



# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



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

May, 2019

**W**elcome to the Ellis County Master Gardener's **E-Gardening** Newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to give you a month-by-month agenda of what you should be doing with your landscape. We will feature horticultural articles that we hope you will find interesting, and important dates where you can find the Master Gardeners speaking, demonstrating, and passing out information relative to your garden. If you would like to receive this newsletter monthly via your email address, log onto our website [www.ECMGA.com](http://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 May?



**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. Taste of Market returns for the 2019 season at a new location. The first Saturday of each month market chefs will be offering freshly made samplings featuring seasonal treats from market sellers. The Taste of Market booth has moved into the front room, recently vacated by Fresh Coffee Market. With the new location look for more opportunities for food demonstrations and some hands-on experiences.

**May 4** Taste of Market—Market chefs Arlene and Cheryl will be serving up some “Fresh Greens of Spring”. Spring peas are young and tender right now so a seasoned sampling on locally made flat bread is planned along with some interesting ways to use fresh dill. A spring greens salad with fruit is also being considered. As always there will be delicious fruit and herbal waters to sample.

**May 11** Kids Craft Day at the market has also moved into the newly vacated space at the front of the farmers market building. The Ellis County Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners will again share their love of teaching by bringing fun and creative learning experiences to all the youngsters who visit the market. Plan to bring your kids and grandkids into the activity space every second Saturday.

**May 18** Pop up Horticulture—The May demonstration features the vegetables of summer. There's still time to plant those tomatoes, peppers, squash, beans, cucumbers and more for a crop in your own backyard. Learn about garden preparation and selecting the best varieties for North Texas. Look for the pop-up tent next to the Master Gardener booth and come ask the experts about your vegetable garden dreams. They can help you get started.

**May 25** Bee and honey sellers will feature special displays and information on the art of bee keeping. If you have ever thought you might want to have your own hive, stop and learn about the process, laws and restrictions, equipment and supplies along with other useful information. Sample some local honey harvested in different seasons from bees that have foraged in different areas on seasonally blooming flowers; taste the differences!



## 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 Riggsby

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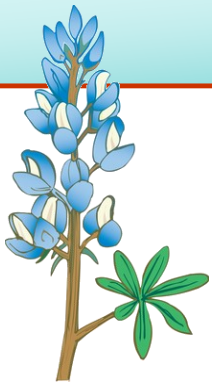
## Ellis County Master Gardener Monthly Meeting—You are invited! Second Tuesday of the month



Steve Huddleston will be speaking at our monthly meeting on Tuesday, May 14, 2019. The topic for the meeting is “Bulbs for North Central Texas”. His presentation will include bulbs that bloom spring through fall. Steve is the senior horticulturist at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden where he helps manage the 110-acre garden. He gives a weekly report on Neil Sperry's lawn and garden show on radio station WBAP and writes for *Texas Living* magazine. Steve is also president of Blooming Concepts, Inc., a landscape consultation, design and installation company and co-author of the book *Easy Gardens for North Central Texas* (Book will be available for sale at the 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.

## It's May—What Needs To Be Done?



### Planting

- \* Plant heat-loving annuals including copper plant, firebush, gomphrena, lantana, pentas, purple fountain grass and ornamental sweet potato in sunny areas.
- \* In shady spots plant caladiums, begonias, coleus, impatiens (mildew-resistant types).
- \* Seeds of celosia, cosmos, marigold, morning glory, portulaca and zinnia can be sown directly in the beds. Keep seeded area moist until seeds germinate.
- \* Achimenes, cannas, dahlias and other summer flowering bulbs can be planted now.
- \* Establish new lawns before summer heat sets in. Sow seeded varieties of Bermudagrass early in the month; or sod Bermuda or St. Augustine grass. Water daily for first few weeks to develop a good root system.

### Fertilizing and pruning

- \* Feed fruit trees, perennials, annuals, ground covers and vines with a lawn fertilizer (3-1-2 or 4-1-2- ratio).
- \* Fertilize tomatoes and most other vegetables every other week for productive and vigorous plants.
- \* Manually thin the fruit on peaches, pears, plums and apples to five to six inches apart early in the month.
- \* Prune spring-flowering shrubs and vines soon after flowering. Keep the natural shape of the plant in mind as you prune and avoid excessive cutting except where necessary to control size. Deadhead roses and other reblooming plants.
- \* Allow foliage of daffodils and other spring-flowering bulbs to mature and yellow before removing.

