including grasses, shrubs and perennials. Follow this link <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/xeriscape/xeriscape.html> to lists of outstanding grasses, vines and groundcovers, perennials, shrubs, trees and water-saving native plants you can use in a xeriscape.

5. **Efficient Irrigation.** All plants need water, even drought tolerant plants. The first year your plants will need more water as they become acclimated, but don't overwater. Soaker hoses and drip irrigation are a great solution to this. Water is delivered to the roots of the plants slowly which encourages root absorption and reduces run off, erosion and pooling. Water deeply and less often.

6. **Mulching.** Mulch deeply with no areas of bare soil. Leaves, coarse compost, pine needles, wood chips, bark or gravel may be used. Mulches help retain soil moisture and temperature. They also block weeds and prevent erosion. If you use an organic mulch bear in mind that it will slowly incorporate into the soil and you will need to "top dress" or add more mulch as this occurs.

7. **Maintain your Landscape.**

One of the best benefits of xeriscaping is the low-maintenance. This doesn't mean you can walk away and forget it. The mulch will help prevent weeds, but be sure to pull them as you see them. Other things to remember are pruning, irrigation, pest control and proper fertilizing.

To learn more about Xeriscaping, contact the Extension office at (972) 825-5175.





## Lavender: An Herb Everyone Can Love

By Ginger Cole  
Ellis County Master Gardener



Lavender is one of the world's most popular herbs. Botanically, lavender is known as *Lavandula*. It has been around for centuries. Its name derives from the Latin lavar "to wash", indicating its use for both bathing the human body and washing clothes. The words laundress and laundry derive from the verb lavandre. Perhaps the cleansing attributes carry over to honeybees visiting lavender. While I have not found any studies to support the effect of lavender on bees, it has been suggested that the essential oil from lavender helps honeybees rid themselves of mites.

What I can attest to is that honey produced from the nectar of

lavender is light and transparent, almost white with tinges of gold. It is almost as if the honeybees have actually captured the sun and incorporated it into the honey. Open a jar of lavender honey, close your eyes, breathe deeply and let the aromas fill your head. Honey is like wine; it reflects the land on which it was created. Do you smell camphor? Almond? Vanilla? It is delicate, yet acidic and floral. As the honey ages, it will crystallize very finely with a smooth mouth feel.

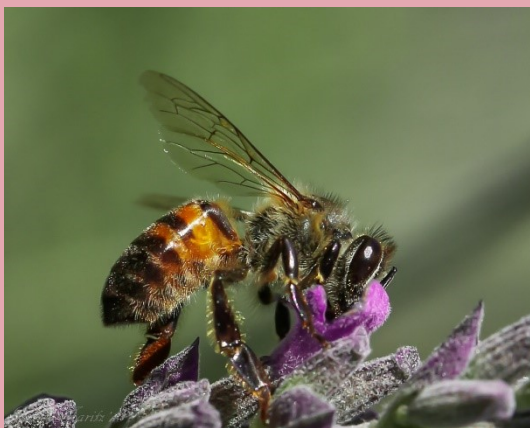
You don't have to be a beekeeper or a honey connoisseur to appreciate lavender plants. Most lavenders are natives of the Mediterranean region, the islands of the Atlantic, Asia Minor and India, but are now grown all over the world.

There are more than 30 varieties of lavender. Most of them grow best in poor alkaline soil and do not like to be overwatered. Many cultivars are listed in this species and it seems the hardiest are the most fragrant of them all.

So which lavender would you like best or grow best for you? I asked myself that question. My solution was to go to a nursery and smell all of them and see which flowers I liked best. I purchased one each of about five varieties. I planted them to see who was the survivor. It has been about three years and only one variety has flourished. It appears to be English lavender, *Lavandula angustifolia*.

From that one plant I have propagated about 20 new plants from cuttings. It was very simple to do (see <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamental/a-reference-guide-to-plant-care-handling-and-merchandising/propagating-foliage-flowering-plants/>)

These new plants are destined for a raised bed in full sunshine in the line of site from my office window. The goal is to create a lavender garden reminiscent of the Hill Country or the south of France. They should love it there. We have poor alkaline soil, and in any other year, we do not get too much rain or humidity.



It is important to remember when planting lavender that it needs good air circulation. The small plants will have a mature mounding habit and can be as wide as four feet and about three feet in the height of bloom season.

When establishing lavender it will need to be watered as the soil dries out. Simply feel the soil and water only when it is dry to the touch. Once lavender is established it is a wonderful low maintenance perennial for you and your local pollinators to enjoy.

