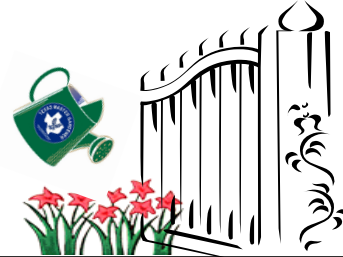




Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume XII, Issue 6

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

June, 2019

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. Following are the upcoming themes for June:

June 1 TASTE OF MARKET: Market chefs Cheryl and Arlene will be featuring Texas grown peaches in their samplings. The peach crop is a little late this year, slowed down by the extra rain but that also means the peaches should be extra tasty and juicy. Look for early varieties at the beginning of the month with the larger, freestone arriving midmonth. Local peaches add flavor to summer dishes from salsas, chutney and cobbler or sliced fresh over ice cream. Stop by the tasting room in the front of the market to sample a variety of peachy dishes. Be sure to pick up some recipes and tips on preserving peaches for later use.

June 8 KIDS CRAFT DAY: Ellis County Master Gardeners will be helping the kids paint pots while they learn about recycling small tin cans and other materials to use in making mini gardens. Kids Craft is in the room at the front of the market. Be sure to bring your kids and grandkids for this fun activity.

June 15 POP-UP HORTICULTURE featuring Ellis County Master Gardener, Mattie Thompson, with her "Gardening in Small Spaces" program. Gain skills on container gardening in Texas, what works on a balcony or patio or what potted plants work around the pool. Grow a garden in a variety of containers from buckets, pots and grow-bags. Visitors are invited to bring their own pot and potting mix while learning to grow flowers, vegetables and herbs successfully. There will be plants available to purchase or bring your own. Look for the white pop-up tent next to the ECMG booth.

June 22 GRILL FEST: This is everyone's favorite market day! The Ellis County Master Gardeners will fire up the grills while gathering vegetables, fruits, meat, produce and seasonings from the market sellers. If the market vendors grow it, the ECMG volunteers will grill it! There are always some unusual sample offerings. The grilling goes on all morning. Free samples are handed out until the food runs out. Come join the festivities.

June 29 Waxahachie Downtown Farmers Market will be overflowing with fresh summer produce. Sweet Texas corn, vine ripe local tomatoes, juicy peaches along with an abundance of local produce, local meats, pickles, salsas and seasonings are ready for your Fourth of July holiday picnic, grilling and outdoor enjoyment. Come shop with us. We have a new supply of bright orange bags promoting the Waxahachie Downtown Farmers Market.



Listen to KBEC

Saturday mornings at 8:10am 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!

Scott Rigsby

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Ellis County Master Gardener Monthly Meeting—You are invited!

Second Tuesday of the month



There will be no meeting during the month of June. The Master Gardeners will be taking a day trip to the Tarrant Regional Water District to see their design gardens and swails and to learn about what is being done to conserve our water supply with the growing population in the years to come.

Social time begins at 9:30am and our program begins at 10am with guest speakers starting at 11am. 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.

What's Happening In June?

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 perennials, to stimulate new growth to allow the plant to continue reblooming 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. Do not 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.



Featured Recipe of the Month

Baked Roasted Radishes

Author Maya Krampf from WickedSpatula.com



Prep Time 5 minutes **Cook Time** 30 minutes **Total Time** 35 minutes **Servings:** 6 servings (Serving size: 1/6 of entire recipe, or about 1/2 C)

Ingredients

2 lb Radishes (trimmed and halved)
3 tablespoons Olive oil
1 teaspoon Sea salt (plus more to taste when done)
1/4 teaspoon Black pepper
1/2 teaspoon Smoked paprika
1/4 teaspoon Onion powder
1/4 teaspoon Garlic powder

Instructions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
Toss radishes with olive oil and spices. Arrange in a single layer on a baking sheet, making sure each radish touches the pan.
Roast for about 30 to 35 minutes, until golden and crispy.
Season with extra salt and pepper to taste.