### Garden Watch

- \* Allow bluebonnets and other reseeding annual wildflowers to die, and the seeds to dry before mowing the stubble. Delay mowing until end of growing season if other wildflowers are growing in the area.
- \* Check tomatoes for signs of early blight (yellow blotches on lower). Apply a labeled fungicide if needed. Keep soil adequately moist to prevent blossom-end rot (brown tissue on bloom end of fruit).
- \* Look for squash bugs in early morning. Destroy eggs found on underside of leaves by hand. Vegetable pests can often be controlled by mechanical, biological or organic means rather than by synthetic pesticides.
- \* Watch for bagworms in junipers and other narrow-leafed evergreens. Apply Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) or general insecticide at first sign of larvae feeding. Remember that once the bag has formed, your only option is to manually pull them off.
- \* Make initial application of Image® or SedgeHammer® to control nutsedge in established warm-season lawns.

May 27th



May 27th

## 2019 Ellis County Master Gardener Scholarship Winners



In 2003, Ellis County Master Gardener Association (ECMGA) decided to make scholarships available to graduating high school seniors residing in Ellis County. We wanted to provide opportunities to these students that chose college studies in horticulture and/or life sciences disciplines. Since then, we have awarded 41 graduating high school students with college scholarships totaling \$78,600. This year the ECMGA decided to allow former ECMGA College Scholarship Awardees currently enrolled in horticulture programs/life sciences degree plans to also apply for an ECMGA College Scholarship to continue their college/university studies. The ECMGA is proud to announce that Catlin Edsall, who is currently attending Texas A&M, received one of the scholarships this year. The three winners of the 2019 ECMGA Gardener Scholarship are:

- Catlin Edsall was awarded a \$3,000 scholarship funded by the Monty Dale Gearner Memorial College Scholarship Program which is administered by the ECMGA and has been created in memory of Monty Gearner, a dedicated member of the ECMGA. Catlin is in her third year at Texas A&M University, College Station, TX.
- Madeline Makovy, from Ennis, received a \$2,000 scholarship. She will be attending Tarleton State University, Stephenville, TX, in the fall of 2019.
- Cole Bakley, from Ferris, received a \$2,000 scholarship. He will be attending Texas A&M University, College Station, TX, in the fall of 2019.



## Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener



**Wild Indigo** – Legume Family (Fabaceae)  
*Baptisia leucophaea* Nutt.

Region: 1 through 5 (Ellis Co. is region 4)

Size: 4 feet

Blooms: April through May, Perennial

*Baptisia* species are branching, bushy plants; their flowers often in spikes or racemes. Erect stalks grow from rhizomes. Wild indigo has fifteen to twenty three-quarter-inch yellow, bonnet-like flowers on a stem, each subtended by large floral bracts. Leaves are made up of three leaflets about an inch long. The thick, woody pods stand out prominently on a stalk. After frost, the plant breaks off at the ground and becomes a “tumbleweed.” Wild indigo is common on prairies, pastures and edges of woodlands, growing in loamy, sandy or silty soil. Continuing hybridization makes finding genetically pure species difficult. Some species may be toxic to livestock.

## Featured Recipe of the Month

### Homemade Verde Sauce

#### Ingredients:

5 tomatillos  
½ bunch cilantro  
3-4 gloves garlic  
Pink Himalayan salt to taste  
¼ - ½ onion  
1-3 jalapenos

Pour a splash of olive oil in pot and heat. Cut up tomatillos, onion, jalapenos and garlic and add to pot. Big chunks are fine. Bring to a boil, best covered, and turn to medium-low heat and let cook. Once veggies are soft with quite a bit of liquid in the pot, turn off and let cool. Cut up cilantro and add to blender with salt. Add cooled veggies to blender with cilantro mixture, and blend. Store in container in fridge.



## Insect Control

By Joseph Masabni, Assistant Professor and Extension Horticulturist  
and Patrick Lillard, Extension Assistant, The Texas A&M University System

Many kinds of insects feed on garden plants. Insect pests damage plants in two ways. Some chew holes in the leaves, stems, roots or fruit, and some stick their beaks into the plants and suck out plant juices. Insects attack garden plants at all times of the year. Some insects will feed on sprouting seed and young seedlings. Others feed on the growing plant or on the mature plant and its fruit.

