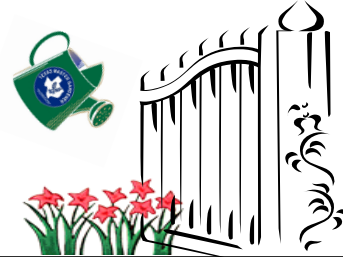




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume XI, Issue 6

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

June, 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

What's Happening in June?

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!**



- ☺ 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!**

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. Below are the upcoming themes for June and early July.

June 9 Kids Activity—The Master Naturalists return to help kids make Father's Day cards with a variety of items found in nature. Bring your kids, grandkids and neighborhood kids for a fun and educational time.

June 16 Pop Up Horticulture— presented by ECMG, Susan Gilliland, and features Kokedama demonstrations at 9:45am and 11am. Kokedama is a ball of soil, covered with moss, on which an ornamental plant grows. The idea has its origins in Japan where Kokedama are very popular. Kokedama is also called poor man's bonsai.

June 23 Totally Tomatoes—Tomatoes are at peak and are plentiful at the market. Here is your opportunity to sample the delicious flavor of locally grown, picked just days earlier, beautiful tomatoes.

June 30 Taste of Market-Pepper Festival—The growers have many varieties from sweet, mild to fiery hot. Learn about the many varieties and sample some salsas and other treats featuring peppers.

July 7 Cool Drinks & Sweet Treats—It's time to step back, relax and enjoy some refreshing iced teas and herbal waters while shopping the baker's booths. Look for tasty cookies, cakes, breads, muffins, and other sweet treats along with savory breads or purchase mixes ready to take home and bake.



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



There will not be a meeting during the month of June.

Be sure to mark your calendar for the July meeting! Carol Feldman, licensed landscape architect will be presenting "Designing for Habitat :Techniques for inviting wildlife into Our home landscape."

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION



Listen to KBEC

Saturday mornings at 8:10 a.m. on 1390 AM.

The Ellis County Master Gardeners have a fifteen 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 June—What Needs To Be Done?



Planting

- ◆ Buy and plant crape myrtles in bloom to be sure you are getting the desired color. Know the variety's mature size to avoid future pruning. Ask for varieties that are resistant to powdery mildew.
- ◆ This is the best time to plant vinca (periwinkle) in full sun. Look for the variety 'Cora' since it is resistant to soil-borne diseases. Water with drip irrigation or soaker hose to keep water off foliage.
- ◆ Plant these tropical annuals for their flowers: tropical hibiscus, 'Gold Star' esperanza, mandevilla, and Mexican heather. Use croton, bougainvillea, and variegated tapioca for their foliage color.
- ◆ June is the time to select day lily varieties as they reach peak bloom.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- ◆ It is time for the second application of an all-nitrogen, slow-release fertilizer on turf grasses. Cut the amount by half to prevent excessive growth which means more water and mowing!
- ◆ Fertilize container plants and hanging baskets with a water-soluble fertilizer every week or two.
- ◆ Prune back autumn sage and mealy cup sage by one-third their size. Deadhead salvias, as well as annuals and other perennials, to stimulate new to 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, mountain sage, Mexican mint marigold, copper canyon daisies, asters, and mums to keep them compact and to prevent buds from forming prematurely. Don't prune after September 1, when buds begin to form.
- ◆ Remove flower stalks on coleus, caladiums, lamb's ear, and basil before buds open. This will promote new leaf growth.

Garden Watch

- ◆ Take a critical look at your landscape while at the height of summer development. Make notes on how the landscape can be better arranged; plants that need replacement, overgrown plants that need to be removed; or possibly, areas that can be converted to more family-friendly activities. Save this information for implementation later in the year or next spring.
- ◆ Control aphids on crape myrtles with a strong spray of water.
- ◆ Spider mites can be troublesome, especially on tomatoes. Treat with an appropriate organic or synthetic pesticide.
- ◆ Control Webworms in pecan and other trees using a pole pruner. Remove while webs are small.
- ◆ Wrap the trunks of newly-planted Shumard oak and Chinese pistache trees to prevent sunscald and borers.