This roasted radish recipe is fantastic as it is, but if it becomes a household favorite, you might be looking for some additional ideas to change it up once in a while. Here are a few ideas:

Onions – add some cut red or yellow onions, then season and bake with radishes

Fennel seeds – they add a subtle sweet flavor

Garlic – it will resemble the flavor of garlic potatoes

Rosemary – adds a sage-like flavor and delicious depth to the dish

Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian
Ellis County Master Gardener*



Texas Bullnettle, Mala Mujer Spurge Family (Euphorbiaceae)
Cnidoscolus texanua (Muell. Arg.) Small

Region: 1 through 8, 10 (Ellis Co. is region 4)
Size: 1 through 3½ feet
Blooms: March – September, Perennial



Be very careful if you want to smell these flowers! Bullnettle is well defended, with stinging hairs covering all parts except the flowers. Once stung, you'll know this plant forever. Upright and branched, it is common across Texas and frequently forms large colonies in disturbed areas. Fragrant, white, tubular flowers consist of five to seven flaring sepals that form loose terminal clusters. Seeds are held tightly in compartments of a tough, almost round seedpod and the large, edible seeds are considered very tasty when ripe. A deep, tuberous taproot, branching underground, lets bullnettle thrive during hot summers and drought. Mala mujer (bad woman), another common name, was given because, like a "bad woman," bullnettle is hurtful to touch.

Extreme Disease - Rose Rosetta is a virus spread by the tiny eriophyid mite. This disease was first identified in the 1940's in wild rose bushes and later spread to other varieties. The signs of Rose Rosette are red (or yellow on hybrid teas) new growth, rapidly elongated stems and witches' brooms, which are sections of multiple stems that are red with distorted leaves and covered with a large amount of thorns. At this time there is no known treatment for this disease other than digging up and destroying the entire plant.

Moon Gardens

*Linda Myers, former Smith County Master Gardener
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service*



Angel's Trumpet

A moon (or evening) garden is a wonderful way to extend the amount of time you can enjoy your landscape. Planning and plotting your moon garden is essential, but also a lot of fun.

First, choose your moon garden location. It should be near your porch, patio or wherever you enjoy sitting or strolling in your yard. You can work with a small or large area or use containers if you have lim-

ited ground space. Fences, walls and trellises are assets for night-blooming vines.

Good plant choices for moon gardens include fragrant night-bloomers and any white or silver plants. Two of my favorites are Four-O'clocks and Moonflower Vines. Four O'clocks are perfect because they awaken in late afternoon with a profusion of red, yellow, pink, white or variegated flowers that perfume the air with a sweet fragrance – and they grow well in Texas.



Moonflower

Moonflower Vine is a lovely night-bloomer with attractive, heart-shaped leaves and beautiful, large, pure-white blooms that have a delicate, heavenly scent that's at its best at night. If you wait until morning to sniff, most of the fragrance will be gone. Plant seeds along a fence for climbing or just allow the vine to travel along the ground.

Other night-scented plants include Evening Primroses, Sweet-Scented Nicotiana and "Royal Standard" and "So Sweet" Hostas. Tender fragrant bloomers include Angel's Trumpets (Brugmansia) and Allamanda vine.

White or silver plants catch the glow from the moon or outside lighting and lend a mellow, peaceful mood to the moon garden. Try planting white varieties of iris, lilies, zinnias or daisies along with silver-leaved plants like Artemisias, Dusty Miller, Lamb's Ear or Japanese Silver Grass for a pleasing effect.

Then spend a few minutes relaxing in your moon garden before bedtime and have pleasant dreams.



Four O'Clock Marvel of Peru

Texas Superstar- Perennial Hibiscus*Submitted by Susan Ellis, ECMG**Source: Steven W. George, Horticulture Specialist, Texas Agricultural Extension Service
www.texasstar.com*

If you have been looking for an easy-care perennial that thrives in the harsh Texas heat and will blow your doors off with color, then your prayers have been answered with perennial hibiscus. Perennial hibiscus are truly perennial and, once established, will provide years and years of brilliant landscape color. These plants are herbaceous perennials, meaning their tops die down to the ground each winter. In the spring new shoots will come roaring back into lush growth when soils warm.

