

Volume XI, Issue 4

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

April, 2018

elcome 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 <u>www.ECMGA.com</u> and click on <u>subscribe</u>. Best of Editors and Newsletter Team: Susan Ellis, Donna Hubbard, Bree Shaw all: it's FREE!



- Tell a friend to sign up for the E-Garden Newsletter...

it's FREE!

Every week at the Market, there is a unique theme designed to highlight vendor products, in-season produce, children's activities, or interesting garden subjects. Following are the upcoming themes for April and early May:

April 28:Grand Opening—Meet the Sellers May 5: Cinco De Mayo





Ellis County Master Gardener Monthly Meeting—You are invited! Second Tuesday of the month



Carolyn Ross, Waxahachie native and Ellis County Master Gardener and Indian Trail Master Naturalist, will be speaking at our monthly meeting on Tuesday, April 10, 2018. The program is titled "Adding a Wildscape to Your Garden". Carolyn received certification from the Native Plant Society of Texas in native landscaping, and will share with us her progress in adding native plants to her property and how to create a garden that is healthy for all of its inhabitants.

Social time begins at 9:30am and the program begins at 10am. Please be our guest! The meeting takes place in the Fidelis "Banquet" Hall of the First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin



TRIVIA

The record one day rainfall in Waxahachie was on April 17, 2016, with 10.1 inches. May of 2016, was recorded as the wettest month of an average of 8.81 inches. DFW's total was 16.96 inches for the month.



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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What's Happening in April

Planting

- ★ Plant warm-season annual flowers. For sun (6+hours per day): angelonias, copper plants, firebush, lantana, moss rose, purslane, pentas, ornamental sweet potatoes, and zinnias. For Shade (less than 4 hours per day): begonias, coleus, impatients, and perilla. Select short, compact plants.
- ★ Plant okra and southern peas (black-eyed peas, etc.). Squash, cucumbers, and melons can still be planted.
- ★ Many herbs can also be planted from transplants (dill, parsley, fennel, mint, oregano, and thyme).
- ★ Now is the best time to plant Bermudagrass and St. Augustine grass sod. Grade and smooth area prior to installing sod to ensure good soil contact. Keep moist until roots are established.
- ★ Seeded varieties of Bermudagrass may be sown starting mid-month. Keep soil moist until seed germinate, and grass has established a good root system.
- ★ Select caladium tubers now, while ample stocks are available, for May planting.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- ★ Apply a high-nitrogen fertilizer to established lawns. Use product containing at least half of its nitrogen in slow-release from.
- ★ Mow common Bermudagrass at 1 ½ inches and St. Augustine grass at 2 ½ inches. Frequent mowing with sharp blades will keep an established lawn thick and healthy; but avoid removing more than one-third of the leaf surface each time.
- ★ Fertilize roses every 4 to 6 weeks from now to September. Start with a balanced fertilizer, then apply ammonium sulfate or other high-nitrogen fertilizer as new growth appears, following a flowering cycle.

Garden Watch

- ★ Check new plant growth for aphids. A few can be tolerated but large numbers should be controlled. Washing them off with a strong spray water may be all that is necessary for control.
- ★ Eliminate fire ants in your landscape by broadcasting labeled bait while temperatures are between 70 and 90 degrees. If fire ants are still present after using bait, treat the individual mounds with appropriate insecticide. Contact the Texas A&M AgrLife Extension Service Ellis County at 972-825-5175 for more information.
- ★ Look for rose rosette disease. New growth on diseased roses exhibit elongated/enlarged canes, reddish leaves and stems, and excessive thorns. Remove and destroy infected plants and roots immediately. There is no proven control for this fatal disease.
- ★ Soil purchased for use in beds, low areas, and containers should be examined closely. Nutsedge and other weeds are often brought in the yard through contaminated soil sources.
- ★ Watch newspapers and media for information regarding wildflower trails, garden tours, and plant sales.

Conservation-Wise

- ★ Installing a new lawn? If so, consider seeding a native grass mixture. It will require less mowing, fertilizer, and most importantly, less water.
- Design vegetable garden in blocks, not rows, to shade roots, and reduce evaporation. Group plants with similar water needs to maximize supplemental irrigation.





2000

Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian Ellis County Master Gardener

Barbara's Buttons - Sunflower Family (Asteraceae) Marshallia caespitosa DC.

Blooms: April – June, Perennial

Size:

Region: 1 through 8 (Ellis County is Region 4)

6-8 inches





No one knows how Barbara's buttons got its name, but there is no doubt that this dainty little flower attracts the eye. Most often it is white, but it may also be pale pink, creamy or lavender. The flower head, topping a slender stem, is 1½ inches across and is composed of numerous fragrant disk flowers that form a lacy-looking ball. Stems may be solitary or several, forming a clump. There are two varieties of this plant: *M. caespitosa var.caespitosa* has slender leaves, six inches long, crowded near the base, with bare stems supporting the flower heads. *M caespitosa var.signata* has leafy stems and is endemic to south and Midwest Texas, where it sometimes forms colonies.

