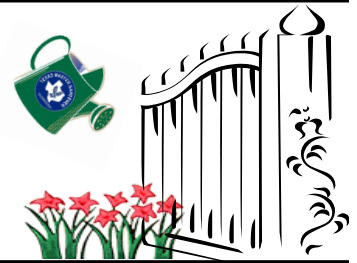




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume XI, Issue 12

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

December, 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

2019 Master Gardener Calendar

The Ellis County Master Gardeners are proud to present our 13th annual gardening calendar. Our theme this year is *"Gardening in the Extre"*.

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



The calendars should be available by the 2nd week in December

Merry Christmas to you all!

Ellis County Master Gardeners and Sponsors

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Listen to KBEC

Saturday mornings at 8:10 a.m. on 1390 AM and 99.1 FM.

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 December....What Needs To Be Done?



Planting

- * Plant berry-producing trees and shrubs to add winter color to your landscape. Choices include possumhaw and yaupon holly, Carolina buckthorn, rusty blackhaw viburnum and American beautyberry.
- * Plant pre-chilled tulip and hyacinth bulbs mid to late month. Plant bulbs in masses for best effect.
- * Daffodil bulbs may still be planted. Look for early and small-flowering varieties that tend to naturalize and return yearly.
- * Considering a living Christmas tree? Choose an adapted plant. Juniper, Arizona cypress and pyramidal hollies are good options. While indoors, place the tree in the brightest natural light and keep soil moist. Do not leave indoors for than two weeks.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- * Apply a root stimulator, such as liquid seaweed or a high phosphorus fertilizer, to newly planted trees and shrubs.
- * Do not top crape myrtles or remove the central leader of any shade tree. It destroys the crape myrtle's natural shape, and delays blooming by five or six weeks. If your plant is too tall or too wide, remove or relocate it, and replace with something smaller that will not require trimming.
- * Remove mistletoe from trees as soon as it becomes visible. Use a pole pruner to remove the entire twig from infected branches before the mistletoe produces berries. There are no effective consumer products to control parasitic plant.

Garden Watch

- * Protect tender vegetation from cold with a lightweight frost cloth available at most nurseries and garden centers.
- * Continue to water lawns, newly planted trees, shrubs and perennials if rainfall is insufficient.
- * Prepare garden soil for spring planting by tilling in six inches of organic matter (compost) to a depth of eight to ten inches.
- * Take time during the holidays to check out the new seed and nursery catalogues. Order early to ensure availability.
- * Let's not forget our feathered friends during the winter when their natural food supply is limited. Providing sunflower, safflower and thistle seed, suet and fruit will attract many species of birds to your backyard. Be sure to provide water.

Conservation-Wise

- * Create a wildlife-friendly landscape that attract birds, bees and butterflies by planting a diversity of native and adapted plants. Visit http://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/wildscapes/. Also, check out <https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/design/plant-database> for recommended plants.
- * Apply two to four inches of mulch in newly planted landscape beds. Mulch protects against winter freeze damage, conserves moisture, controls weeds and reduces erosion.
- * Remember the Earth Kind® Challenge that you took in January? To learn how many new, earth-friendly practices you adopted this year, return to <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/challenge/test> and retake the test. By implementing Earth-Kind® practices, you can create beautiful, easy-care landscapes, while conserving our natural resources and protecting the environment.

Ellis County Master Gardener Monthly Meeting—You are invited!

Second Tuesday of the month



The Master Gardeners will be having their Christmas party and gift exchange. There will not be a guest speaker during this meeting.

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 Ave., Waxahachie. For info, call (972) 825-5175.

Why Do I Need to Keep a Gardening Journal?

(from Smith County Master Gardeners 2018 Calendar)

Keeping a gardening journal takes some of the guesswork out of gardening. It can be an invaluable reference tool. Reviewing your journal yearly, you will begin to identify microclimates in your particular landscape as well as area weather patterns. Noting your successes and failures will keep you from repeating mistakes and help you plan for the future. Your garden journal may be as simple as notes on a calendar or an elaborate scrap-book. Using a computer is quick and easy and enables you to include digital photos. Maintaining a garden journal will increase your confidence as a gardener and offers a wonderful feeling.





Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian



Tropical Sage – Mint Family (Lamiaceae)+
Salvia coccinia Buchoz ex Etlinger

Region: 1 - 4, 6 – 8 (Ellis County is Region 4)
Size: 1 – 3 feet
Blooms: March - December, Perennial



Tropical sage is an upright, aromatic, hairy plant with square stems typical of the mint family. Bright red flowers are about an inch long and two-lipped, with the upper lip narrow and extended forward. The lower lip is broad and three-lobed. Flowers are in clusters of well-separated whorls that form a long, slender spike. Leaves are opposite and stalked, saw-toothed or scalloped on the margins. Other red *Salvias* in the state are *S. roemeriana*, usually found in shaded, rocky woods, with erect to reclining stems; *S. greggii*, a woody shrub of west Texas; *S. regla*, found in the Chicos Mountain, and *S. penstemonoides*; a rare Edwards Plateau endemic. Their flowers attract many pollinators, especially hummingbirds. A long flowering season makes them a reliable source of nectar. As the same sage implies, *Salvia* can be used as a condiment or the leaves dried for tea. *Salvia* is represented in Texas by twenty-one species, six of which are shrubs.

Juniper Berry

By Arlene Hamilton, ECMG



Juniper, (*Juniperus communis*) is an evergreen shrub common throughout North America. The "berry" is not a true berry but the female seed cone with unusually fleshy scales, which give it a berry-like appearance. Male and female flowers occur on separate plants but only the female flowers produce berries. Most juniper species grow edible berries, but some are too bitter to eat. Warning, some species, such as *J. sabina*, are toxic and consumption is inadvisable. The cones from *Juniperus communis* or common juniper are used as a spice in northern European cuisine to add a sharp, clear flavor to game marinade, wild birds and other meat dishes. Juniper berries are commonly used in sauerkraut and various German, Austrian, Czech and Hungarian dishes. Commercially, juniper berries flavor gin, a liquor

developed in the 17th century in the Netherlands. If you have ever enjoyed a gin and tonic you have sampled the flavor of juniper. To harvest the berries, pick them fully matured in the fall and allow them to dry slowly, this can take six months or longer, then store in a tightly sealed container in a dark cool cabinet or pantry. Or you can order a small quantity from your favorite herb and spice shop. The berries lose their flavor quickly so don't purchase more than you will use in a short time.

During the Christmas holidays juniper branches are brought into the home for decoration. Their piney, aromatic leaves add a fresh cedar scent and are used to make garlands and wreaths. Some juniper trees are mistakenly given the common name "cedar," for example *J. virginiana*, the red cedar that is used in cedar drawers and chests. An essential oil extracted from juniper berries is used in aromatherapy and perfumes.

Juniper berries have been found in ancient Egyptian tombs including the tomb of Tutankhamen. The berries probably came from Greece and were used as a medicine long before they were mentioned as a food. The Romans used juniper berries as a cheap domestically-produced substitute for the expensive black pepper and long pepper imported from India.

Common juniper grows wild and many of the cultivars are popular in the Southern landscape. Junipers vary in size and shape, from trees 20 to 40 feet tall to columnar or low spreading shrubs with long trailing branches. They are evergreen with needle-like or scale-like leaves.

During a visit to my former hometown, Webster Groves, Missouri, I was involved with an herbal festival. One of the items for sale was a "Juniper Berry Foot Bath". Each muslin packet contained Epsom salts, juniper berries and baking soda with instructions to fill a basin with several inches of warm water, add the contents and soak your feet for several minutes. Seems like a perfect way to finish a day of holiday shopping.

A quick search through my German cookbooks and Williamsburg recipes found juniper berries listed as ingredients in Sauerbraten, Roasted Pork, Roast Venison with Red Wine Sauce, Pheasant with Stuffing, Steamed Spiced Sauerkraut, Carrot and Potato Bake, as well as many stews and slow roasting dishes. So, if there is a hunter in the family or you enjoy hearty meals, give juniper berries a try.

