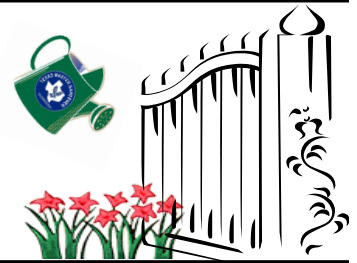




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume XI, Issue 2

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

February, 2018

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 and click on subscribe. Best of all; it's FREE! Editors and Newsletter Team: Susan Ellis, Donna Hubbard, Bree Shaw

2018 Master Gardener Calendar

The Ellis County Master Gardeners are proud to present our 12th annual gardening calendar. Our theme this year is *"Landscapes of Tomorrow – Back to Basics."*



As always, this beautiful and informative calendar includes month-by-month gardening information, soil preparation, fertilization, moon signs, average temperature and rainfall each month, holidays, as well as sponsors' events.

Your **FREE** copy is now available at all of the following calendar sponsors' locations. While you are there to pick up your calendar, please shop at their businesses.

You might find just the Christmas gift you are looking for. Also thank them for sponsoring this year's gardening calendar! Without them there wouldn't be a calendar.

The calendars are now available

Ellis County Master Gardeners and Sponsors

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Waxahachie Farmer's Market

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Listen to KBEC

Saturday mornings at 8:10 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

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

Planting



Cool-season vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, and potatoes should be planted mid-month, or about four weeks prior to the average last freeze date (March 15 in Ellis County). Beets, carrots, lettuce, radishes, spinach, Swiss chard, and "greens" (collard, mustard, and turnip) should be planted two to four weeks prior to the average last freeze.

Plant asparagus crowns in 10-12 inches of soil. When buying crowns, look for two-year-old root systems with healthy roots.

When buying plants, bigger is not always better, especially with bare-root plants. Small to medium sizes establish faster.

Dig and divide warm-season perennials (cannas, coneflowers, perennial salvia, mums) before they break dormancy.

Fertilizing and Pruning

Prune bush roses around Valentine's Day. Prune old, dead and weak canes back to the ground. Leave four to eight vigorous canes, removing one-half of their growth above an outward-facing bud. Wait to prune climbing or leaning roses until after they bloom. Prune errant canes any time to maintain shape.

Herbaceous perennials and ornamental grasses may be cut back now. Prune autumn sage (*Salvia gregii*) by 50%. Mexican feather grass does not require pruning.

Dig and divide large clumps of ornamental grasses, especially if the center of the plant has died.

Cut or mow liriope before new growth emerges. Trim Asian jasmine back to four to five inches.



Garden Watch

Begin controlling insects and diseases on fruit and nut trees. Spraying is essential for successful harvest. Contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service- Ellis County for a copy of the "Homeowners Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule."

Look for aphids and caterpillars on vegetables, and control with insecticidal soap and Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), respectively.

Check for scale insects adhering to the trunk, branches, and leaves of hollies, euonymus, shade trees, fruit and pecan trees. Apply horticultural oil to control these and other over-wintering insects.

For the more difficult to control crape myrtle bark scale, apply a neonicotinoid insecticide, such as imidacloprid, as a soil drench to the root zone of infested trees.



Conservation-Wise

It's rose-planting time! Consider Texas A&M Earth-Kind® varieties which are easy to maintain. For more information, go to <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkindroses>.

Maintain two to four inches of shredded hardwood or other wood mulch in beds and containers year-round to conserve moisture and suppress weeds. Taper off mulch near the base of plants.

Landscape Rule of Thirds –When designing or renovating your landscape, utilize the "rule of thirds" by planting 1/3 drought-tolerant turf grass, 1/3 native and adapted planting beds, and 1/3 pervious hardscape. This will give you more visual appeal, usable space and a reduction in water requirements, fertilizers, and pesticides.

Aerate lawn area. Clay soil becomes compacted over time. To increase the soil's ability to absorb water, aerate the lawn in late winter/early spring and apply a ¼ inch of compost.



Interested in becoming a
2018 Expo Sponsor Or
Expo Exhibitor?

Contact James Kocian at
expo.ecmga@yahoo.com



Reserve the date: March 24, 2018!

Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener*



White Dogstooth-Violet – Lily Family (Liliaceae) *Erythronium albidum* Nutt.