Conservation-Wise

- ◆ Properly designed, water-efficient landscapes need one inch of water per week. To determine how long to run an irrigation system to apply an inch of water, conduct a catch can test. For detail, go to <https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/irrigation>.
- ◆ Water without creating runoff: In clay soils, systems may apply water faster than it can be absorbed. Use the "cycle and soak method" by watering in 2 or 3 short cycles instead of one long cycle. New controllers have a cycle and soak setting.



TEXAS
DISCOVERY
GARDENS
AT FAIR PARK

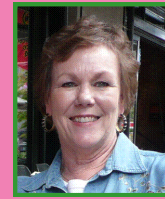
SHADE TOLERANT PLANTS
Saturday, June 16, 2018
10:00 am-11:00 am

Do you have a spot in your yard that doesn't get much sun? Finding plants that not only tolerate a shady location, but also provide interest is always a challenge. Join Roger Sanderson, Director of Horticulture as he shares with Dallas gardeners a vast palate of shade-friendly plant material. He'll also navigate through the tricky world of labeling a plant as 'shade tolerant' in local nurseries!

Go to their website txdg.org to register.

Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Rainlily – Amaryllis Family (Amaryllidaceae)
Cooperia drummondii Herb.

Region: 1, 2, 4, 6-7 (Ellis County is Region 4)
Size: 1 1-1/2 feet
Blooms: April – October, Perennial



Stems and leaves of rain lilies grow from a bulb and each stem usually bears a single flower. White, heavy-textured, fragrant blossoms flare from a pinkish tube that varies in length according to the species. One of the most common species in Texas is *C. pedunculata*, which has a tube up to one and one-half inches across. It blooms in the spring and early summer. *C. drummondii*, with a tube that may reach seven inches long and a relatively small flower head, is more widespread and blooms from late summer through fall. The habit of appearing in grassy areas soon after rains, often in large numbers, gives Rainlily their name.

YOU MIGHT ME A “HORTI-HOLIC” IF ...

Submitted by Shirley Campbell, Master Gardener

1. You took a career in gardening for the free plant benefits!
2. You've crossed international lines with plants in your underwear or socks.
3. You've dug something up in a cemetery that wasn't dead (or you keep a shovel in your car).
4. Your yard is planted in drifts of one.
5. You “liberated” a cutting, seed, flower, or plant from a public garden, park, or garden center without asking or paying.
6. You've lied to your loved ones about how much you spent on a plant/plants.
7. You've seriously considered not divorcing someone, moving to a better job, or upgrading to a better house because you couldn't move all of your plants.
8. You've pushed, prodded, elbowed, kneed, blocked, or in any way been less than nice at a plant sale.
9. You're trying to grow a shade tree from a seed.
10. You save old blankets and coats to protect plants in your garden during winter that should never be considered hardy here.
11. You've broken up with someone for hating yard work or because their dog dug up one of your plants.



12. You buy plants with no idea where they are going in your garden.
13. You've moved a plant in your yard more than three times. (Gardening is just musical chairs with plants.)
14. You can't experience a garden without browsing...like a sheep, nibbling, smelling, touching, fondling.
15. You can remember plant names better than people's names.
16. Your boss, spouse, or family doesn't understand that you love the green of plants more than the green of money.
17. You have a picture of a plant in your purse or cell phone you show off to friends, or you're carrying around a picture/plant to have identified.
18. You'd rather have a truck load of compost than a bouquet of roses or a box of chocolates.
19. You walk around your yard and describe plants by the names of the people you got them from.
20. The sales people at your local nursery know you by first name.

Source: Jimmy Turner, former Senior Director of the Dallas Arboretum

Gardening is cheaper than therapy and you get tomatoes!