Texas Superstar— Phalaenopsis Orchid

Information collected and submitted by Susan Ellis, Ellis County Master Gardener

Orchids compose the largest family of flowering plants in the world. They occur on every continent except Antarctica so obviously there should be one that can be easily grown in Texas. The Phalaenopsis, commonly known as the Moth Orchid, is a beautiful yet easy to grow indoor plant. Phalaenopsis orchids are practically pest free, require little maintenance and with proper care thrive in the low light conditions of the modern home.

Care of Phalaenopsis Orchids

Prepared by the Education Committee, the American Orchid Society

Modified by Dr. Yin-Tung Wang, The Texas A&M University System, Dept. of Horticultural Sciences



Light The *Phalaenopsis* orchids grow well near bright windows, with no direct sun light. An east window is ideal in the home; shaded south or west windows are acceptable. In dull, northern winter climates, a full southern exposure may be required. Artificial lighting is acceptable: using two or four tube fixtures suspended six inches to one foot above the foliage for 12 to 16 hours a day. In a greenhouse, heavy shade must be provided to allow 800 to 1,500 fc of light. No shadow should be seen if you hold your hand one foot above the leaves. If leaves are hot, reduce light intensity.

Temperature for *Phalaenopsis* should be above 60°F at night and between 70° and 82°F during the day. Although higher temperatures result in fast leaf and root growth, lower light and good air movement are necessary. Do not exceed the limit of 95°F. Temperatures below 78°F for three to five weeks with good light are needed for initiating flower spikes. Wide fluctuating temperatures and low humidity can cause bud drop on plants with flower buds ready to open.

Water is especially critical for this orchid. The medium should never be allowed to dry out completely. Plants should be thoroughly watered and not watered again until nearly dry, but not until bone dry. In the heat of the summer in a dry climate, this may be every two to three days, whereas during the winter of a northern climate, it may be every ten or more days. Do not allow water to accumulate in the crown for long to avoid decaying diseases. Do not sit pots in standing water for long.

Humidity is recommended to be between 50-80% of relative humidity. If RH is lower than 40% in the home, set plants on trays of gravel, partially filled with water so that pots never sit in water. Grouping plants together can slightly raise the humidity in the immediate surrounding area. In humid climates, such as in a greenhouse, it is imperative that the humid air is moving to prevent fungal or bacterial diseases to set in.

Fertilizer should be applied on a regular schedule, especially if the weather is warm when plants are actively growing. Application of a complete fertilizer, such as Miracle Gro, Peters 20–20–20 or similar, at a rate of half to one teaspoon per one gallon of good quality water at each watering. Reduce this frequency to every other or third watering when it is cool. Make sure that an ample amount of water is applied to allow some excess water to drain from each pot. Water with a high salt concentration should be avoided.

Potting is best done in late spring or early summer after blooming has completed. *Phalaenopsis* plants must be potted in quick draining mixes, such as fir bark, tree fern fiber, chunky sphagnum peat, charcoal, perlite, or combinations of these. Root rot will occur if plants are allowed to sit in an old, soggy medium. Your young plants should grow fast enough to need repotting yearly and should be potted in a finer grade medium to allow good root contact. Mature plants potted in a coarser medium may stay in the same pots for years, provided that medium is changed when needed. To repot, remove all old medium from the roots, trim off rotted roots, and spread the remaining roots over a handful of medium in a pot. Fill the rest of the pot with medium, working through the roots, so that the junction of the upper roots and the stem is slightly below the medium. Be careful not to leave large air pockets. Use a stick to push the medium in between the roots. Keep plants in shade and wait for one to three days before watering.

NOTE: Each individual bloom lasts **80 to 120 days**. However, exposure to the fumes and gases from gas stoves, automobiles, and cigarettes can cause all the flowers and buds to drop prematurely in a few days.

Growing Christmas Trees in Texas

Growing Christmas trees can be profitable but requires time (3-5 years) and a long-term financial investment to produce high quality trees. Virginia pine is the major Christmas tree species for the acidic soils of East Texas. Afghan pine is the choice for the more arid, alkaline soils in Central and West Texas. Other species planted in limited amounts include eastern redcedar, deodar cedar, Arizona cypress, sand pine and spruce pine.