### Kinds of insects

The insects that feed on garden plants can be divided into two main groups: the sucking and the chewing insects. These are some of the most common insect pests and the damage they cause.

Chewing Insects	Damage
Grasshoppers	Eat entire leaves
Potato beetles	Eat holes in potato and tomato leaves
Flea beetles	Eat very small holes in leaves
Armyworms	Eat large holes in leaves and may eat fruit
Cutworms	Cut off plants at or below ground level
Cabbage loppers	Eat holes in cabbage, collards and broccoli
Corn earworms	Chew fruits of tomatoes and peppers and ears of corn

Sucking Insects	Damage
Aphids	Suck juices from leaves and stems
Stink bugs	Suck juices from stems and fruit
Leafhoppers	Suck juices from leaves
Squash bugs	Suck juices from stems or vines
Whiteflies	Suck juices from underside of leaves

### Recognizing insect problems

A good gardener must learn to recognize insect problems. To know when insects are damaging your plants, watch for anything that does not look normal.

The following symptoms will help you recognize insect problems.

- \* Plants are stunted and do not grow properly.
- \* Plants have deformed or damaged leaves.
- \* Plants look yellow or light in color.
- \* Plants look wilted and droopy.

If your plants show any of these symptoms, examine each plant closely for insects. Also examine the soil near the plant base, as many insects drop and hide there when disturbed.

### Controlling insects

Many insects can be managed without using pesticides, but this cultural control requires extra time and effort. It may also result in slight damage to your plants. Some of the cultural methods you can use to prevent or control insect damage are:

- \*Keep weeds and grass pulled out of the garden. Mow the area around the garden.
- \*Plant varieties that grow well in your area.
- \*Apply the correct amount of fertilizer and water when needed.
- \*When you have picked all the fruit, destroy the old plants by removing them or plowing them under.
- \*You can wash off some insects, such as aphids and spider mites, with a water hose.
- \*You may hand-pick some insects or egg masses from the plant to prevent damage.
- \**Chemical control* of insects often may be



necessary. For best results, treat insects before large numbers build up in the garden. Dusts or sprays provide good control.

Before you buy a pesticide, read the label to see if it is recommended for the pest and plants you want to treat. Before you use a pesticide, read the label to see how much you should use. Read all information on the label and follow all directions.

All insecticides are poisonous, so handle them with care and keep them away from children and pets.

The chart to the right lists some insecticides recommended for home vegetable gardens:

Conventional insecticides	Organic insecticides
Dibrom®	azadirachtin
endosulfan	Bt (Bacillus thuringiensis)
Kelthane™	garlic juice extract
malathion	neem oil
naled	pyrethrin
Sevin®	spinosad
sulfur	



## Saving Seeds from the Garden

By Homer D. McCain, ECMG

**"The flowers of tomorrow are the seeds of today and if we don't save those, many of the old plants will pass away."**

### Heirloom Plants

People have collected and saved vegetable seed for generations. Fortunately, that's why the many heirloom plants grown since before the 1900's still exist today. There are many plants called old fashion or standard variety that have been around a long time too, but not long enough to be called heirlooms. Heirlooms are plants that are considered to be 50 years or older. The plants from these seeds will be identical to the plant that grew it. Unfortunately, the seeds from many of these plants are getting harder to find or are no longer available at garden centers or seed catalogs.



### Hybrid Plants

Hybrid means the plants have been crossed pollinated with another variety plant or plants by man. The seeds from these will not come true, and the plants from these seeds will not look like the parent. For this reason, seeds from hybrid plants are really not worth harvesting. There are many hybrid plants on the market today as plant breeders have developed plants that have superior attributes to other plants such as color, beauty, disease, insect resistance and more.

### Collecting Seeds

So what seeds can you save? Seeds should be collected from heirloom or standard plants which have not been cross pollinated with other plants. These seeds have produced like plants each year. Collecting and storing seeds is not difficult but there are some things you need to know.

### Dry Seeds

When you save seed, always get it from the best-looking plants. Select the ones that are the most disease and insect free. Get the vegetables that have the best flavor and other traits that you want, and the flowers with the best and most colorful blooms. Always harvest mature seed. Immature seed will not germinate. The easiest seed to collect is from plants such as beans, peas, okra, corn, herbs and flowers. These are called the dry seeds. Leave these type seeds on the plant until the end of the growing season when they have matured before harvesting.