June 17th

BEAT THE HEAT

*By Carolyn Foster
Ellis County Master Gardener*



This is the season for family vacations and very little rain. Proper watering is critical during this time of the year. If you're going away, get someone to water those container plants and ground covers. Perennials and ground covers grow slowly the first year after planting and speed up as they become better established. So, extra care of plants the first year is very important. Water deeply and in-frequently, moistening the soil about four to six inches down. Make sure plantings are weeded, and mulching three to six inches will choke out new weeds. Trim and prune dead or broken branches, stalks and stems, and over-grown or leggy plants. Remove spent blooms from plants. This will help plants survive the Texas heat that's on its way.

If you think that planting annuals will guarantee you nonstop color from spring to fall, think again. Unless it's self-cleaning, once an annual plant has produced a good crop of flowers and they've set seed for the next generation, that's it. The plant thinks its job is done. So, how do we keep the blooms coming? DEAD-HEAD! Simply remove the flowers BEFORE they set seed. The more you clip, the more the plant will churn out new blooms. Same thing with veggies, the more you pick, the more they produce. Most will bloom or produce until frost if the brutal heat doesn't get them first. So, get out there and clip away or pick, pick, pick. You will fill your house with flowers and your fridge with great home-grown goodies.

When plants start to get leggy and overgrown, one of the best things you can do is to prune them back a bit. Many plants are renewed and revived by this process, but sometimes plants go into HEAT CHECK. It's a plant's version of a summer vacation. Lobelia, Alyssum, and French marigold are some plants that like to chill out when the weather gets hot. Don't worry; when the nights get a little cooler, they will start to bloom again. Until then, just keep them watered and watch out for pests. When they start to bloom, feed them every three weeks and they will put on a show.

You can take cuttings from your favorite plants. Start with a good rooting hormone and a strong, healthy plant. Take a four to six inch cutting from a mature stem. Use clean, sharp clippers and clean with a solution of one part bleach to eight parts water after each cut. Wrap the cutting in a wet paper towel and cut again about ¼ below a node (where leaves meet the stem) when you're back inside. Pinch off the lower leaves of the bottom half so the stem is bare. Keep upper leaves in place, but no buds or flowers. Dip in rooting compound and put into a well misted growing medium (potting soil, rice hulls, etc.). Tamp soil, water lightly or mist again, and cover base of plant with plastic. Remove plastic one hour a day to prevent mildew. In three to five weeks, you should see new shoots forming. Remove plastic, protect as you would any young plant and you're good to go.

Hope these tips and ideas will help you and your garden get through the next few months of intense Texas sun.



Trivia: The hottest temperature ever recorded locally was 113° which occurred on June 26th and 27th of 1980.



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facebook®

Are you a Facebooker? Ellis County Master Gardeners are on Facebook and we'd love to have you join us. 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! You'll find us at the link below, 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.

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



Save The Date!
Saturday, March 30, 2019

VEGETABLE GARDENING IN JUNE

*Submitted by Pat Dockins, Master Gardener
(Originally printed June 2011)*



“How is your garden doing?” That’s the question I’ve been asking my fellow Master Gardeners lately. Most reply that, “Everything is looking good but tomatoes are coming along slowly.” For our garden, too, tomatoes look good, blooming etc. but not growing like I feel they should. The weather, of course, is the reason. Cool fronts coming through, then warm, then another cool front; well, the poor plants don’t know what to do. When the weather finally settles down, everything will take off.

Keep an eye out for squash bugs. Get to those as fast as you can. If you don’t want to use pesticides, you might try vacuuming them. We did that one year and it worked for a while but eventually the bugs won, which was okay as we had had our fill of squash. We like to use Sevin dust around the base of the plant first thing but you’ll have to renew it from time to time. If the bugs have won already, just replant.

Tomatoes have those awful looking hornworms that just devour the plant. If you notice all the leaves gone on an area of your plant, then start looking for the culprit. With patience you’ll see the ugly green worm. I wear a glove or use a pair of pliers to pick those. I can’t bear the thought of touching those things! Keep a rock handy to squash those critters.



By the first part of June your onion tops will begin to fall over. When two-thirds or more of them have fallen over, pull the onions. If there is no rain in the forecast for several days, you can leave them on top of the ground to dry before storing them. You need to store them in a well-ventilated place out of direct sunlight. The important thing is to keep moisture away from them. My granddad used old window screens to dry his onions. After they have dried for a week or two, cut the tops off to about an inch from the base. Also, trim the roots back at this time.