In the Garden

With Monica Nyenhaus, ECMG

The question I get asked the most from new veggie gardeners AFTER their first try is, “what do you do to get that harvest?”. First, this is going to be a long story as my husband would say.

The time to start your vegetable garden is now. October would be best, but anytime in the winter is a good time to start preparing for your new garden because we start growing in mid-January!

Our soil in Ellis County is clay based, but full of nutrients. You need to amend the soil and pick out caliche for ten years or bring in soil for raised beds. Either way be sure your soil and any amendments are of excellent quality. The better the soil, the better the harvest.

Make sure your garden has at least eight hours of sunlight a day, preferably morning to early afternoon. Our heat in the summer is brutal on tomatoes and peppers. If you can provide late afternoon shade, it is a wonderful reprieve from the scorching heat in July and August.

My first and best choice as an amendment is mushroom compost. It is the most common compost to put in your vegetable garden. If you have your own compost, use it, but most of us don't. Almost all of the local nurseries or soil suppliers will carry compost in bulk. I have a pretty large garden, which is about 30 x 70 feet. I bring in six yards of compost each year and till it into the existing bed.

I have heard from several seasoned gardeners that if you spread liquid molasses over the newly tilled compost it helps break down the compost faster and adds nutrients to the soil at the same time. Another amendment, which helps prevent fire ants and other bad bugs, is diatomaceous earth (DE). Texas A&M has done research in tilling DE into the soil to prevent pests in farming and it has been successful. There is nothing worse than standing over a zucchini plant, harvesting your veggies, then jumping all over brushing fire ants off your legs! Because the soil is now so loose, it makes for a great haven for those little pests to habitat in. Make sure you buy feed grade DE so as not to kill or poison yourself, the plants, or your pets.

There are commercial fertilizers out there you can add in, but I use natural things like egg shells, worm castings, soft rock phosphate, even banana peels! Do some research on this when it's freezing cold and then get your mix together and get it in the ground, so it can begin to break down and add the needed nutrients into the soil for your first or next planting.

It's important to test your soil first to see what it needs. You can stop by the Ellis County Extension Office to get a soil sample test kit. By doing this you can determine what amendments you need to add to your soil before embarking on a shopping spree. Each amendment has its own properties that will change the nutrient content of the soil. But you can never have too much compost! Just make sure it is not HOT when you plant because it will burn the roots. That's the reason to get it in before you plant so it breaks down and the nutrients are readily available to the plants when you start putting them in or sowing your seeds.



Save The Date!
Saturday, March 30, 2019



Regardless of what you plan to use in the garden, the important thing is that the soil has the proper nutrients in it to feed the plants. Most vegetables are heavy feeders, so the garden is quickly depleted of the needed food for them to thrive. Once they are in the ground and going, then you can fertilize every two weeks or so during the growing season. This is an entirely different topic and as with soil amendments there are many ways to add nutrients. This is just what I have been taught and learned from seasoned vegetable gardeners.

As an honorable mention, I could not end without saying that watering consistently is the second most important issue when growing vegetables. In Texas, we either get too much or not enough rain. Last year for Christmas, my husband installed a drip system in the garden. It's wonderful and well worth every cent.

Now that you have your homework, it's time to sit with a cup of hot tea, do some research on different fertilizers making sure that you are referencing growers in our area, talk to the master gardeners, shop some seed catalogs, and dream about the abundant harvest you will be eating in the spring. Hopefully, this information will help you get off to a good start this next season.

Interested in becoming a
2019 Expo Sponsor OR
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Contact James Kocian at





The Lure of Fragrance in the Garden

By Gail Haynes, Ellis County Master Gardener

Did you ever enter a garden and notice a wonderful fragrance and try to track down the source? Many flowers have fragrance when sniffed up close but some are so aromatic that they can permeate the entire garden. Fragrance has been an important part of gardens forever, but modern breeding has favored flower size and colors while too often overlooking scent. Roses are a good example. The spicy richness of 'Maggie', 'Belinda's Dream' and 'Duchesse de Brabant' leave an impression not easily forgotten.