Three cultivars of perennial hibiscus are stellar performers in Texas landscapes. These highly recommended cultivars are 'Flare,' 'Moy Grande' and 'Lord Baltimore'. All three provide stunning color summer to early fall, love the heat, require very little maintenance and are so pest resistant that almost never will you need to apply any pesticides.

These plants are very versatile and can be used in large containers, as a perennial border and in butterfly and hummingbird gardens. Make sure that the plants you buy have the Texas Superstar® label in the containers – this is your assurance that you are purchasing plant types that have proven themselves in A&M studies across the state. Adapted throughout Texas, these hibiscus are among our finest, easy care perennials. Give them a try – you'll be the envy of the neighborhood in no time.

Lord Baltimore Rose Mallow Hibiscus*Hibiscus* sp. 'Lord Baltimore'

'Lord Baltimore' displays deeply cut, glossy foliage and stunning red flowers up to ten inches in diameter. Five feet tall and self-sterile, this improved hybrid prefers neutral to acid soils.

Hardiness: Zone 5

Exposure: Full Sun

Size: Height — 5 feet tall; width — 5 feet wide

Bloom Time: Summer till frost

Soil type: Prefers neutral to acid soils

**Moy Grande (Texas Giant Hibiscus)***Hibiscus* sp.

'Moy Grande' has the largest, open-face hibiscus flower in the world! The rose-pink blossoms are truly magnificent with diameters reaching a full 12 inches (dinner plate size). This cultivar will grow in acid or alkaline soils. Gives flushes of bloom throughout the summer; prompt removal of spent blossoms will encourage rebloom.

Hardiness: Zone 5

Exposure: Full Sun

Size: Height — 5 feet tall; width — 5 feet wide

Bloom Time: Summer till early fall

Care: Remove old blossoms & developing seed pods to promote rebloom

**Flare Rose Mallow Hibiscus***Hibiscus* sp. 'Flare'

'Flare' has apple green foliage and large, high quality fuchsia red flowers to ten inches wide. A sport of 'Flare', 'Peppermint Flare' has the same superior traits as the original but the flowers are pink and peppermint (pictured top right). Four feet tall, it is a profuse bloomer and has the important advantage of being self-sterile which encourages luxuriant rebloom. This wonderful cultivar does great in any soil type, even our sticky, highly alkaline clays.

Hardiness: Zone 5

Exposure: Full Sun

Size: Height — 4 feet tall; width — 4 feet wide

Bloom Time: Summer till frost





AgriLife Extension releases new publication
MOWING WARM SEASON TURFGRASS

Kay Ledbetter, skledbetter@ag.tamu.edu

COLLEGE STATION – Mow high, mow low, mow often ... ever wonder what the best recommendations are to ensure a beautiful lawn? Not doing it right can be detrimental to warm-season turfgrass, according to a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service specialist.

AgriLife Extension has released a new publication to help homeowners and other turfgrass managers properly execute the most common turfgrass management practice — mowing. The new publication is at <https://aggierturf.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/ESC052-1.pdf>.

“Mowing might seem like one of the simplest and most intuitive practices to many of us, as even children mow at a fairly early age to earn some extra money,” said Dr. Becky Grubbs, AgriLife Extension turfgrass specialist in College Station. “However, mowing can also be one of the fastest ways to stress and compromise your turfgrass health.”

Grubbs said it is not uncommon for mowing to be at the root of any number of turfgrass problems.

“People have a tendency to mow at an inappropriate height or frequency for their specific turfgrass species and cultivar,” she said. “This can lead to added stress on their turf and create opportunities for pest encroachment.”

Grubbs said she designed the new publication as a simple guide to remind people of some key rules to proper mowing.

“There are a few things that are critical to maintaining healthy turfgrass when it comes to mowing,” she said. “Start by mowing at the appropriate height for your species/cultivar. Make sure you follow the ‘one-third rule.’ And, take time to properly maintain your equipment.”

In the case of St. Augustine lawns, for instance, she said it is not uncommon for her to see homeowners maintaining them at heights that are much too low, opening up opportunities for weeds and disease to move in.