Cool weather crops are coming to an end. Pull plants that are dead, dying or have bolted and replant with warm weather crops like beans, squash, beets, okra, cucumber, black-eye peas, and Swiss chard. I would be afraid to try tomato transplants this late in the season. I don’t believe they would have time to make before the really hot weather comes on.

If you haven’t thinned your turnips, beets and carrots before now, do it so the root can develop. The tops of turnips and beets are edible if you like greens. I’ve never tried the carrot tops so I can’t say if they are any good or not.

Most of your plants can use another round of fertilizer at this time.

Get ready for a hot dry summer. With our new row crops we use soaker hoses covered by mulch. We’ve found that using at least three inches of mulch helps keep the roots cool and moist longer, which in turn keeps the plant producing longer. There is little water loss this way, as well. It also helps to keep the weeds under control. Remember if you live in the city of Waxahachie, you can get a pick-up and/or trailer full of mulch free. Call Waxahachie City Hall for directions.



Featured Recipe of the Month

Garden Tomato Salad

From Taste of Home

TOTAL TIME: Prep/Total Time: 15 min. **YIELD:** 8 servings



Ingredients

3 large tomatoes cut into wedges
1 large sweet onion cut into thin wedges
1 large cucumber sliced

Dressing

1/4 C olive oil
2 T cider vinegar
1 garlic clove minced
1 t minced fresh basil
1 t minced chives
1/2 t salt

Directions

In a large bowl, combine tomatoes, onion and cucumber. In a small bowl, whisk dressing ingredients until blended. Drizzle over salad; gently toss to coat. Serve immediately. **Yield:** 8 servings.

Nutritional Facts

1 cup: 92 calories, 7g fat (1g saturated fat), 0 cholesterol, 155mg sodium, 7g carbohydrate (5g sugars, 1g fiber), 1g protein.

Diabetic Exchanges: 1-1/2 fat, 1 vegetable.

Herbal Pet Care

Submitted by Arlene Hamilton
Ellis County Master Gardener



One of the many benefits of having an herb garden, especially one with a semi-cultivated area that pets are welcomed to enjoy, is the pleasure of watching them react to some of the plants. Dogs and cats will often chew on grasses to aid digestion or helpfully cause them to vomit up unhealthy foods. Many cats love catnip, cat mint, and cat thyme, but they, like dogs, often freely munch on the leaves of many herbs including parsley, basil, dandelion, mint, chervil, sorrel, and lemon balm – all rich in a variety of minerals and vitamins. Such snacking is often a sign that the pets are seeking certain nutrients lacking in their regular diet or they instinctively know that certain herbs also have medicinal properties to prevent or alleviate discomforts and illness.

Following are a few herbs that grow well in the North Texas climate and are beneficial to pets and animals:

Cat mints and its most noted cultivar Catnip, (*Nepeta cataria*), can cause cats to act foolish. The bruised leaves of a newly transplanted catnip plant release nepetalactone, a component of the essential oil that mimics a cat's sexual pheromones. Catnip thus acts as an aphrodisiac.

Cat thyme (*Teucrium marum*), more commonly seen in rock gardens than in herb gardens, might look like silver thyme at first glance, but your cat might think this fuzzy herb is a garden of earthly delight. Cat thyme belongs to the mint family, as does thyme. Cat thyme looks like a hairy, upright silver thyme, but actually it is in the germander genus, which consists of more than 300 species. Cat thyme achieves its cat appeal through different chemical compounds than those in catnip. The crushed leaves emit a strong fragrance suggestive of mint and camphor.

Rose hips have recently become popular as a healthy treat for pet chinchillas and guinea pigs. These small rodents are unable to manufacture their own vitamin-C and are unable to digest many vitamin-C rich foods. Rose hips provide a sugarless, safe way to increase their vitamin-C intake. Rose hips are also fed to horses. The dried and powdered form can be fed at a maximum of one tablespoon per day to improve coat condition and new hoof growth. The rose hip, or rose haw, is the fruit of the rose plant that typically is red-to-orange, but ranges from dark purple to black in some species. Rose hips begin to form in spring after the rose flower begins to fade, and ripen in late summer through autumn. Horses and livestock will seek out wild varieties of rose hips if allowed to grow in the pasture.