### Wet Seeds

Other plants are referred to as wet or fleshy type plants like squash, melons, cucumbers and tomatoes. Leave the fruit on the vine until it's past the ripe stage. Cut in half and scoop out the seeds with a spoon, wash them and spread them out on paper to dry. For tomatoes put the seeds with the pulp in a glass jar and leave them four or five days to ferment so that the seed can be washed clean with a spray of water. The seeds that fall to the bottom of the jar are the ones to save. Carefully pour the water off the seeds and spread them out on a newspaper to dry.

The seed from flowers or other plants can be harvested after the plants have finished blooming and have become dry. Cut off the seed heads and put them in a paper bag and separate the seed from the chafe by hand.

### Storing Seed

When the seeds are dry place them in a jar or plastic bag and label them with name and date, and put in a cool dry place or a refrigerator. Seed viability decreases over time. Onions and corn must be used the following year. Most seed should be used within three years. Do not mix the seed or store ones that are damp which can cause mold.

At planting time plant only one variety of the same heirloom plant. For example, if you are planting heirloom tomatoes, plant all tomatoes of the same variety and away from other plants in the garden. Since heirlooms are pollinated by insects, wind or man, they could cross pollinate with other plants of a different variety. If that happens, they would no longer be considered an heirloom and their seed would not come true.

Saving seed is not for every gardener, but some adventurous people enjoy it. Sometimes you will be surprised at what you get. Good gardening!

**HAPPY MOTHERS DAY**

*May 12, 2019*

## A NEW CATEGORY OF TEXAS SUPERSTAR – “PER-ANNUALS”

Gayle Johnston – Ellis County Master Gardener

When considering plants for selection for our landscape gardens, we're all familiar with the conventional categories of perennials, annuals, shrubs, etc. According to Greg Grant, Smith County Extension Agent – Horticulture, Tyler, and widely published author on native and adapted Texas horticulture, “Per-Annuals” may be another category any Texas gardener will want to consider.

“Per-Annuals” are tropical shrubs or perennials which may be considered as annuals but which may also perform very well as perennials in select Central and North Texas environments. Some per-annuals work best in North Central Texas as container plants or annuals while others function very nicely as a returning perennial which comes back reliably in the spring. They are usually propagated vegetatively from cuttings and will tolerate both full sun as well as partial shade and a variety of soil types.

There are a number of Per-Annuals which have been designated as Texas Superstars due to their exceptional versatility, ability to tolerate Texas climatic conditions, ease of propagation and availability. Three that will be discussed here include the following:

Alternanthera – Little Ruby and Brazilian Red Hots – *Alternanthera 'Little Ruby'* and *Alternanthera dentatata*

Firebush – *Hamelia patens*

Pride of Barbados – *Caesalpinia pulcherrima*

### Alternanthera

Designated as Texas Superstars in 2015 and 2016, respectively, Little Ruby and Brazilian Red Hots Alternanthera will be most recognizable by many Texas gardeners as “Joseph’s Coat”.

The Little Ruby variant is about a third of the normal size of older selections of Joseph’s Coat and will perform as a smaller, compact, thicker and fuller type of seasonal groundcover. Depending upon its location and the amount of sunshine it receives during the day, its color will vary from green to red to deep burgundy. The more sun it receives, the darker, more intense the color. Typically planted in late winter or spring, it can also be planted throughout the summer and fall and be expected to give good results. Its long planting season, among other traits, is one of the reasons it was selected as a Texas Superstar.

Added as a Texas Superstar in 2016, Brazilian Red Hots Alternanthera sports attractive, lively, hot pink and rose shades of color and is a vigorous and vibrant addition to any North Central Texas garden. It is easy to grow in low sun and may even prefer partial shade, but can easily tolerate hot Texas sun if planted early in the spring and in northern parts of the state. Direct sun will also help the plant maximize its vibrant color. Plants are 24-36 inches tall with a 12-18 inch spread and mature plants benefit from being cut back lightly as days become longer in late spring to promote a vigorous flush of summer color.