Region: 1, 3, 4, 5 (Ellis County is Region 4)
Size: 8 – 10 inches
Blooms: February through May, Perennial



White dogstooth-violet is a small plant that forms extensive colonies, spreading from underground shoots. A bare stem produces a single flower that hangs over, with its petals curved back, skyward. The nodding flower seems too large for its slender stem. Its six petals are yellow on the inside, but are white to a lovely pale violet on the outside. Leaves are three to eight inches long, tapering at both ends. They have thick blades, and are mottled purple-brown or light green. A plant with one leaf is immature, but plants with two leaves are mature and will flower. It has been reported that Indian children relished the crunchy, mild-flavored bulbs in the early spring, but these have never been a major food source. White dogstooth-violet is found on rich, moist loams, along slopes, sometimes under brush or in shaded areas.



Ellis County Master Gardener Scholarship 2018



In 2003, ECMGA decided to make scholarships available to graduating high school seniors residing in Ellis County. We wanted to provide opportunities to these students that chose college studies in horticulture and/or life sciences disciplines. Since then, we have awarded 39 high school students with college scholarships totaling over \$71,100.

One of the objectives of the ECMGA is to build partnerships with the Ellis County community to expand horticultural education and opportunities. In keeping with this objective, the ECMGA will again make scholarship funds available in 2018 to deserving high school seniors pursuing studies in horticulture-related fields.

To qualify, the applicant must be a graduating high school senior residing in Ellis County from an Ellis County High School, Ellis County Charter High School or Ellis County Home School Program. The applicant must have an elected academic major in a horticulture-related field that includes, but is not limited to horticulture, agriculture, environmental science, forestry, botany, biology (e.g., plant genetics, plant physiology), landscape design or entomology. Other horticulture-related fields of studies are outlined in the scholarship application package available on the ECMGA website. Applicants must be able to provide proof of acceptance at an accredited institution of higher education.

In addition, last year the ECMGA decided to allow former ECMGA College Scholarship Awardees currently enrolled in horticulture programs/degree plans to also apply for the scholarship to continue their college/university studies. ECMGA college scholarships awarded to qualifying students in 2018 will be up to \$3,000. Students applying for the ECMGA Scholarship are invited to visit <http://www.ecmga.com> to download the application package found under the "What's Happening" tab. The completed application may be submitted by registered mail (return receipt requested) or in person to the Texas AgriLife Extension Service office located at 701 South I-35, Suite 3, Waxahachie, TX 75165. If additional information is needed regarding the ECMGA Scholarship, please call (972) 825-5175. **All scholarship applications must be received no later than 4:00pm on March 16, 2018.**



ELLIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS LAWN AND GARDEN EXPO ADULT WORKSHOPS

East End of Exhibit Hall



1:00 to 2:30 p.m.

Roses and Companion Plantings – Mattie Thompson

Ollas – Jane Slone

Shade and Sun Container Gardening – Micki Roark

Seed Saving – Monica Nyenhuis

2:30 to 4:00p.m.

Herbs and Edible Flowers – Arlene Hamilton

Landscapes of Tomorrow -Back to Basics – Scotty Rigsby

Irrigation – You Can Do It– James Derstler & Allan Paxton

Preserving the Bounty – Tomato & Peppers – Susan Clark

Organic Gardening – Carolyn Ross

Save The Date!
Saturday, March 24, 2018



Vegetables





Featured Recipe of the Month

3-Minute "Quick Boiled" Swiss Chard

"Quick Boiling" Swiss Chard is the Mediterranean way of cooking Swiss Chard, which makes it tastier and more nutritious because it helps remove some of the acids (especially oxalic acid) and brings out its sweet flavor. (Taken from page 445 of the 2nd edition of the World's Healthiest Foods book.)