Garlic is an important herb for pets (and people). It cleanses and tones the entire digestive system. By removing excess mucus from the intestinal tract it keeps worms to a minimum. External parasites are also repelled by the smell of garlic. The most effective form of garlic is the freshly chopped cloves, mixed into food. Depending on the size of your cat or dog, give one half to two cloves to each pet two or three times a week.

Following is a highly nutritious recipe for a pet treat that will produce an eager and appreciative response from your pets:



Minty Cat & Dog Crunches

4 cups cooked millet	1/2 cup barley flour (or any other flour)
1/2 cup brown rice flour (or any flour)	1/4 cup yeast
1/2 cup skim milk	1/4 cup fresh or 1/8 cup dried parsley
1/2 cup fresh or 1/4 cup dried mint	1/2 cup vegetable oil
1 large clove garlic, finely chopped	1 cup wheat germ
4 cups cooked corn grits	2 tablespoons seaweed powder



Mix all ingredients together except oil. When thoroughly mixed, add oil slowly. Spread mixture about 1/4 inch thick onto lightly oiled cookie sheet. Place in 400°F degree oven for 45 minutes or until crisp. Allow to cool, and break into small pieces. Store in an air-tight container in a cool place.

June 9: Lego Terrariums—Build Awesome living Terrariums with your favorite Lego Theme. Bring your favorite Lego Characters or use some of ours. We will have Lego Pieces to add to your creation. This workshop will be a blast for young and old alike! Limited to 20 Spots. \$35 per creation.



June 23: Magic Unicorn Workshop—Make a magical garden filled with Unicorns and Rainbows. We will have decorative plants, unicorns, rainbows and colored sand to create a miniature world for your unicorn to live. Don't miss this magical workshop. Limited to 20 spaces. \$35 per creation.

June Workshops

June 16: Fairy Terrariums Workshop—Build a Terrarium with Fantastical Fairy scenes inside. We will use easy to care for Air Plants in these creations. Hang your creation anywhere inside for years of enjoyment. Fun for the whole family. Limited to 20 spots. \$35 per creation.

Events begin at 3 pm
Go to the website or Facebook to obtain tickets

When Attracting Butterflies—Don't Wing It

Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener



Sometimes the most beautiful part of the garden doesn't come from the ground. Butterfly gardens — gardens with plants selected and arranged specifically to attract the fluttering beauties — are becoming increasingly popular across Texas. Like all of nature's creatures, butterflies require food, shelter, and water. With planning, anyone can make these colorful visitors part of their surroundings year after year.

Gardeners hoping to lure butterflies to their landscape should first determine:

- * The butterfly species native to your region
- * Types of flowers most likely to attract nectar-feeding insects
- * Host plants best suited for the developing caterpillars



Planning ahead for the right plants to attract butterflies is a must when you want to enjoy these beautiful insects in your landscape. Butterflies are a welcome sight for many Texas gardeners and landscapers as they plan and

often grow their gardens to make them irresistible to butterflies.

Butterfly gardening requires some knowledge of local butterfly species, flowers that are attractive to nectar-feeding adults, and host plants for the developing caterpillars.

Marigolds, nasturtiums, zinnias, hollyhocks, and daylilies are among the favorites of butterflies. Also, a few of our very own Texas Superstars are popular with the butterfly population including; Gold Star Esperanza, Flare Perennial Hibiscus, Texas Lilac Vitex, and Lord Baltimore Perennial Hibiscus. The designation of a Texas Superstar is given only to the toughest, most reliable, and best-looking plants that have stood up to years of field trials by Texas A&M University's Agriculture Program. During the field trials, the plants receive minimal soil preparation, minimal water, and no pesticides.