### Firebush (Pictured top right)

An evergreen shrub or small tree native to many areas in tropical and subtropical America, Firebush can be seen growing prolifically near the stone pyramids of the Yucatan peninsula and is prized by the natives for its many medicinal uses. Although a woody perennial in its native habitat, it is best used as an annual in central and north Texas. It will grow to a mature height of 18-30 inches, is very heat and drought tolerant once established, and will grow in almost any soil, even heavily alkaline clays as long as well drained. It is also adaptable enough to tolerate partial shade even though its most vibrant color comes with exposure to full sun. The attractive foliage is highlighted by terminal clusters of scarlet red, tubular blossoms with deeper red throats which are natural attractants for hummingbirds and butterflies. Shorter days and cooler temperatures turn foliage a beautiful blood red in the fall. It does extremely well in containers which can be overwintered by moving near a bright window inside.

### Pride of Barbados

One of the most versatile of the Per-Annuals, Pride of Barbados is an evergreen shrub or small tree in frost free climates; a deciduous shrub in areas such as the Rio Grande Valley (zone 9), a returning perennial in Central Texas and San Antonio (zone 8) and an annual in North and West Texas. In Zone 8b, it will come back reliably in middle spring as a perennial and has been demonstrated to survive temperatures as low as 18 degrees Fahrenheit. The plant is usually tall (8-12 ft), growing large even after freezing to the ground during the winter. Blossoms are bowl-shaped, 2-3 inches across with five crinkled, unequal red and orange petals, and ten prominent bright red stamens. Plants tolerate very high temperatures and drought, and are easy to grow in alkaline to acidic soils as long as well-drained.

As a general rule, cutting grown perennials and tropicals are less picky than seed grown annuals and will do very well in amended topsoil with compost and fertilizer.





## Extreme Naturalism

By Scott Rigsby, Landscape Director for the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association (TNLA)

EXTREME NATURALISM is currently one of the biggest trends in the green industry today. What is it? Basically, it is incorporating natural elements into new or existing landscaping around your home, minimizing the amount of time you spend in your yard pruning, trimming, fertilizing, mowing, controlling weeds and especially, minimizing the amount of supplemental water needed to keep turf alive. The overall message is that humans need to take action to preserve the fragile environment of our planet.

Those natural elements can be anything and everything you see around you in nature...rocks and boulders, and of course, all varieties of native and adapted plants and trees, which can go without pruning or trimming. The idea is to achieve as natural a look as possible. Let the plants achieve their mature size and shape. This means of course that you need to know the mature size and shape of the plants you purchase. Do your own research or work with a local landscape/nursery professional to make sure you get the right plants for your

yard. Choose plants that can withstand the extreme conditions in North Texas and specifically, Ellis County. We are USDA Zone 8. We can reach 110° in the summer and 10° in the winter. We can get 65 inches of rain a year or 25 inches. Our average is about 35 inches and it is not spread out evenly throughout the year. Our highly alkaline, black clay soil is some of the most difficult to work with in nature, not to mention the caliche and limestone rock that is prevalent in our county. The point is, in our extreme conditions, it is beneficial to use extreme measures when planning your landscaping.

While attending the TNLA board meeting in Minnesota recently, I met with some board members of the Minneapolis Nursery and Landscape Association. On one of our tours to a large nursery grower we were shown some trial garden flowerbeds

testing the concept they have embraced called "green mulching". These were raised beds of good soil, native and adapted plants for their area, planted in such a way that when they reached maturity, they would be very close together. The idea was to minimize or do away the need for mulch and pruning, achieving a more natural look and letting the plants sort of fend for themselves, tended by nature. Some more of their ideas – don't trim the hedges, let them go wild; go big or small – try this trend in a small front garden or extend it to an entire property; embrace this trend regardless of whether you live in the city or country, on a farm or in a subdivision; explore a mixture of plants. You see these gardens when you stroll through a forest, trek along an alpine trail or shuffle through a warm, breezy prairie meadow.

Turfgrass is not natural. It is a look that became popular in the U.S. in the early 50's when homes were being built in subdivisions. It is the most costly and highest maintenance plant we have. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century when we should be conserving water as our population grows, we continue to buy homes with fully sodded yards and sprinkler systems. As Master Gardeners, we believe to be water and environmentally conscious, we should promote sustainable gardening with Water Wise Gardening techniques, being extremely natural in the landscaping around your home. Plus, what a great encouragement to others to do the same when they see your low maintenance, natural looking landscaped yard.