Expo 2018 Children's Workshops



2018 Master Gardener's EXPO...

A huge success. All who came out enjoyed Ask the Expert, adult workshops, children's workshops, variety of vendors, plant sales, and door prizes.

























Light House for Learning

(With the Ellis County Master Gardeners) For reservations, call Melissa Cobb at (972) 923-4631 Register online at <u>http://www.wisd.org/default.aspx?name=CO_LighthouseforLearning</u>

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

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 land-scape 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

SAVE THE DATE!

The Ellis County Master Gardener Association announces a Private Garden Tour 2018

Saturday June 2, 2018 9:00am until 2:00pm Midlothian TX

Five gardens will be open to the public with Master Gardener docents. Tickets \$10 Adults, children under 16 are free when accompanied by an adult. Purchase tickets at the gardens.

Additional information please contact Mattie Thompson at mattiethompson50@gmail.com

















• Prune spring-flowering shrubs soon after flowering. Keep the natural shape of the plant in mind as you prune and avoid excessive cutting except where necessary to control size.

• Roses have high fertilizer requirements. For most soils, use a complete fertilizer for the first application just as new growth starts, then use ammonium sulfate, or other high nitrogen source, every 4 to 6 weeks, usually just as the new growth cycle starts following a flowering cycle. For organic sources use cottonseed, rotted manures or alfalfa meal.

• Continue to spray rose varieties susceptible to black spot, using a spray recommended for fungus control every 7 to 10 days. Many of the Old Garden Roses and some of the newer ones have considerable resistance to black spot.

• Climbing hybrid tea roses may be pruned as soon as they complete flowering.

• Removing spent flowers, trimming back excessive growth, and applying fertilizer to an established annual bed can do wonders towards rejuvenating and extending the life of the planting.

• As soon as azaleas have finished flowering, apply an acid type fertilizer at the rate recommended. Don't over fertilize, as azalea roots are near the surface and damage can occur. Water thoroughly after fertilizing.

• Seeds of amaranthus, celosia, cosmos, marigold, portulaca, zinnia and other warm-season annuals can be sown directly in the beds where they are to grow. Keep seeded areas moist until seeds germinate. Thin out as soon as they are large enough to transplant. Surplus plants can be transplanted to other areas.



• It will soon be time for bagworms to attack junipers and other narrow-leafed evergreens. Control measures, such as Sevin dust or spray, should be applied while the insects and the bags are about one-half inch in length.

• When caterpillars attack live oak trees en masse, it is very alarming, but usually nothing can be done. A healthy live oak will usually regrow its leaves and resume normal activities.

• For instant color, purchase started annual plants. Select short, compact plants. Any flowers or flower buds should be pinched to give plants an opportunity to become established.

• Check new tender growth for aphids. A few can be tolerated, but large numbers should be controlled. Always follow label instructions on approved pesticides for control. Washing them off with a strong spray of water may be all that is necessary for adequate control.

• Many flower or vegetable seeds left over after planting the garden can be saved for the next season by closing the packets with tape or paper clips and storing in a sealed glass jar in your refrigerator.

• Start weeding early in the flower garden. Early competition with small plants can delay flowering. A mulch will discourage weed growth and make those that do come through easier to pull.

• Soil purchased for use in beds, low areas, and containers should be examined closely. Often, nut grass and other weeds, nematodes, and soilborne disease are brought into the yard through contaminated soil sources.



Watch newspaper and other publicity for information regarding wildflower trails, and open garden days. Plan to take a trip to enjoy beautiful gardens and trails that are abundant in many areas of Texas



April Showers Bring May Flowers





INDIAN TRAIL CHAPTER

Indian Trail Master Naturalists Events

Join the Indian Trail Master Naturalists at their monthly meeting on Monday, April 23, 2018. The program for the evening is entitled "Butterfly Rhythms—Population Patterns Throughout the Year". Dale Clark, Co-Founder of the Dallas County Lepidopterists' Society and Owner of Butterflies Unlimited will discuss his butterfly knowledge and interest with a program that covers butterfly rhythms-butterfly population patterns throughout the year. The program is free and follows the 6 p.m. Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. Meeting location: First United Methodist Church, Family Life Center 505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxaha-chie. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email <u>ellis-tx@tamu.edu</u>

Saturday, April 14, 2018 9am, Wildflower Walk. Members will be leading a walk at Mockingbird Nature Park. Join in this ½ mile stroll along the trails to identify wildflowers. Free to the public. Participants should bring drinking water, closed toes shoes, comfortable outdoor clothing and insect repellent if needed. The walk will be canceled if raining. Info at: <u>http://txmn.org/indiantrail/</u> or email: <u>Information@itmnc.com</u>



Eclectic Gardening With Jane Slone, Ellis County Master Gardener **THIS MONTH: WHY GARDEN**



Eat Healthier

The National Garden Bureaus wrote an article in 2006. The statements have not changed a lot in the last ten years. The number one reason in 2006, we gardened to produce healthy food. We have learned a great deal about pollution and how the pollutants stay in the soil for many years. When we garden, we control what goes in our garden soil. Healthy soil is important for plant growth.