The following tips will help make your garden, backyard or landscaped area a haven for butterflies:

- * Locate in a sunny area. Butterflies like direct sunlight and heat.
- * Provide shelter by planting along a fence, hedge or building if wind is a problem.
- * Avoid using chemical pesticides.
- * Provide a warm resting spot by placing a board or a few flat stones around the garden.
- * Fill a shallow saucer with water and sink it into the soil.
- * Provide food plants for the caterpillar. These can include milkweed, thistle, clover, goldenrod, and other natives in a spot where their invasive habits will not be a problem. Other menu favorites are carrots, dill, parsley, and nasturtium. Choices for the annual border include marigolds, red salvia, zinnias, lantana, cosmos, and impatiens.

Whether it's a backyard or a landscaped garden, make the most of your outdoor area this season by creating an inviting area for butterflies.

Photos: Top Left-Monarch Butterfly

Middle Right-Monarch caterpillar

Bottom Left-Black Swallowtail



Nancy Fenton was presented the Master Gardener Emerita Award by Susan Knapp during our May meeting. This award is presented to a Master Gardener volunteer for distinguished service to Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Nancy was a member of the class of 2002. Nancy has served on the board and as president numerous times, has worked many hours in the demonstration gardens, and placed in the state as an "Outstanding Individual Master Gardener".



GARDEN CHECKLIST FOR JUNE

by Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist, TX A&M

Take a critical look at your landscape at the height of summer development. Make notes of any plants that need replacement, overgrown plants that need to be removed, better arrangements for your landscape, and possible activity areas that can be enjoyed by family members. *These are good projects for next winter.*

Echinacea Perennial Echinaceas

Check for insects and diseases. Spider mites can be especially troublesome at this time. Insecticidal soaps or labelled miticides can be helpful in their control.



The best way to conserve garden moisture is mulching. A good mulch not only retains valuable moisture needed for plant growth, but also improves overall gardening success.

Hand pull or hoe weeds before they mature and produce seed.

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 cotton seed hulls will have about the same mulching effect as six inches of oat straw or four inches of coastal bermuda hay.

Removing faded flowers from the plant before it sets seed will keep plants growing and producing more flowers. A light application of fertilizer every four to six weeks will also be helpful.

Houseplants can be moved outside this month. Sink the pots in a cool, shaded garden bed to prevent them from drying out too quickly. Water pots, container plants, and hanging baskets often. Monthly feeding with a household fertilizer encourages continued growth.

Now is the time to plan for next spring. Consider digging and dividing any crowded spring bulbs. Once 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. Replant immediately in prepared soils.

June is the month to select day lily varieties as they reach their peak bloom.

Fertilize rose beds every four to six weeks. Apply small amounts of fertilizer high in nitrogen immediately after a flush of bloom or every four to six weeks.

There is still time to plant some of the heat-tolerant summer annuals. You can direct-seed zinnias and portulaca, and purchase periwinkle, salvia, marigold, and purslane plants for transplanting. Be sure to water transplants adequately until roots become established.

Pinch back chrysanthemums, Mexican marigold mint, autumn asters, and other late summer and fall blooming annuals to prevent the necessity for staking.

Reblooming 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*, and *Salvia leucantha* (Mexican bush sage) 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 1st, since flower buds begin forming about that time.



Indian Trail Master Naturalists Events



Join the **Indian Trail Master Naturalists** at their monthly meeting on **Monday, June 25, 2018**. The program for the evening is entitled "**Mammal Skins and Skulls**". Gwen Eishen, Educator for the Texas Wildlife Association and Certified Texas Master Naturalist, will explore identification and specialized adaptations of native Texas mammals with animal skulls and skins, all while learning about the animal's habitat, food sources, and adaptations for survival.

The program is free and follows the 6pm. Master Naturalist meeting that is also open to the public. Meeting location: First United Methodist Church, Family Life Center—Gathering Room, 505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email ellis-tx@tamu.edu

Join the Master Naturalists on **June 16**, at 9am for their Wildflower Walk at Mockingbird Nature Park. Stroll the 1/2 mile trail and identify wildflowers. This walk is free to the public. Participants should bring drinking water and wear comfortable shoes. The walk will be cancelled if raining.