Ingredients:

1 lb Swiss Chard
Mediterranean Dressing:
3 TBS extra virgin olive oil (or to taste)
2 tsp lemon juice
1 medium clove garlic
Sea salt and pepper to taste
Optional:
6 kalamata olives
1/2 cup feta cheese
1 tsp tamari soy sauce

Directions:

1. Fill a 3-quart pot three-quarters full of water, cover, and bring to a rapid boil.
2. While water is coming to a boil, press or finely chop garlic, and let it sit for at least 5 minutes.
3. Wash Swiss Chard and slice the leaves 1" wide. I only cook the white stems as I find the others too tough. Remove the thick stems. Slice white stems 1/2" wide.
4. Stems require more cooking time than the leaves. Be sure water has come to a rapid boil before adding them to the pot; be extremely careful to avoid burning yourself. Do not cover. Cook for 2 minutes, then add Swiss Chard leaves. Begin timing as soon as the water returns to a boil and cook for 3 minutes. For younger, thinner, and more tender leaves (common in Europe where they are picked earlier), cook both the stems and leaves together for 2 minutes.

5. After 3 minutes, drain Swiss Chard in a colander in the sink. Press out excess liquid with fork to prevent diluting the flavor of your dressing. You want the Swiss Chard to be tender, brightly colored, and not mushy when done.

Transfer to a bowl and toss Swiss Chard with the remaining ingredients while it is still hot. Research shows that fat-soluble vitamins and carotenoids found in foods, such as Swiss Chard, may be better absorbed when consumed with fat-containing foods like extra virgin olive oil. Dressing helps tenderize Swiss Chard. After 5-10 minutes, it will become more tender.

Important: For best flavor, use a knife and fork to cut the cooked Swiss Chard crosswise several times until it is in very small pieces. The more finely you cut Swiss Chard the more exposed surface area you create. This can allow more flavors of the dressing to pass into the Swiss Chard and speed up desirable changes in texture including tenderness.

Serves 2



Save The Date!
Saturday, March 24, 2018



Building my Dreamhouse Greenhouse

By Debbie Lane, Master Gardener



I became a Master Gardener in 2017. I have had an interest in gardening for several years. The interest grew as I aged. Little by little I tried landscaping the house we built twenty years ago. Through trial and error, I determined I really like native plants. As time passed, buying every plant I wanted grew tiresome and expensive. I thought a greenhouse may be what I needed.

I did not go right out and buy a greenhouse. I had many questions. One of my biggest questions was what if I spent a lot of money, time, and energy on a greenhouse and then my interest waned leaving it sitting there neglected? My decision was made for me when my husband saw a printed sheet on greenhouses on my desk before Christmas a few years ago. I received a 10' x 10' hoop-type greenhouse that Christmas! It had a greenish plastic tarp material for siding and the roof. There were two zip up doors on either end with ties at the top of the doorway to roll the door flap up and hold it in place. It was perfect! I grew all kinds of flowers, vegetables and plants from seed. I spent practically every day for six months doing something in the greenhouse. Some days I just went in to check on things. Other days there was work to be done. There was more to the greenhouse than just plants. I was learning hands on about ventilation, temperature, humidity, fungus and pest control. I was hooked!

We found the same model greenhouse on sale during that following summer. My husband helped me set it up end-to-end with the first one. My space doubled, and all was good until the following summer. The plastic material on the first one started to disintegrate from the harsh Texas sun. My interest had not lessened for one and a half years so I decided to plan for a permanent greenhouse.

In September 2016, I began to draw my simple greenhouse. Many questions popped into my head all at once: How big should it be? What materials should I use? Should there be a floor? If so, what type of floor? What type of roof should I use? Will this be expensive?

I called a contractor friend who erects metal buildings, owns an event center, builds landscape ponds, and has his own greenhouse. I asked him what his likes and dislikes were concerning his greenhouse. He was very informative! He also erected the red iron (frame) of my greenhouse for me.

A greenhouse can be very inexpensive using whatever types of materials you may have at hand. It can be a lean-to type, a hoop-house type, mobile, permanent, etc. You are only limited by your imagination.

I had an image in my mind of what I wanted. I wanted a permanent type; an actual building. I wanted it to be 12' x 20' with a single slope roof. That made the roof 11' on the high side and 8' on the low side facing south. I knew from my limited experience that they get very hot in our Texas sun, so I didn't want the sides to be 100% clear.

We prepared our 12' x 20' spot and built the bottom framework/base with 5" x 3" x 11g rectangular tube. The red iron, 3"sq x 11g tube and 3" purlin, would be welded to this base. We placed landscape fabric down inside the base and spread gravel over the entire floor space. Next came the cement stone walkway that stretches from door to door. A smooth walkway for any wheelbarrow or carts that may be rolled through the greenhouse was a must.