The local pollinators get pollen and nectar. You have endless possibilities in cooking or crafts using the flowers fresh or dry some for later use. Lavender makes a refreshing tea or can be added to lemonade for a wonderful summer drink. Just the fragrance of lavender lifts my spirits and brings me such joy. If you have never grown lavender, you may want to give it a try.



## Ellis County Master Gardeners Receive State Awards and Specialist Certificates

Congratulations to the Ellis County Master Gardeners Association (ECMGA), which

was recently recognized at the 2015 Texas Master Gardener Association (TMGA) State Conference, held this past April in Bell County. The Texas Search for Excellence Awards Program is sponsored by the TMGA and was created to recognize outstanding Master Gardener projects and programs throughout the State of Texas and to recognize individual Master Gardeners and Master Gardener Associations for their outstanding contributions within the State of Texas.

The ECMGA, your local volunteer Master Gardeners, are members of your communities. They are enthusiastic, willing to learn and help others, and able to communicate with diverse groups of people. What really sets Master Gardeners apart from other home gardeners is their special training in horticulture. Consider joining this diverse and fun group or inviting them to speak at your next gathering.

We salute our ECMGA members for their wins at state!



ECMGA was recognized in three categories: Outstanding Individual Master Gardener, Nancy Fenton; Written Education for Plant of the Month at the Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market; and Youth JMG Program Book Bloomers.

All winners demonstrated overall excellence, high levels of education and community outreach that embody the values of the Master Gardener Program and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.



Our new JMG specialists are: Ruth Davis, Cerelda de Heus, Danny Smith, and Mary Lee Nelson.

Four Master Gardeners of the Ellis County Master Gardeners Association received their Junior Master Gardener (JMG) Specialist certificates and pins at the State Conference.

JMG Specialists must complete specialized training sessions and perform additional hours of volunteer service. JMG Specialists support JMG programs throughout the Ellis County area. The JMG curriculum engages children in novel, hands-on group and individual learning experiences that promote a love of gardening, develop an appreciation for the environment, and cultivate the mind.

Come join us to learn new ideas and techniques that will help you implement or grow effective youth gardening programs in your school class, JMG® club, after-school program, 4-H youth gardening project, home school or any group of interested young gardeners.

Congratulations to our newest Junior Master Gardener Specialists!



**Interested in becoming a  
2015 Expo Sponsor Or  
Expo Exhibitor?**

Contact James Kocian at  
[expo.ecmga@yahoo.com](mailto:expo.ecmga@yahoo.com)

**Reserve the date: March 26, 2016!**

## Ellis County Master Gardener 2015 Scholarship Awards



### Waxahachie, Ennis and Midlothian Graduates Awarded ECMGA College Scholarships

This year marks the thirteenth year that the Ellis County Master Gardener Association (ECMGA) has offered Ellis County graduating high school seniors the opportunity to apply for college scholarships. One of the objectives of the ECMGA is to encourage students to pursue college studies in horticulture and related fields through the awarding of college scholarships. To date, 32 students have been awarded a total of \$55,500.

The Ellis County Master Gardener Association has awarded its 2015 College Scholarships to the following students: **Ms. Emma E. Hinds**, **Ms. Brynn E. Henry** and **Clifford D. Wade**, students at Waxahachie High School. Also awarded scholarships were **Tyler Joe Woods** from Ennis High School and **Matthew R. Mitchell** from Midlothian High School. The scholarship award for each of these students will be \$2,600.

**Emma Hinds** plans to attend Texas A&M University where she will study horticulture and landscape design. **Brynn Henry** also plans to attend Texas A&M University and plans to study biomedical science focusing on plant derived medicines. **Clifford Wade** plans to attend the University of Texas at Austin where his planned field of study will be psychology and biological science. **Tyler Woods** plans to attend Tarleton State University where his planned field of study will be Biology. **Matthew Mitchell** plans to attend Texas Tech University where he plans to study landscape architecture and horticulture.

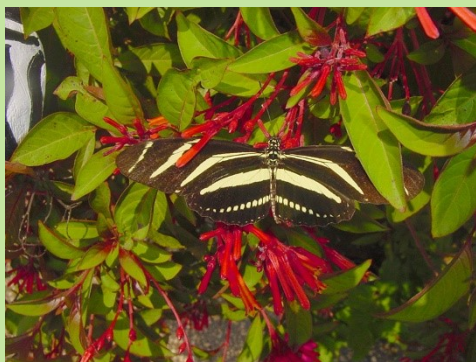
## Growing Smart: June Gardening Tips

*By Carolyn Foster  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



Summer is almost here and everything is growing. If you planted my favorites...perennials, things are looking good, but you may need splashes of annuals for extra color. Remember, some like it sunny and some like it shady.