“St. Augustine grass should be maintained between 2.5 and 4 inches in height, but it’s not uncommon for me to see people mowing it much lower – the way they might for a Bermuda grass lawn,” Grubbs said.

Two tables in the publication highlight appropriate mowing heights for Texas. Grubbs said there may be different practices in other parts of the country, particularly for cool-season grasses that thrive at lower mowing heights further north.

“This is really a guide for Texas turfgrass managers and homeowners,” Grubbs said. “We include a few cool-season species, as we do see them in areas throughout North Texas, but the focus is more on warm-season turfgrass management.”

She also points out that many people wait too long between mowing, ultimately removing more than one-third of the total turfgrass height each time they mow.

“When we do this throughout the season, we are essentially scalping and stressing our turfgrass each time by removing a large volume of its photosynthetic material and exposing the soil for weed encroachment in the process,” Grubbs said.

“Following the one-third rule means that if, for example, I am trying to maintain a mowing height of 2 inches, I should really aim to mow by the time it reaches 3 inches in height.”

She said this may mean mowing more frequently than some lawn owners are used to doing if they really want to keep their turfgrass healthy.

Finally, Grubbs said not to forget to take time to properly maintain equipment.

“Mowers are like any other tool,” she said. “They will perform best when they are clean and sharp. Dull, dirty blades can spread pests and create entry points for disease. You wouldn’t use dull shears to prune your woody plants, and the same principles apply here.”

MOWING QUICK TIPS



Mow another time if the lawn is wet. Mowing dry grass prevents disease from spreading and makes for better clippings to use as mulch on the lawn later.



Always cut less than a third of the grass' height for the best performance from your lawn. Mow frequently enough that your lawn stays close to its natural height when less than a third of the height is cut off.





Different grasses grow to a wide range of natural heights. Mow according to the natural height of your grass for best results.



Sprinkle dry clippings evenly back onto the lawn.

OUTDOOR CONTAINER GARDENS

By Micki Rourke



What is container gardening? It is a scaled down version of the beautiful garden you have always wanted to grow. The process often provides instant gratification because the project is completed in such a short amount of time!

Even though the purposes of container gardens are only limited by your imagination, here are some suggestions:

- Control of special soils, like those needed for azaleas or cacti
- Provide attractive views from inside or outside the home
- Show off one stunningly structured plant
- Brighten the edges of patios, porches or balconies
- Provide delightful fragrances up-close
- Provide privacy screens
- Provide a focal point in flowerbeds
- Provide the opportunity to try interesting combinations of plants

The design determines your choice of container, soil, plants, design

and placement. Try to choose a garden that can furnish choices for all components needed. Consider containers first. The colors, shapes and materials can be endless! Choose as large a container as possible within your budget. Save those small ones for the windowsill. Larger containers allow you to purchase plants with sizable root balls, which means less watering and more show on top. Consider materials next. Terracotta is quite affordable, but its porosity allows soil to rapidly dry out. The terra cotta pots also tend to freeze and crack in winter. All containers must have drainage holes, whether pre-drilled or drilled by DIY enthusiasts. If reusing a container, remove old soil, scrub out any debris, then soak with a weak bleach solution, rinse and air dry.

Next, shop for soil. Soil mixes can be labeled potting soil, container mix or growing mix. Avoid topsoil or compost because they are not formulated for containers. Additional components of packaged soils are usually fertilizer moisture retentive polymers. Both components can be added to any standard potting soil inexpensively.

As you begin to choose plants for your containers, think about the following:

- Color choice: both blossoms and foliage display color
- Texture: include smooth leaved plants as well as fine or furry leaved plants
- Plant shape: 3 shapes look best together; tall and spikey, bushy and round and trailing or cascading
- Size: choose quarts or 1-gallon sizes for well-developed roots
- Healthy plants: plants should appear disease free and not root bound, with roots growing out of the holes
- Light and water requirements: most importantly, place plants with the same requirements for sun, shade and water in the same container. Each plant tag should be clearly marked

At this point, group your chosen plants together, place them into the containers and evaluate your choices.