Reserve the date: March 28, 2020!



**Interested in becoming a  
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Expo Exhibitor?**

Contact James Kocian at  
[expo.ecmga@yahoo.com](mailto:expo.ecmga@yahoo.com)

## GARDEN CHECKLIST FOR MAY

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



- Experiment with a container of Bougainvillea this summer. It is a plant that prefers conditions that are hot and dry! Full sun and a rest period without too much watering are usually necessary before a burst of new blooms.
- It is not too late to sow directly into the soil seeds of sunflower, zinnia, morning glory, portulaca, marigold, cosmos, periwinkles and gourds. Achimenes, cannas, dahlias and other summer-flowering bulbs can also be planted in May.
- Allow foliage of spring-flowering bulbs to mature and yellow before removing.
- Pinch back the terminal growth on newly planted annual and perennial plants. This will result in shorter, more compact, well branched plants with more flowers.
- Time to plant caladium tubers, impatiens, coleus, begonias and pentas in shady areas.
- Replace or replenish mulch materials in flower beds and shrub borders to conserve moisture and reduce weed growth.
- Make cuttings of your favorite chrysanthemums and root them in a mixture of sand and peat moss. Cover cutting box with plastic and place in shaded area for 5 or 6 days to prevent wilting.
- Prune climbing roses as they complete their spring bloom season. Remove dead or weak wood as needed.
- Take a critical look at your landscape while at the height of summer development. Make notes of how you think it can be better arranged, plants that need replacement, overgrown plants that need to be removed and possible activity areas that can be enjoyed by family members.
- Check for insects and diseases. Destroy badly infested plants. Spider mites can be especially troublesome at this time. Select a chemical or organic control or use insecticidal soap.
- During the summer soil moisture becomes extremely important and essential for good plant production. Because continual watering is oftentimes costly and time consuming, it pays to conserve the moisture around plants. This is best done by mulching. A good mulch will retain valuable moisture needed for plant growth and improve overall gardening success. Mulches are usually applied 2 to 6 inches deep, depending on the material used. In general, the coarser the material, the deeper the mulch. For example, a 2-inch layer of cottonseed hulls will have about the same mulching effect as 6 inches of oat straw or 4 inches of coastal Bermuda hay.

## Extreme Environmental Issues

Since the mid 1990's, city dwellers have been encouraged to adopt management practices to reduce fertilizer runoff and conserve water. Research has shown that large amounts of phosphorus and nitrates are washed from recently fertilized grass sod, regardless of the type of fertilizer and is contributing to the potential of deficient oxygen levels and algae blooms. As the algae begins to die other organisms consume them using even more oxygen resulting in possible fish kills and "stinky water". Using a soil test to determine what nutrients are needed and only applying them at the right time will help keep these fertilizers out of our water systems. Contact your local AgriLife Extension office for more details on soil testing.

## Indian Trail Master Naturalists Events



Join the Indian Trail Master Naturalists at their monthly meeting on **Monday, May 20, 2019**. The program for the evening is entitled **"Texas Native Cats-Our Wild Neighbors"**. Monica Morrison, founder of Texas Native Cats, will discuss the five species of wild cats that call Texas home or did historically. Find out about their habitat and diet, the benefits they provide to the environment and the threats they face. At the end of Monica Morrison's presentation, you'll leave with a better understanding and appreciation of our native felines. 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 505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie. For more info, call (972) 825-5175 or email [ellis-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:ellis-tx@tamu.edu).

**Saturday, May 18, 2019, 9am**—Wildflower Walk at Mockingbird Nature Park. Come join your local Master Naturalists on a ½ mile trail identifying wild flowers. Everyone is invited to join our approximately one hour stroll. Please come prepared with water and closed-toe shoes. In the event of inclement weather the walk will be cancelled.

2019 Master Naturalist Training Class— August 20-November 12, 2019. For further information go to [www.txmn.org/indiantrail/](http://www.txmn.org/indiantrail/). The application deadline to sign up is July 16, 2019.