Sweet Olive (*Osmanthus fragrans*) is a small tree or large evergreen shrub that flourishes over much of the South, especially in the more acidic soils of East Texas. Its small, creamy white blossoms occur during warm spells all fall, winter and spring, and on a still day can be experienced 20 or 30 feet

from the source. The same is true of winter honeysuckle, (*Lonicera fragrantissima*). It blooms every year in January and February with lemony scented yellowish blossoms. It is one of the few shrubs that thrives equally well in all areas of our state.

Gardenias are another heirloom favorite. Although they prefer acid soils, gardenias were so highly prized by our ancestors that even in the hot, dry areas of our state, they could prosper when the soil was amended with leaf mold, peat moss or other similar soil amendments. Planted outside your bedroom window it could scent the entire garden and house when at its peak in late spring, early summer.

In South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley citrus is an option. Other areas can grow citrus in containers if provided protection during freezing temperatures. Satsumas, kumquats, tangerines and grapefruit are all possibilities, and they all have wonderfully fragrant flowers. If you have ever been in a citrus grove at bloom time, you know that it is a special experience.

Now is a good time to plant narcissus and they, too, are among the most fragrant garden plants. Narcissus 'Grand Primo' has been around for hundreds of years and is probably our most reliable spring flowering bulb. N. 'Golden Dawn' is another widely adapted choice and blooms a little later in spring. Order or purchase bulbs now and plant as soon as they arrive. They are best when planted in groups or "drifts" of a dozen or more.

Now is also a good time to plant seeds of sweet peas. As their name implies, sweet peas have a wonderful fragrance and are an all time favorite. In North Texas wait till late winter to plant them. For the rest of the state select a place that has a little protection from the North. Prepare the soil by adding compost or composted pine bark along with some cotton seed meal or slow release garden fertilizer. Plant next to a fence or trellis so that the vines will have support. Two favorites that are very old and reliable are 'Painted Lady' (pink) and 'Cupani' (purple & rose). Both are usually available from seed sources. You should have lots of fragrant bouquets by late March and April.



Winter Backyard Birding

Bird watching is one of the most popular hobbies in the country and is second only to gardening. That makes sense because one can participate in both hobbies at the same time.

Birds really need our help in finding water during the winter months, especially if rains are not plentiful. Offer a constant source of clean water for drinking and bathing. In addition to being a source for drinking, your container will serve as a bathtub as well! All birds need to maintain a ritual of preening their feathers, even in winter. Just remember to replenish the water when needed.

Different species are attracted to different types of food. Some birds prefer seed, small nuts and berries; some eat insects and some birds eat anything they can find. Cardinals, purple finches, chickadees and titmice love black oil sunflower seeds. Goldfinch prefer niger seed. Doves will eat millet. Carolina wrens are insect eaters and enjoy suet. Blue jays love peanuts, berries, fruit and insects. Mockingbirds eat insects, fruit, and can strip a chili pequin bush in no time! Instead of pruning back freeze-burned perennials, consider leaving the dried seed heads on the dead plants. They too, are a seed source.

Many of our birds love suet, and it serves as a substitute for insects in winter. Suet is nothing more than pure beef fat. Suet cakes are a great energy source in winter when insects are harder to find.

If your landscape is in need of trees and shrubs, winter is a good time to research the berry-producing varieties available. Some of our most common berry-producing shrubs are American beautyberry, the hollies, the yaupons, nandina, ligustrum, Japanese yew, pyracantha, lantana and chili pequin. Should you desire to add berry-producing plants to your landscape, be sure to request female plants when shopping. Male plants do not produce berries.

A winter garden full of feathered friends will bring colorful life to our currently dormant landscapes, along with the feeling that spring is just around the corner. So, don't forget to feed the birds.





December Clean-Up

By Carolyn Foster, ECMG

As fall progresses and temperatures drop, plants that do not die go dormant. This is a time we can catch up on other gardening projects. We can clean up our landscapes and prepare our gardens for spring plantings.