Once you have gathered your containers, plants and soils in a comfortable potting space, you are ready to plant! If your container is large and heavy, just plant it in its eventual location. Assure your container will have good drainage by elevating with pot feet or a few bricks. Using dishes that trap the drained water on the bottom of pots may attract mosquitos.

If the soil in the bag is dry, add some warm water and stir until it feels moist but not soggy. At this point, add amendments if the soil does not already contain them: a hand full of long-lasting fertilizer along with the labeled amount of water retentive pellets. Fill your container about halfway with soil, then place the tallest of your plants in the center.

Add the bushy, round plants around this spikey one. Finally, place the trailing plants around the edge. Push them all very close to each other and fill in all air spaces with soil. Never place soil higher on the plant stems than it was in the original containers. Water thoroughly until you see the drainage and you are all set.

Enjoy your container gardens year-round!



Happy Father's Day

June 16, 2019

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.
- ◆ Check for insects and diseases. Spider mites can be especially troublesome at this time.
- ◆ During the summer, water or soil moisture is essential for good plant production. Because continual watering is often costly and time consuming, it pays to conserve moisture around plants.
 - ◆ 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.
 - ◆ Mulches are usually applied 2- to 6- inches deep, depending on the material used. In general, the more coarse the material, the deeper the mulch. For example, a 2-inch layer of cotton seed hulls will have about the same mulching effect as 6 inches of oat straw or 4 inches of coastal Bermuda hay.
- ◆ Removing faded flowers from the plant before they set seed will keep them 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 balanced water-soluble 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.
- ◆ There is still time to plant some of the colorful, 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, marigold, autumn asters, salvias and other late summer and fall blooming annuals to prevent the necessity for staking.
- ◆ Re-blooming salvias, such as *Salvia greggii* and *S. Farinacea*, should be pruned back periodically during the summer. To make the job easier, use hedging shears, and remove only the spent flowers and a few inches of stem below.
- ◆ Fall-blooming perennials, such as Mexican mint marigold (*Tagetes lucida*), chrysanthemums, physostegia, and *Salvia leucantha*, should be pruned in the same manner during the summer to keep them compact, reducing the need for staking. This type of pruning should be completed prior to September 1, since flower buds begin forming about that time.

Indian Trail Master Naturalists Events



Join the Indian Trail Master Naturalists at their monthly meeting on Monday, June 24, 2019. The program for the evening is entitled **"Dragon Fly—Top Gun"**. Tom Fleming, photographer of natural phenomena, is a huge fan of dragon flies and will share his directly observed information and anecdotes about their behaviors. The program is free and follows the 6 pm 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

Saturday, June 15, 2019, 9am— Wildflower Walk (Last one until September) Members will be leading a walk at Mockingbird Nature Park, 1361 Onward Rd., Midlothian. Join in this ½ mile stroll along the trails to identify wildflowers. Free to the public. Participants should bring drinking water and wear closed-toe shoes. The walk will be canceled if raining. Info at: <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/> or email: Information@itmnc.com.

2019 Texas Master Naturalist Training Class: August 20-Nov 12, 2019. For further information go to www.txmn.org/indiantrail/. The application deadline to sign up is July 16, 2019.

June Workshops



- June 8 - Unicorns Rainbow Garden Workshop (3pm)
- June 15 - Gardening Seminar: Awesome Shade Gardens (3pm)
- June 22 - Lego Terrariums (3pm)
- June 28 - My Craft Party: Address Planter (7:30pm-Ages 21+)



For information on individual workshops visit Earth Tones Greenery at <https://earthtonesgreenery.com/>

Eclectic Gardening

With Jane Slone, Ellis County Master Gardener

CATS IN THE GARDEN



We love to have the bees, butterflies and birds in our gardens. They pollinate flowers and eat some of the unwanted insects so they are beneficial. What about the four-legged critters we call CATS? This article does not include dogs. The canine behavior in the garden is very different from the cat family. Scientifically they are called *Felis catus*.