## Eclectic Gardening

With Jane Slone, Ellis County Master Gardener

### WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU PLANTED A HOLLYHOCK?



When you visit a garden you usually see iris and daylilies. Roses are usually planted along a fence row, or possibly a few vines such as Carolina Jasmine. Not many gardeners think of hollyhock as their first choice in the garden. This is my favorite plant in the garden. I remember my grandmother having hollyhocks. I always thought they were the most beautiful flower. Every year I plant some new ones and add to the older ones that return. Nothing fancy, just beautiful long stems with leaves and flowers.



Tomatoes have hornworms, hollyhocks have rust. This has been a problem for years.

**Rust**—*Puccinia malvacearum* is a rust fungus that first appears on the undersides of hollyhocks lower leaves as lemon-yellow to orange pustules that darken with age. The top of the leaf shows bright yellow to orange spots with reddish centers. Spots may quickly come together to destroy large portions of the leaf. With severe infection pustules may also appear on the stem of the plant. Minor rust infections will not harm the plant, however, with severe infection the disease may cause wilting and leaf drop OR death.

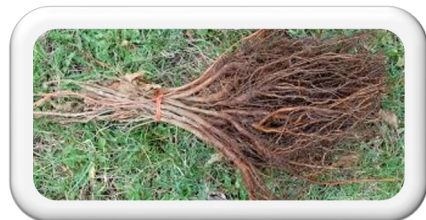
Good sanitation is crucial in controlling rust. The first rusted leaves that appear in the spring should be removed and destroyed. As soon as flowering is over, infected plants should be cut back to the soil line. All infected leaves and stalks should be removed and destroyed by burying in a compost pile or unused part of the garden. Be sure to let a few flower stalks ripen before removal so plants can reseed. The seeds are not affected. It is the leaves that are susceptible. Windy and wet weather can aid in the spread of this disease. Rust spores are carried by the wind and water. This spread of fungus can infect hollyhocks found in remote areas of your yard. The spring time and rainy weather will cause the first infection.

**What To Do**— Cut infected plants at the soil line and remove any debris as soon as the hollyhocks have bloomed. This will prevent the rust disease from overwintering and infecting

the new spring growth. If there are any type of mallow plants in the area remove those as well. In the spring remove and destroy the first leaves that appear infected. Consider the location; does it have adequate sunlight and good soil with drainage? Sunlight and drainage should help prevent the disease. Make sure you water early in the day. This will allow the leaves to dry before night. Consider a variety that is resistant to the disease. Look for disease resistant varieties. The two recommended are *Alcea rugose* or *Alcea ficifolia*. A fungicide can be used before the plants become infected. You will need to continue the spraying throughout the growing season.

#### What About Bare Root Rather than from Seed?

Beautiful blooms may tower up to 9 feet tall and can be used as an old-fashioned focal point in a garden bed. Large blooms are long lasting when planted correctly. Planting hollyhock roots is the best way to start this large and attractive flower. Seed-grown hollyhocks and those started from cuttings often start life in a weaker form and are more prone to develop rust disease, a disease that plagues long-time hollyhock growers. Plants grown from seed may not be true to the parent plant either.



Bare root hollyhock plants often appear to be dried out, so soak them in a tub of water for 10 minutes to rejuvenate them. They may also be soaked overnight, but don't leave them in water long enough to get soft. Plant hollyhock roots in a prepared hole in the right location. The hole should be wider than the roots and deep enough to encourage the long taproot of bare root hollyhock plants to easily grow downward. When planting, the taproot should point downward. Don't plant too deeply though, just a couple inches below the soil.

Gently press the roots into the soil for good contact and cover with soil. After covering the bare root plant with soil, water well and add a layer of mulch. Bare root hollyhock plants should not be allowed to dry out; neither should they sit in waterlogged soil. When planting hollyhock roots in spring, cover them with mulch or newspaper if spring days get unseasonably warm.

#### Maybe You Would Rather Plant Seeds

Hollyhocks need full sun and moist, rich, well-drained soil. The mistake many novice hollyhock growers make is to plant this flower in soil that is too dry. If you are planting seeds, sow the seeds outside about a week before last frost. If you are planting seedlings, wait about two to three weeks after the last frost. Hollyhock seeds only need to be planted right below the soil, no more than ¼-inch deep. Hollyhock plants should be placed about 2 feet apart to grow well.



I hope you will give this old-fashioned plant a try. You will be rewarded with beautiful flowers of all colors. Purple and the pink are my favorites.

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