- Clean out blackened stems and foliage of dead plants; they may harbor disease pathogens and insect eggs that can overwinter in the beds.
- While it may appear all activity has stopped, much is going on in the soil until it freezes. Newly transplanted trees and shrubs, perennial divisions and hard bulbs are growing roots, drawing on soil nutrients and moisture around them.
- Earthworms and other microbes in the soil are still producing the organic materials from goodies they are finding in the soil. Summer mulch is decomposing.
- It is important to spread a thick winter layer to protect plants and soil over winter months. Mulching now will help keep the soil temperature even.
- To keep rodents from nesting in the soil, wait until the ground freezes before adding about 6" of mulch. Mulch up to the crown of the plant.
- Mulch perennials around trees and shrub beds.
- Mulch bulb beds to keep soil from shifting and cracking, otherwise shallow bulbs can be heaved to the surface.
- Protect the bark of young trees from gnawing critters by wrapping with wire or tree guard products.
- The last feeding for roses should be 2 months before the first frost. Stop cutting blossoms so new growth will not be encouraged.
- Dig and divide spring and summer perennials now.
- Dig and discard dead and diseased plants. But do not put in compost piles.
- Water trees and shrubs deeply before the ground freezes.
- Feed trees less than a year old.
- Now is also an excellent time to clean, sharpen and store tools.
- Why do we prune plants?
 - a) Produce more and improve the quality of the blooms and fruit
 - b) Maintain a desired size or appearance
 - c) Re-establish a balance between root and branch systems after transplanting
 - d) Rejuvenate older, neglected plants
 - e) Repair any injuries to the trunk and branch systems; damaged wood is an open invitation to disease
- When should we prune?
 - a) Spring is the best time to remove any wood damaged by winter's wind, ice or snow
 - b) Summer is the time shear evergreens, hedges and early blooming shrubs after the last flowers fade
 - c) Fall is a good time to prune certain roses, clematis, hydrangea, crape myrtle, hibiscus, grape vines and small berry fruit
 - d) Late winter is the best time to prune fruit trees, certain roses and broad-leaf evergreens

Santa's Garden Christmas Party

December 8, 5-8pm

Join us to meet and take pictures with Santa! Listen to Christmas carols with the Midlothian High School Choir, while enjoying Hot Chocolate and S'mores! Fun for the whole Family! Buy Tickets Online!

Earthtones Greenery
presents...
Santa's Garden
CHRISTMAS PARTY
DECEMBER 8, 5-8PM
with Special Guest
from the North Pole
Santa Claus
MEET SANTA FROM 5-7:30 PM

- Hot Chocolate
- Christmas Music
- Christmas Lights
- S'Mores
- Pics w/Santa
- Gingerbread House Workshop

Benefiting
TOYS for TOTS
Bring a new, unwrapped toy to help fill up the Firetruck! The Marines will be on hand to collect the toys for children in need!

810 E Main St. Midlothian TX 76065 * 972-723-0702

GARDEN CHECKLIST FOR DECEMBER

by Dr. William C. Welch

Professor & Landscape Horticulturist, TX A&M

- Continue to set out cool-season bedding plants, such as pansies, violas, stock, snapdragons, and dianthus.
- Don't get in a hurry to prune woody plants. Late December through February is usually the best time to prune them.
- Don't spare the pruning shears when transplanting bare-rooted woody plants. Cut the tops back at least one-third to one-half, to compensate for the roots lost when digging the plant.
- Drain gasoline from power tools and run the engine until fuel in the carburetor is used up.
- Drain and store garden hoses and watering equipment in a readily accessible location. The lawn and plants may need water during a prolonged dry spell.
- Berrying plants, such as holly and yaupon, may be pruned now while they can be enjoyed as cut material inside the house.
- Use good pruning practices when selecting Christmas greenery from landscape plants. Don't destroy the natural form and beauty of the plant.
- Prolong the life of holiday-season gift plants by providing proper care. Check to see if the pot wrap has plugged up the bottom drainage. Don't overwater. Keep out of drafts from heating vents and opening doorways. Fertilizer is seldom needed the first few months.
- Want to start cuttings of your favorite Christmas cactus? As soon as it has finished blooming, select a cutting with 4 or 5 joints, break or cut it off, and insert the basal end into a pot of moderately moist soil. Place it on a windowsill or other brightly lit area. The cuttings should be rooted within 3-4 weeks.
- Plant spring-flowering bulbs if you haven't already done so. Be sure to refrigerate tulips and hyacinths for 6-8 weeks prior to planting.
- Take advantage of bad weather and holiday time to study seed and nursery catalogues as well as good gardening books.