The National Garden Bureau believes an easy solution is to grow your own vegetables. It's estimated that during WWII, 20 million homeowners had Victory Gardens that produced close to 40% of the fresh vegetables consumed in the United States. Start your own garden and know the food you're eating is fresh and safe with fantastic flavor not always found in grocery store produce. Both the Harvest for Health study and many school garden programs have shown that folks who grow their own veggies tend to eat more veggies, which brings all sorts of benefits. (For some, lower cholesterol, decreased risk of cancer, and better digestion among other things.) Not to mention that when you grow your own, you know it's free of chemicals and preservatives.

We may not be able to grow all our own food, but we can find markets that sell fresh vegetables. The local Farmers Markets have popped up throughout communities. Waxahachie Farmers Market is one choice.



Garden for Exercise

Because our country is in a national health crisis with substantial economic and social implications.

Just being outside can be good for the soul, and sunlight in moderation for Vitamin D is a benefit. Exercise is not the first thing we think of when we say gardening. Exercise can be an asset of being outside and working in the soil. Always use techniques that will not hurt your body from lifting and carrying heavy equipment.

Studies show that an hour of moderate gardening can burn up to 300 calories for women, almost 400 calories for men. Mowing the grass is like taking a vigorous walk. Bending and stretching to plant a garden compares to an exercise class, while hauling plants and soil is similar to weightlifting.

Garden to add Beauty.

Apartments to ranches can add beauty to their outdoor space. A simple garden on the balcony can add beauty with flowers that will grow in a limited space such as a container. If you enjoy cooking fresh food, tomatoes and some vegetables, and have a limited space, you can use containers for gardening. Herbs will survive in a small space and give freshness to the air. They can be used fresh or dried for cooking.

Ranches are inclined to grow foods for the livestock. They can also add a nice vegetable or flower garden around the house to enjoy. Small gardens with multiple types of vegetables have become very popular. Sharing of vegetables through a coop is one way to increase your fresh food.



When adding beauty to your landscape, trees and shrubs can provide a home for the birds and other wildlife in the area.



Garden to Learn

There are a variety of ways to increase gardening know-how such as seminars, Master Gardener programs, Vocational-tech courses and formal degree programs at a college or university. For some people, gardening is a lifelong hobby. For others, the love of plants can lead to a rewarding job at a local garden center, a large global company, or even owning their own business. A garden can be a source of flowers, vegetables, herbs, and other crops that can be sold at local farmers' markets and roadside stands. Real estate agents estimate that attractive landscaping increases a home's value by as much as fifteen percent.

Garden to Meet People

Whether it's with someone who lives down the street or halfway around the world on the Internet, gardeners love to talk about plants. Surplus tomatoes, a bouquet of flowers, or an extra plant, are gifts to be shared with friends and neighbors. Meeting other gardeners through garden clubs, plant organizations, and gardening

websites is an easy way to share information, ask questions and get involved. Garden to be creative. Gardening provides an outlet for creative and artistic expression. A garden's design can reflect a personal sense of style such as a romantic cottage garden or a peaceful Japanese garden, as well as provide a showcase for art and sculpture. With the wide variety of seeds and plants available

Eclectic Gardening (Continued from page 8)

in garden centers it's easy to experiment with new plants or change a garden's color scheme every year.

Garden to Win

For people with a competitive streak, gardening is a friendly way to show off their skills. Garden clubs regularly have shows that highlight the best flowers grown by local gardeners. County and state fairs offer an opportunity to show everyone the giant pumpkin, beautiful beans or luscious tomatoes harvested from the garden.

Garden for Emotional Needs and Spiritual Connections

Gardens play an important part in our wellbeing. A garden might serve as a tranquil retreat or private escape from the demands of everyday life. The beauty of flowers can lift spirits, while pulling weeds can be a great release for stress and excess energy. A harvest of colorful flowers or tasty vegetables gives a sense of achievement and feelings of success, while neighbors and visitors often express their appreciation for those efforts.

Garden for Lasting Memories

Gardening is a fun activity that can be shared with children and grandchildren, even if the garden is a single container or small spot in the yard. And a garden offers a beautiful way to remember a special person or time of life.