I adopted two small boys from the SPCA last year. My goal for the kittens was to keep mice out of the chicken coop. Cats are unique in their own family. This was my family's first experience with kittens. Many gardeners are not always happy to have these four-legged animals in their garden. Cats dig up plants, bulbs and dig holes in the garden for their personal hygiene. They will make a cool bed on the bare dirt and take a nap. They also chase birds, eat birds and go after the butterflies. Mine have brought me nineteen snakes, two bunnies, unidentifiable creatures and geckoes. This is just a small list of creatures that have been snared by the two boys, Milo and Otis (my husband has since renamed them, Hannibal and Lector). If it moves, they are interested in bringing it inside.



Now that we have talked about the poor creatures that have succumbed to the claws of death, let's consider the positives. Cats are excellent for preventing mice, moles, rats and squirrels from invading the garden. Because rats and mice can harbor diseases, we do not consider them as creatures that we cherish for the garden.

The other question is can cat excrement harm us? It is true that outside cats' fecal material can contain many parasites. One of these is a parasite called *Toxoplasmosis*. It is dangerous for a pregnant woman to ingest the eggs from this parasite. When cleaning a cat litter box, you are more likely to become infected than being outside in the garden. If you have had the disease and become pregnant, you and the baby are safe. Pregnant women should always be cautious of taking care of cats during a pregnancy, be it

outside or inside. Do not empty cat litter boxes. If the parasite is in the litter box, it can become airborne and inhaled. There are other parasites such as roundworms and tapeworms that are excreted by infected cats. The cat becomes infected when eating rodents or birds that are infected. With cats, you are safe if you take precautions. Wear gloves and wash your hands after being in the garden. Wash and rinse all crops that are harvested. By planting a cat garden, it may prevent them from entering your vegetable garden.

On a lighter note, what is the benefit? Cats excrete nitrogen, potash and potassium. Probably not enough to fertilize the garden, but it is not harmful. Allow the excrement to overwinter in the garden and then till. In our yard we pick up animal poop and remove it from the yard. A word about catnip. Catnip is a perennial herb from the mint family *Labiatae*. The term 'catnip' is thought to originate from the response cats show towards the plant. It is the nepetalcataria variety that most cats enjoy. It is the oil in the plant that attracts the cat. In the reading of articles, it states that it can be a harmless physiological reaction in both female and male cats. Not all cats respond to catnip. Some cats do not have the gene and do not have a response to the smell.

When planting a garden for your cat(s), be sure that the plants are not poisonous. Some plants that can be harmful are lantana, marigold, chrysanthemum, azaleas and wisteria. Most animals have an internal sense of what is harmful and avoid those plants.

Make your cat(s) a salad bar. Cats love grasses. They are beneficial and provide vitamins and help in cat digestion. Catnip and mint are two favorites of the cat family.

If you are aware of your cats using the garden as a poop area, actions that can be taken: give your cats their own space, find an area to cultivate for the cats that has tall grass for hiding and a clean area for excretion. Also, have a bowl of water and a cool place in the garden. This will help keep them out of your prized flowers (possibly). If you want to keep cats out of your garden and yard, there are several nontoxic methods: save your lemon and orange peelings to place around the base of your plants, place bells or wind chimes that make a noise when the cat brushes against them or plant scented plants such as citronellas or geraniums. There are many types of plants that have small spines or bristles that will deter the critters as well.



Overview of plants for a cat garden:

Catnip-this plant is a member of the mint family, and the scent gives cats a burst of energy. When it is ingested, cats can become mellow and calm. However, do not give catnip to a cat that has a history of seizures.

Mint-will help freshen breath and clean your cat's teeth.

Parsley-your cat will enjoy the taste of this plant, and he will get nutrients from it like those in wheat or oat grasses.

Rosemary-this herb not only has a pine-like fragrance, but also the added benefit of repelling fleas from your cats.

Wheat-cats get lots of nutrients from these grasses, but the grasses also grow grains when left alone, and the grains themselves are toxic to cats. So, it is important for you to keep the grass cut short so that your cat doesn't eat the grains before they grow.

For those who keep their cats inside, you can incorporate an indoor garden. Take a rectangular pan and plant several of the above listed plants. Cats are inquisitive and will appreciate any activity for entertainment.

Thank You All!

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