Registration is now open for the annual **Master Naturalists Training Class** of the Indian Trail Chapter, serving Ellis County and Navarro County. Training includes weekly classes in Waxahachie on Tuesday nights, Aug 21-Nov 13, 2018, and three Saturday field trips. To register, email training@itmnc.com or visit their website to apply online at txmn.org/indiantrail/about. Applications are also available at the AgriLife Extension office at 701 South I-35, Suite #3, Waxahachie, TX 75165. For additional information, please call Lynn at 214.802.6993.



Eclectic Gardening

With Jane Slone, Ellis County Master Gardener

CHICKENS IN THE GARDEN. WHAT THEY CAN DO FOR THE GARDENER



There are many reasons people have chickens: pets, the eggs, the meat, or the fun of having a unique animal. I have had chickens for over twelve years. I must admit that I do not like eggs. The reason for my raising chickens was therapy. Chickens can be pets. My chickens were obtained as baby chicks and raised as pets. After they reached maturity and produced a large amount of chicken poop, the idea of adding the poop to the garden became apparent.

The benefit of having chickens for gardeners is the fertilizer. Some animal fertilizer must go through a period of being hot and then cooling. What this means, the heat kills the bacteria that could be harmful to humans. Cow manure is too hot to use directly. A period for drying is needed. Depending upon what the animal eats will determine the actions that must be taken before using in the garden. Rabbit and chicken poop are two of the best choices. The chicken fertilizer is a great organic way of adding nitrogen to the garden. If you are harvesting manure, it is recommended that you wear a mask. This will prevent inhalation of any harmful dust or organisms.

I leave the poop in a closed container for about ten days in the hot sun. This will make sure that any bacteria that could be harmful to humans will be destroyed. If you are adding it to your compost, this is a good way of getting nutrients into the garden without worrying about commercial fertilizer. I do make compost tea and use this in the garden. If you are interested in making compost tea, the recipe can be found on the Internet.



Another great reason for having chickens in the garden is pest control. Chickens will eat bugs. The problem is they do not discriminate between good insects and pests. My chickens will eat grasshoppers and other insects. Chickens will take care of squash beetles and grubs. Hornworms are a problem in the tomato garden. If allowed the chickens will eat the worms before you even know the worms are on the plants. I have observed the chickens looking at them and taking a step back. They may observe the worms before devouring. They will swallow small snakes as if they are spaghetti.

My chickens help keep weeds out of the garden. During the winter the birds have free range. They till the ground and loosen the soil. They do not eat the weeds when brown, but they will dislodge them from the soil and make it easier to remove the weeds. They do not nibble on the tomato plants. I do not know why, but they have never eaten anything that might be poisonous. With chickens roaming around, the birds are less likely to take huge bites out of your favorite tomatoes.

During the first few months of planting I keep the chickens out of the garden with inexpensive wire. The wire is easy to place around the plants and then remove once the plants become established. This allows the plants to develop roots. Chickens will root in the dirt to find a cool place to sit during the heat of the day. Some gardeners build long tunnels between the rows. This is in the form of wire tunnels; the tunnels can be moved if needed. This will allow the chickens to run between the rows but not into the vegetables rows.

Chicken food can get expensive. If you have chickens that free range it will cost less to feed the chickens. Chickens can free range in the spring and summer and will not need supplemental food, except calcium and water. Calcium is important for strong egg shells. The variety in their diet will provide fresh eggs with nutrients. If you were to inspect eggs and compare them, you would find that the color of the yolk varies based on what the chickens eat. If you have carrots that are not edible, give them to the chickens, they will gladly eat them. The yolks then take on an orange color, rich in vitamins.

Chickens are not for every gardener. They can get sick and need medical attention. They get old and no longer lay eggs. If you hatch them, they may be roosters. Roosters can become aggressive. Chickens need shelter and warmth in the winter. Before you invest in chickens for your garden, consider the pros and cons. As I stated earlier, they are pets; hand raised and many of them do not even know they are chickens.



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