Featured Recipe of the Month

Coffee-Roasted Carrots

From Cooking Light



Ingredients

- ~ 1½ pounds multicolored medium carrots, trimmed and peeled (halved lengthwise, if large)
- ~ 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ~ ¾ teaspoon instant coffee granules, crushed
- ~ ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ~ ½ teaspoon light brown sugar
- ~ ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ~ 1/8 teaspoon fennel pollen (optional)
- ~ 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- ~ 1 teaspoon lemon zest

How to Prepare

Preheat oven to 425°F. Toss carrots with oil, coffee, salt, sugar, pepper, and, if desired, fennel pollen. Arrange in an even layer on a rimmed baking sheet. Roast at 425°F until browned and tender, 20 to 25 minutes, stirring halfway through cooking. Transfer to a platter, and sprinkle with parsley and lemon zest.



Holiday Trivia



1. Who played George Bailey in the Christmas classic "It's A Wonderful Life"?
2. What Christmas beverage is also known as "milk punch"?
3. What Christmas-themed ballet premiered in Saint Petersburg, Russia in 1892?
4. What much-reviled Christmas edible is known for its long shelf life?
5. What Bing Crosby song is the best-selling single ever?
6. "Miracle on 34th Street" centers on what real-life department store?
7. What beverage company has been using Santa Claus in its advertising since 1931?
8. According to legend, what holiday goodies were shaped to resemble a shepherd's staff, as a way to remind children of the shepherds who visited baby Jesus?
9. What figure from English folklore came to be associated with Santa Claus?
10. "Twas the Night Before Christmas" was originally published under what name?
11. In what modern-day country was Saint Nicholas born?
12. What Christmas carol does the Peanuts gang sing at the end of "A Charlie Brown Christmas"?
13. What well-known Christmas carol became the first song ever broadcast from space in 1965?
14. In the 1964 classic "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," what was the name of Rudolph's faithful elf companion?
15. What traditional Christmas decoration is actually a parasitic plant?
16. In Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," what was Mr. Scrooge's first name?
17. Per a recent holiday fad, what "spy" hides around the house, reporting back to Santa on who has been naughty and nice?
18. In the TV special "How the Grinch Stole Christmas," what three words best describe the Grinch?
19. How many reindeer are featured in the poem "Twas the Night Before Christmas"?
20. What Christmas decoration was originally made from strands of silver?

Indian Trail Master Naturalists Events



The Indian Trail Master Naturalists will not be having a monthly meeting in December. Join them for their next scheduled meeting January 28, 2019. 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., Waxahachie. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email ellis-tx@tamu.edu

There will not be any Wildflower and/or Bird Walks until possibly February, 2019. Info at: <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/> or email: Information@itmnc.com



Find us on:
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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>

Merry Christmas

Answers

1. Jimmy Stewart
2. Eggnog
3. The Nutcracker
4. Fruitcake
5. White Christmas
6. Macy's
7. Coca Cola
8. Candy Canes
9. Father Christmas
10. A Visit from St. Nicholas
11. Turkey
12. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
13. Jingle Bells
14. Hermey
15. Mistletoe
16. Ebenezer
17. The Elf on the Shelf
18. Stink, stank, stunk
19. Eight (no Rudolph!)
20. Tinsel



BECOME A TEXAS MASTER GARDENER

Do you like the feel of the earth between your fingers, the fragrance of growing flowers, the taste of homegrown tomatoes and herbs? Do you want to share your interest in gardening with others? Become a Master Gardener! The Master Gardener Program is a volunteer development program offered by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and is designed to increase the availability of horticultural information and improve the quality of life through horticultural projects in your community.

What is a Master Gardener?

The Texas Master Gardener program is an educational volunteer program conducted by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service of the Texas A&M University System. Master Gardeners are members of the local community who take an active interest in their lawns, trees, shrubs, flower and vegetable gardens. They are enthusiastic, willing to learn and help others, and able to communicate with diverse groups of people. What really sets Master Gardeners apart from other home gardeners is their special training in horticulture. In exchange for their training, persons who become Master Gardeners contribute time as volunteers, working through their county's Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office to provide horticultural-related information to their communities.