Sun lovers include zinnias, portulaca (moss rose), periwinkle, salvia, marigold, celosia and purslane to name a few. Shade lovers can tolerate either part or full shade and include impatiens, begonias, caladiums, salvia and coleus. Some annual will come back and many self-seed and come back.



Need more ideas for color...think annuals and tropicals. Many such as esparanza (yellow bells), firebush (*top right*), mandevilla (*bottom right*), hibiscus, angel's trumpet and bougainvilleas are great choices. Lantana loves heat, is drought tolerant and may come back. Continue to remove faded flowers (deadheading) before they set seed to keep plants compact, growing and producing more flowers.

Feed annuals every four to six weeks to keep productive and pretty. Choose crape myrtles, available in a variety of colors and a size to fit the spot. Varieties with Indian tribe names like Hopi, Natchez, etc., resist powdery mildew best.

Plantings that are native to our area thrive better, but if you can supply the water, you still have time to plant trees, shrubs, ground covers and establish new lawns. Watering is very important the first year and during dry spells to be worth the investment. However, do not over water; this kills more plants than under watering.

Bare spots encourage weeds, so cover them with mulch. Mulch around plantings also preserves moisture and gives beds a more finished look. There are many colors and materials (shredded, chips, nuggets and rubber). Every year, turn the old mulch into the soil as it bio-degrades or add new if you're keeping that color.

Watch out for Japanese beetles, bag worms, spittle bugs, chinch bugs, crickets, grubs, horn worms, snails and slugs, just to name a few. These pests can destroy all your hard work in a matter of days. Look for pests daily and pick off (my favorite way). Birds help by eating bugs, but there are also organic products and

chemicals that will do the job. **READ THE LABEL and FOLLOW DIRECTIONS CAREFULLY.** With chemicals, **MORE IS NOT BETTER!** Remember there are pests, but there are also beneficial insects that are our friends and help us. Keep Growing Smart!







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

### So What Constitutes An Effective Rain Event?

*Excerpted from an article by Larry Stein, Ph.D., Extension Horticulturist, Department of Horticultural Sciences, Texas AgriLife Extension Service. <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind>*

Mist, drizzle, fog; dreary, cloudy days, great for fruit tree chilling, but does the wee bit of moisture associated with these events have any impact on agriculture? The key to this dilemma lies in the amount of moisture which falls, the soil type and whether or not the soil is wet or dry.

Most soils are composed of varying amounts of sand, loam and clay. Sands allows for rapid water infiltration, but they hold very little water so plants will dry out very quickly. Loams do not take water as fast as sands, but hold more water which can be used by plants for growth. Finally, clay soils take water slowly, so often a lot of water runs off in a heavy rain. Even though clay soils hold a lot of water much of it cannot be extracted for plant growth.

Soil physics tells one that soil must be totally wet before the water moves. So you cannot partially wet the soil; the water only penetrates as far as the water wets the soil. Just a little bit of moisture (0.1 inches) will wet the soil on top and cause it to stick to your shoes, but go an inch deep and the soil will be bone dry.

If the rainfall rate is two inches per hour, the sands will take in quite a bit of water whereas the loam and clay will not. So oftentimes heavy, fast rain events are not effective at re-wetting the soil profile. In most cases much of this water runs off

rather than into the soil. By the same token, one should realize that when the rain does not infiltrate the soil and runs off, the place of "ponding" will experience a much larger rain event. Bottomland is a prime example. Farmers today actually put small berms or dikes in their fields to increase water infiltration so that rain events will more effectively wet their soils.

The other thing you have to remember is how far an inch of water (from rain or a sprinkler, etc.) will wet the soil. Table 1 shows that one inch of water that does not run off will wet the soil 12 inches deep; but it will take more water to wet a loam, 1.5 to 2.0 inches and even more, 2.5 inches to wet a clay; and again this is assuming that no water runs off.

The mist, drizzle and showers which often amount to a quarter of an inch or less obviously do not run off and so the water has wet into the soil. The only problem is that in most cases the soil is only wet one-half to maybe an inch deep.

The best time to water is actually during a rain event. Of course, if it is raining "cats and dogs", one would not want to water because the water is already coming so fast that it will run off anyway. But mist and drizzle is a different story. No water will be evaporating since it is raining and the amount you apply along with the mist or drizzle will help wet the soil to a greater depth.