Once the red iron was up, my family worked on finishing out the inside walls with some flat 29g trim sheets about 2/3 of the way up. While the men finished the inside, my daughter and I started cutting the old fence wood that would become the exterior walls. (Two contractors gave me some old fence wood for my project.) I wanted two different types of wood/color for the exterior walls. A fourth (contractor) friend gave me some rusty corrugated metal to use as an exterior wainscot below the fence wood. I was so excited, you'd have thought I had won the lottery!

As I didn't want the sides to be 100% clear due to heat, we put a door and window in both end walls. We put four windows across the south facing wall and two windows across the north facing wall. All doors and windows have screens to let the breeze blow through, but keep out the pests.

People ask me how this can be a greenhouse with so much wall space. After talking at length with my contractor friend, I decided on a triple insulated polycarbonate roof panel. On a 65 degree sunny day it will climb to 100 degrees inside the greenhouse. I was able to find a very reasonable exhaust fan, extra louvered shutter, and thermostat to control the heat in the summer. I have two small oscillating fans and two heaters for the cold weather. The fans and one heater I found at estate sales paying a total price of \$15.00.

Continued on page 7



Announcing the Amateur Photo Contest

Sponsored by the Ellis County Master Gardener Association



Winners will be announced at the Lawn & Garden Expo
March 24, 2018

Two Categories: “Single Specimen” and “In the Garden”

Photos must be submitted by midnight March 10, 2018

Photo Contest Rules with link to entry form

<https://txmg.org/ellis/photo-contest/photo-contest-rules/>

Photo Submission Form

<https://txmg.org/ellis/photo-contest/>

Continued from page 6

My husband, being quite handy, put an old sink found at the scrapyard into an old workbench I found at an estate sale. He built a small tower frame to elevate one of my rain barrels, cut a small hole in the greenhouse wall and stretched a hose from the barrel to the sink. Voila! I have running water when I need it.

When I had the first greenhouses, I ran an extension cord from the house to power the heaters and fan. I did not like doing this and found that the circuit breaker would blow often. Since I needed more power for the exhaust fan, I had electricity installed. Then I decided to install lights so I could work after dark.

I originally had a mix of old stainless shelves and a couple tables to hold the plants. I replaced the tables with more stainless shelves, so the water could drain. The shelves were from the scrapyard, so there was little cost to us. Every once in awhile my husband or I drag home another old shelf to use in the greenhouse.

Building the greenhouse created an area to landscape which I turned into a butterfly garden. I have enjoyed growing many of my plants from seed in the new greenhouse. The first winter I grew double dwarf French marigold, lavender, salvia, Turks cap, milkweed, Gregg's blue mist, stevia, basil, rosemary, chives, thyme, and more. I love being able to transplant them into my landscaping or giving them away to friends to plant. It's a feeling of accomplishment, although I still buy some plants at my local nursery.



INDIAN TRAIL MASTER NATURALISTS EVENTS

Join the **Indian Trail Master Naturalists** at their monthly meeting on **February 26th**. The program for the evening is entitled **“Biodiversity and Conservation”**. **Dr. Taylor Quedensley**, a Research Botanist at Botanical Research Institute of Texas, will present a fascinating look at lichens, an important group of organisms that play a major role in the biodiversity of most terrestrial ecosystems on every continent. Meeting location: First United Methodist Church, Family Life Center 505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email ellis-tx@tamu.edu



February 16-19, 2018. “The Great Backyard Bird Count” Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society. The GBBC was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time. Now more than 160,000 people of all ages and walks of life worldwide join the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds. For at least 15 minutes on one or more days simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. See website for additional information.

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

Join Ellis County Master Gardeners and Ellis County Extension Agency in a variety of classes to prepare your gardens and yards for spring.