Is the Master Gardener program for me?

To help you decide if you should apply to be a Master Gardener, ask yourself these questions:

- ~ Do I want to learn more about the culture and maintenance of many types of plants?
- ~ Am I eager to participate in a practical and intense training program?
- ~ Do I enjoy sharing your knowledge with people?
- ~ Do I have enough time to attend training and complete volunteer service hour requirements?
- ~ Do I have special interests that could benefit the community or an interest in developing one? (e.g., bird or butterfly knowledge, native gardens, wildflowers, etc.)
- ~ Do I have a sincere interest in nature or gardening?

Training

If accepted into the Master Gardener Program you will attend a training course which offers a minimum of 56 hours of instruction that covers topics including: lawn care, ornamental trees and shrubs, insects, disease and weed management, soil and plant nutrition, vegetable gardening, home fruit production, garden flowers and herbs, plant propagation, and water conservation. These courses are taught by specialists in their specific areas.

The Master Gardener training course will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each Tuesday and Thursday throughout the month of February 2019, at the First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin Street, Waxahachie, Texas.

Volunteer Commitment

In exchange for the training, participants are asked to volunteer at least 75 hours of service by November 30th to earn the title of "Texas Master Gardener". The volunteer time will take place during the normal work week with the exception of the Annual Lawn & Garden Expo which is held on a Saturday in the spring. The type of service done by Master Gardeners varies according to community needs and the abilities and interests of the Master Gardener. Some Master Gardeners answer telephone requests for information related to gardening. Others staff plant clinics or displays in shopping malls, farmers' markets, or community centers. Master Gardeners may speak to local groups and conduct workshops. They may help establish school and community garden projects, work with 4-H youth, or assist their agent with news or radio releases related to gardening. The Master Gardener Coordinator in the county Extension office decides how volunteer time can best be used.

Certification

Participants become certified Master Gardeners after they have completed the training course and fulfilled their volunteer commitment.

If you are interested in the Master Gardener Program and would like an application, please contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office in Ellis County at 972-825-5175, e-mail Ellis-tx@tamu.edu or find the application on the master gardener website, ECMGA.com. Applications will be mailed upon request and must be returned no later than January 11, 2019, at which time you will be called to schedule an interview.

Note: Master Gardeners are representatives of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. In all volunteer work related to the program, Master Gardeners follow the research-based recommendations of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. The title "Texas Master Gardener" can be used by volunteers only when engaged in Extension-sponsored activities.

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.



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!

Gold



Bronze



Green

AmeriGrafix, Boyce Feed & Grain, CNB of Texas, Gerdau, Holcim, Living Earth Technologies, Renewal by Andersen Roland's, Nursery & Landscape, Tex-Scapes Greenery, Texas Tree Farm, Waxahachie Civic Center

Exhibitors

360 Painting of South DFW
Adam Rope State Farm
Angie & Teresa's Garden Store
Artisan Outdoor Lighting
Barris Pottery & Ceramics
Beldon Dallas
Best Bug Bait
Bertha's Best
Blue Moon Soaps
Bluebonnet Worm Farm
Boyce Feed & Grain
C & J Farms
Central Kubota
Chautauqua Preservation Soc
Concrete and More
Costco Wholesale
Creative Quilters Guild, Ellis Co.
Custom Fence & Pergola

DFW Custom Decks
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Ennis Garden Club
Flamingo Food & Beverage
Garden Charms
Garden Variety Organics
Gardenscapes by Diane
Girl Scouts NETX
Goss, Karl & Jim
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H-E-B
Hollyberry Herb Farm
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Living Earth Technology Co.
Native Solar
Ovilla Garden Club
Peachy Page Farm
Perline Company Inc.
Prairielands Groundwater GCD
Rain Drop Studio
Real Time Pain Relief
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RiverMist Pools & Spas
Rolen's Honey Bee's
Silverado Lawn & Landscape
Skinkle Tools
Synthetic Turf of North Texas
Texas Rustic Works
Texas Toffee
Texas Tree Farms
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Tommy's Bird Houses
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