Featured Recipe of the Month

Asparagus with Spicy Nutmeg Butter From McCormick



Ingredients: ¹/₄ tsp ground nutmeg 1/8 tsp garlic salt 2 Tbls butter or margarine, melted 30 medium fresh asparagus spears (about 2 bunches) 1 Tbls olive oil $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pine nuts, toasted (optional)

Preheat broiler. Stir nutmeg, garlic salt, and red pepper into melted butter. Set aside Wash asparagus and break off stalks as far down as they snap easily, about 1-2 inches from ends. Arrange asparagus in single layer on a large rimmed baking pan line with foil; drizzle with oil and roll to coat. **Broil** asparagus 4-6 minutes or until crisp -tender, turning once. Place in a serving dish and pour seasoned butter over asparagus. Garnish with nuts, if desired. Makes: 5 servings

PEPPERS/APRIL IS THE TIME TO THINK ABOUT ADDING PEPPERS TO YOUR GARDEN

By: Jane Slone, Ellis County Master Gardener

MEASURE THE SOIL TEMPERATURE BEFORE PLANTING

Transplants: The best method to decide when to transplant your peppers is to measure soil temperatures about two inches below the surface. When you have three consecutive days with soil temperatures above 55° degrees, that is the ideal time to plant. For fall crops, the time to plant is approximately 100 days before the first expected freeze date. It is best to protect new plants from weather for a few weeks after planting, in both the spring and summer. Planting method: Peppers transplant easily and that is the most common method, 18-24 inches apart. The best transplants are about 7-8 weeks old, 5-6 inches tall and have good foliage free of any obvious disease. At planting time, the soil should be slightly moist. Pour approximately one cup of starter solution in each hole. Deep planting should be avoided. Water thoroughly and for a few weeks.

HOW DO I DECIDE WHICH PEPPER TO PLANT?

Varieties: The amount of capsaicin in a pepper determines how hot they are. This can be scientifically measured as Scoville units. Peppers can vary greatly in the amount of heat they generate when eaten. The bell pepper has a Scoville rating of 0, while the hottest pepper, the Naga Jolakia, has a rating of about 1 million Scoville units. If you want to know the rating of the peppers you are considering planting, you can Google Scoville scale and get the answers. If you do not know which type of peppers to plant, then plant a combination of sweet, mild, and hot peppers, to have the right pepper.

WHAT TYPE OF SOIL IS BEST FOR A GOOD CROP OF PEPPERS?

Soil: Peppers can be grown in a general-purpose soil. The soil should have nutrients for vegetables not flowers, and are easy to grow in most any healthy soil. Use lots of compost and organic material and mulch heavily. Peppers do best when planted on raised, well drained beds, as they like to have warm feet and don't do well with wet feet. When you water is more important than how you water. Avoid letting soil dry out enough causing plants to wilt. You may need to water approximately twice a week if Mother Nature does not supply the required water. Peppers do best if grown in full sun, with well-drained soil. Peppers like a slightly acid soil with pH between 5.5 and 7.5.

WHEN AND HOW MUCH FERTILIZER SHOULD I USE ON THE TRANSPLANTS?

Fertilizer: Dig the hole and add water before you plant. This reduces shock to the plant. You may use a starter solution to accelerate root production. It is best to not fertilize until the first set of blooms appear. You should mulch after the first fruit sets. Too much fertilizer can cause excessive stem growth and very few blooms. Use approximately half a handful of organic fertilizer per plant, or side dress with about 2 tablespoons of ammonium sulfate, or 1.5 tablespoons of ammonium nitrate in a circle around each plant.

HOW TO DECIDE WHEN TO HARVEST?

Harvest: Use a sharp knife or scissors and cut the peppers from the plant. Don't break peppers from plant. Some recommend cutting off the first set of peppers to stimulate faster production. Most peppers will turn colors (yellow, red, purple, etc.) when they are fully mature, but can be harvested when green.



NOW THAT THE TOMATOES ARE IN THE GROUND **IT IS PEPPER TIME**

Planting dates: Peppers are easily started from seed. This allows you to have varieties that might not be available at stores. After all danger of frost and the soil has thoroughly warmed, approximately 2 weeks after tomatoes are planted, it is safe to plant your peppers. Like tomatoes, peppers do best when transplanted.

Peppers need to mature and produce while nighttime temperatures are above 60° degrees and daytime temperatures are below 80° degrees. When temperatures are outside of this range, peppers tend to shed their blooms and produce smaller fruit. Most varieties completely stop fruiting when temperatures get above 90° degrees.

Exposure to temperatures in the low 40's for even a short period of time may stunt peppers, reducing their harvest.

If you started peppers from seed and they do not appear to be growing, it would be best to buy new plants.



Thank You All!

Thanks to the sponsors, exhibitors and visitors for making the 2018 Ellis County Master Gardener's Lawn & **Garden Expo a great success!**



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