Monday, February 26, 6pm–7:30pm, Plant Propagation. Want to learn how to propagate plants from some of your favorites or some of your friends? This class will give you information on growing from seeds as well as different methods of propagation such as layering, cuttings, and plant division. You will have both classroom and hands on activities. Instructors: Gay Doyle and Walt Friis. Cost: \$14.00

Thursday March 1, 6pm–7:30pm, Butterfly Gardens with Native Plants. This class will give instruction on taking out the grass and replacing with pollinator plants or adding the right type of plants to existing gardens. Plants that will draw in our native butterflies and hummingbirds. The garden will be vibrant and full of life for your enjoyment. Some of these plants only need trimming once or twice a year-much less work than mowing every week. Perennials and annual plants can be used with great success. Instructor: Carolyn Ross Cost: \$14.00

Monday, March 5, 6pm–7:30pm, Turf Grass Introduction. This class will teach how to get a perfect yard. You will learn about the varieties of grasses that are good for this area of Texas. How to select the correct grass, where to purchase, and when is the best time to plant, and finally, how to prepare the soil before planting. Instructor: Scherle Barth. Cost: \$14.00

Thursday, March 8, 6pm–7:30pm, Native Plant Landscapes. Most gardeners recognize Bluebonnets and Indian Paintbrush as native plants but are not aware of the shrubs, vines, trees, and other plants that are native to our area and can be added to our landscapes. This class will introduce you to some of these plants and the reasons for including them on your property. Instructor: Maureen Nitkowski Cost: \$14.00

Thursday, March 22, 6pm–7:30pm, Herbs for All Gardeners. An introduction to growing and using herbs in our daily lives. This class will cover how to plan and start an Herb Garden for your specific needs in the garden or container. You will learn how to preserve your herbs and enjoy their flavor all summer long. The instructor will bring plants for you to see, enjoy flavors and aromas! Instructor: Bea Rocha. Cost: \$14.00

Monday March 26, 6pm–7:30pm, Ollas, A New Way of Conserving Water in the Garden. This class will go over the benefits of using ollas, and how to make your own olla for use in your garden. The process of making an olla will be demonstrated, and directions for making one will be handed out to the participants of the class. Ollas may be the most efficient method of local plant irrigation in dry lands known, due to the micro porous (unglazed) walls that do not allow water to flow freely from the pot, but guides water seepage to the plants. Instructor: Jane Sloan. Cost: \$14.00

Monday, April 2, 6pm–7:30pm, Irrigation Systems Design and Efficiency. This class will provide the basics of designing an efficient irrigation system, and provide you the knowledge to install a system yourself, or the tools to ask the smart questions of a contractor. Information will be provided to help you maintain an existing system; simple test procedures to determine if any adjustments or replacements are required to keep you from pouring your money down the drain. Instructor: Allan Paxton. Cost: \$14.00

Thursday, April 5, 6pm–7:30pm, Rainwater Harvesting. Harvesting rainwater is one of the many possible steps a homeowner can take to help stem water shortages and be economical. This class will provide you with information on active and passive systems. Learn how to get started with a simple rain barrel for your landscape or install a complete potable water system in your home. Instructor: Jim Derstler Cost: \$14.00

Monday, April 9, 6pm–7:30pm, Turf Grass/Lawn Maintenance. Is your lawn overgrown with weeds or have brown spots that is supposed to be green, or do you just want to know how to better take care of it? This class is for you. This class will provide information on grass diseases, weed control, and how to maintain your lawn for the growing season. Instructor: Mike Peters. Cost: \$14.00

Tuesdays April 24–May 15, 6pm–8pm, (four classes) Beginning Farmer/Rancher. If you are a land owner or have newly acquired a farm or ranchland, and are seeking information for the best way to utilize your property, join this experienced instructor for advice. Topics covered: soils and soil fertility, soil testing, pasture management, basic livestock productions, and pond management. This class will be held at the Ellis County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office at 701 S. I-35E, Suite 3, in Waxahachie. Instructor: Mark Arnold, County Extension Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources Cost: \$22.00

Thursday, May 3, 6pm–7:30pm, Landscape Design in Ellis County. Learn the secrets to successful landscaping in Ellis County. Subjects covered will be soil, climate/temperature, rainfall, native and adapted plants, trees, shrubs, perennials, etc. Class includes a PowerPoint presentation with photos, and examples of designs and landscapes in Waxahachie and Midlothian. Class is taught by the "Landscape Director" for the state of Texas on the board of TNLA (Texas Nursery and Landscape Association) and Ellis County Master Gardener. Instructor: Scott Rigsby. Cost: \$14.00