### Garden Checklist for June 2013

- ◆ Supplemental irrigation is essential for all but the hardiest plants in times of extended drought. Water lawn and gar-

den thoroughly, but not too frequently. As a general rule, soak to a depth of eight inches. Finish watering by early afternoon, to lessen the chance of disease.

- ◆ Check watermelons for ripeness regularly. They are usually ready when the bottom portion is definitely yellow green or even yellow in color.
- ◆ Take a critical look at your landscape while at the height of summer development. Make notes of how you think it can be better arranged, plants that need replacement, overgrown plants that need to be removed, and possible activity areas that can be enjoyed by family members.
- ◆ Check for insects and diseases. Destroy badly infested plants. Spider mites can be especially troublesome at this time. Select a chemical or organic control, or use insecticidal soap.
- ◆ Especially during dry summers, soil moisture becomes extremely important and essential for good plant production. Because continual watering is oftentimes costly and time consuming, it pays to conserve the moisture around plants. This is best done by mulching. A good mulch will retain valuable moisture needed for plant growth, and improve overall gardening success. Mulches are usually applied two to six inches deep, depending on the material used. In general, the coarser the material, the deeper the mulch. For example, a two-inch layer of cottonseed hulls will have about the same mulching effect as six inches of oat straw or four inches of coastal Bermuda hay.

◆ There is still time to plant some of the colorful, heat-tolerant summer annuals. Direct-seed zinnias and portulaca, and purchase plants of periwinkle, salvia, marigold, and purslane. Be sure to water transplants as needed until roots become established.

- ◆ Removing faded flow-

(Continued on page 10)

**Table 1. General soil water storage and depletion characteristics for three different soil types.**

	Soil Texture		
	Sands	Loams	Clays
Water infiltration rate (inches per hour)	2.0 – 6.0	0.6 – 2.0	0.2 – 0.6
Available water (inches per ft.)	1.0 – 1.5	1.5 – 2.5	2.5 – 4.0
Days to depletion when ET = .2 inches/day	5 – 7.5	7.5 – 12.5	12.5 – 20.0
Amount of water to wet to 12 in a dry soil (inches)	1.0	1.5 – 2.0	2.5



Landscape Gardening (Continued from page 9)

ers from plants before they set seed will keep them growing and producing flowers. A light application of fertilizer every four to six weeks will also be helpful.

- ◆ Houseplants can be moved out of doors this month. Sink the pots in a cool, shaded garden bed to prevent them from drying out so quickly. Water pots, container plants, and hanging baskets often. Monthly feedings with houseplant fertilizer will encourage continued growth.



- ◆ Now is the time to plan for next spring. Consider digging and dividing any crowded spring bulbs. Once the bulbs have matured and the foliage has turned brown, it is time to spade them up and thin out the stand. Crowded bulbs produce fewer and smaller blooms. They usually need thinning every three to four years.

- ◆ June is the time to select daylily varieties as they reach their peak of bloom.
- ◆ Fertilize roses every four to six weeks. Apply a high-nitrogen fertilizer immediately after a flush of bloom.
- ◆ Continue to spray susceptible roses with a black-spot control such as Funginex every seven to 10 days.
- ◆ Re-blooming salvias, such as *Salvia greggii* and *S. farinacea*, should be pruned back periodically during the summer. To make the job easier, use hedging shears, and remove only the spent flowers and a few inches of stem below. Fall-blooming perennials, such as Mexican marigold mint (*Tagetes lucida*), chrysanthemums, physostegia (pictured left), and *Salvia leucantha* (pictured below), should be pruned in the same manner during the summer to keep them compact, reducing the need for staking. This type of pruning should be completed prior to September 1, since flower buds begin forming about that time.



## Visit Our Gardens!

The Ellis County Master Gardener's Horticulture Learning Center Garden's (HLC) will be open to visitors during the Gingerbread Trail Tour of Homes, Saturday, June 6 and Sunday, June 7. Master Gardeners will be hosting tours and informal discussions on Texas gardening at our HLC in Getzendaner Park.

Walk through our beautiful Star and Rose gardens. Learn what will grow on hillsides with low water needs in our Brim garden and feast on the fragrances of our newly created Culinary Herb garden.

Enjoy some refreshments and ice cold mint tea while talking with garden experts about your landscape needs. The gardens will be open from 10am to 4pm on Saturday and 12pm to 2pm on Sunday. Look for us on the left as you enter Getzendaner Park.





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