The Children's Workshop Room returning to the 2018 Master Gardener's Lawn and Garden Expo



The Children's Workshop Room has become a favorite at the annual Ellis County Master Gardener Lawn and Garden Expo. Children and adults all enjoy the educational exhibits, hands-on activities, and lively atmosphere. The opportunity to move to a larger room has been such a big hit that we will again be set up in the Crape Myrtle Room of the Waxahachie Civic Center. Master Gardener volunteers are available to assist children with activities and answer parents' questions about gardening with children. Indian Trail Master Naturalists are always a big part of the Children's Workshop Room, and working closely with the Master Gardeners, provide fun learning activities all through the day.

Representatives from the Junior Master Gardener program will be on hand to talk with teachers and parents of homeschool students. The Children's Workshop Room exhibitors include the Texas Honeybee Guild with their live honeybee demonstration hive. Texas Discovery Gardens joins us with unusual critters and information about their education and outreach. Fascinating insect collections from local residents are also on display and parents are welcome to bring their insect questions. Smokey Bear has also been known to make an appearance! The Children's Workshop Room is always a buzz of activity with educational opportunities children can participate in. Plan to visit the Children's Workshop Room for a fun time and always a surprise or two.



Introducing Earthtones U

Earthtones U is a series of hour long classes to make your thumb greener!



Complete eight classes and get your Earthtones U graduate certificate along with 15% off purchases* for one year, and ETU shirt, and more! It's a great way to learn more about keeping a healthy lawn and landscape. Earthtones U students get entrance to all 12 classes. Each class will have free, valuable giveaways. Plus, Earthtones U students get access to private sales and events throughout the year! Learn more and Save more. Only \$75 for a year's worth of benefits and knowledge to last a lifetime! Contact Earthtones for more information.

**excluding consignment or clearance items*

Course Schedule: 10am

March 17: Grow Organic
March 31: Veggie & Herb Gardening
April 7: Basic Landscape Design
April 21: Container Color Gardening
April 28: Butterfly Gardening
May 5: Texas Superstar Plants
May 12: Bringing in the Birds
May 19: Irrigation 101
June 2: Composting 101
June 9: Water Wise Landscaping
June 16: Shade Gardening
June 23: Smart Lawn Maintenance

February – The Month of Wait and See

By Arlene Hamilton, Ellis County Master Gardener

Having spent the past week surveying the damage to my herb garden caused by the extreme cold, this month's column will cover what you should and should **not** be doing in your herb garden.

February is always my month of "wait and see". There are many herbs listed as tender perennials in North Texas that did not survive three days and nights of below freezing no matter how much mulch you applied or how carefully you covered your plants. Then again we gardeners are naturally full of hope. Isn't that one of the definitions of a gardener? Following are my plans for herb gardening in February.



Basil is long dead so if you haven't cleaned up the dead stalks pull them out and toss into the compost. If the plant flowered and set seed in the late summer you may be surprised with some new plants emerging in late April or May.

Bay trees show some damage to the most outer leaves but I will leave that alone until after our last frost date. We don't want to encourage new growth with winter still here.

Chives, both onion and garlic are a slimy mess right now but new growth will emerge with warmer days. Don't uncover until late February or March.

Cilantro, Dill and Parsley: I always plant seeds in the fall and enjoy adding a few sprigs of these early greens to salads in February and March. Unfortunately these little babies did not survive the deep cold. So I will reseed this month. If it remains cool the seeds will not germinate until we are into longer periods of warm weather. As I've told you before, I'm a lazy gardener so I scatter the seeds directly on the prepared soil, cover with a light layer of top soil and go back to my rocking chair. Some of the seeds will make it, of that I am sure.

Green and Bronze Fennel are up about twelve to eighteen inches and don't seem to have been bothered by the cold. In addition to great anise flavor this plant is a favorite dinner for the black swallowtail butterfly caterpillar.

We will have a pity party for the **Lavender**. No matter what, I can't seem to keep it alive. The late heavy rains last fall stressed all of the plants and one by one they curled up and died. I don't believe the freeze had anything to do with their demise. The only one still looking healthy is the Spanish lavender which is recommended for its beauty in the garden not its sweet aroma.



Lemongrass always looks dead now but do not remove the long dried grass until after our last average frost date around the middle of March then cut back. New shoots will quickly appear.



Oreganos in my garden were the surprise loss. I grow many varieties and all suffered damage to their leaves. Peeking under the dead leaves I find good green growth so expect the plants to survive but I will wait until late in the month to trim back by about one third.

Rosemary plants are showing damage also. The creeping varieties are more susceptible to freeze damage and may need to be replaced but upright rosemary should need just a good haircut later to stimulate new growth.

Sage plants will need to be cut back in late February or early March. New growth will appear as the days get longer and warmer.

Thyme should have enjoyed the cold snap. The leaves tend to turn red in the winter and the flavor is not as intense but a trim and warm weather will get the flavorful oils flowing.

So again, as you have heard from the other Ellis County Master Gardeners, February is a time of wait-and-see. There is work to be done but patience is the key to success in the spring garden.

Tools and Ideas for a new year of Gardening

- Good gloves
- For digging – shovel, hand shovel, spade, spading fork and a trowel.
- For weeding – hand cultivator and hand weeder
- For pruning – floral shears and pruners
- Clean dirt and rust from tools if needed.
- Sharpen blades and organize tools



Eclectic Gardening

With Jane Slone, Ellis County Master Gardener



Winter-Chill-Snow-Sunshine How are these terms important to the Peach, Plum or Apple You Will Eat Next Summer?



Most gardeners who live in Texas do not think about the importance of winter. Without a “chill” some plants and trees will not produce fruit. Fruit then becomes apples, peaches, flowers. Most of us look forward to a nice peach or pear picked from our garden. Before this fruit forms, mother nature needs to provide a cooling period. There is a set temperature that is required by many trees. Without this “chill” the tree will not produce fruit.

If we lived in the tree orchard states, it is critical that the tree receive the proper amount of “chill”. Since Mother Nature is not always kind, sometimes certain fruits are abundant, and other times there is a limited production.

We can't produce avocado easily in our area, but go to South Texas and they are abundant. Lemons, limes, apples, and peaches have different chill periods.

Vernalization

These trees go dormant in the winter months, with cold weather. Not a hard freeze but cold temperatures. If the tree remains warm, it will produce new buds. The buds will die

before they can produce a fruit for picking. What controls this tree from producing buds too soon is hormones. The trees' hormones are controlled by the length of the day, and the cooler temperatures at night. These chill hours are called vernalization; a cold period. This is a process where the plant (flower, fruit) do not grow or produce any fruit or flowers during the winter months. Different plants have cold requirements. I enjoy Peonies and have tried to grow with very little success. If the winters are cold, the plant has sufficient time to hibernate, and will produce flowers. During this period the plant does not produce hormones needed for fruit and flower. Temperature controls the hormones of the plant. Telling the plant when it should send out the buds of growth.

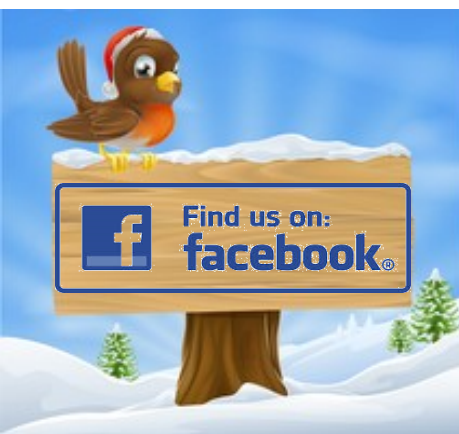
The temperature for Vernalization is a temperature between 32 degrees to 45 degrees. The number of days needed are important to the plant's fruit production. When the temperature has warm days, it can reduce the days of rest and hormones will signal, now is the time for growth. Then when the weather turns cold, the buds die. How can we prevent this false period of growth in our backyard trees? Plant a variety that is acclimated to our environment; the success rate will be improve.

When you open the refrigerator and see daffodils, tulips or narcissus bulbs, this is what your trees need. THE BIG CHILL

Calculating Chilling Hours

Method 1: Chilling hours are calculated by counting the number of hours between 32 and 45 degrees F, from October 1st through February 28th/29th.

Method 2: Chilling hours are calculated by counting the number of hours at or below 45 degrees F, from October 1st through February 28th/29th.



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