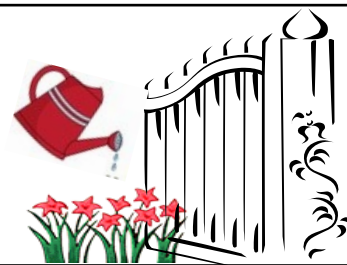




# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume XII, Issue 9

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

September, 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](http://www.ECMGA.com) and click on subscribe. Best of all; it's FREE! Editors and Newsletter Team: Susan Ellis, Donna Seery, Bree Shaw

## What's Happening in September?

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 September:



**Saturday September 7 ~ Taste of Market** will be offering melon creations for sampling. Our farmers and growers have a variety of melons for sale. In addition to watermelon, muskmelon and cantaloupe look for some new varieties. Market chefs Cheryl and Arlene will be offering some unusual ways to prepare and serve these wonderful summer fruits. For starters you can try some pickled watermelon rind, a three-melon salsa, melon water and more. Come see what's chilling in the tasting room in the front of the market. Remember, it's airconditioned inside!

**Saturday, September 14 ~ Kid's Craft Day** The Indian Trail Master Naturalists will bring their crafty skills. There are always some unusual natural items to share with our young visitors of all ages. Be sure to bring your kids and grandkids into the Craft Room at the front of the market for some cool arts and crafts.

**Saturday, September 21 ~ Pop-Up Horticulture** The ECMG's Pop-Up Horticulture returns and the featured topic will be Growing a Fall Vegetable Garden. Texas is blessed to have two ideal growing seasons with totally different crops for each. If you love lettuce, garlic, onions, spinach, kale, dark greens, carrots, radishes, potatoes and more visit the white pop-up tent at the master gardener booth to learn how to plant, grow and harvest cool season crops.

**Saturday, September 31 ~ "All About Apples"** and pears and plums and all those delicious tree fruits that are just coming into season. There may still be some late peaches available. If so, be sure to grab some; this was a bumper year for this delicious, juicy fruit. Figs have a short season but several sellers offered them in August so look for a few in September. Pears have been available, but it really seems like fall is here when the apples start arriving. Although apples are generally a west Texas crop, some newer dwarf varieties are being grown in North Texas so look for them and support our local growers.



## 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



The Master Gardeners will be planning for 2020 therefore there will not be a speaker during the month of September. Be sure to check out next month's newsletter for the information about October's speaker.

Social time begins at 9:30am and the meeting 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.

## What's Happening In September

### Planting

- ◆ Plant these fall vegetables now: beets, carrots, “greens” (mustard, collard, turnip), kale, lettuce, radishes and spinach.
- ◆ Lawn establishment using warm-season grasses such as Bermudagrass, St. Augustine, zoysia and buffalo grass should be completed early in the month.
- ◆ Overseed established Bermudagrass lawns with perennial ryegrass this month, if desired.
- ◆ Plant these fall-blooming annuals from bedding plants before buds have opened: marigolds, petunias, asters, pinks, snapdragons and mums. Wait until cooler weather to plant pansies, violas and ornamental cabbages and kale.
- ◆ Complete sowing bluebonnets to ensure spring flowers. For season-long color, purchase a wildflower mix that contains annuals and perennials, as well as cool-season and warm season plants such as bluebonnets, black-eyed Susan, Indian blanket, Indian paintbrush, Mexican hat, plains coreopsis, purple coneflower and evening primrose. Sow seeds in areas that are free of grasses and lightly tilled. Lightly rake area to get good seed-soil contact before watering.

### Fertilizing and Pruning

- ◆ Apply high-nitrogen fertilizer (4-1-2 ratio) on lawns and shrubs to prepare plants for fall and winter. Container plants will benefit from using high-nitrogen, water-soluble fertilizers.
- ◆ Tidy up summer perennials by removing dead and faded flower stems and seed stalks. Continue through fall.
- ◆ Root-prune trees and shrubs to be transplanted this winter. Cutting the roots around the plant with a spade will stimulate new root growth in what will become the soil ball when plant is moved.

### Garden Watch

- ◆ Apply a pre-emergent herbicide to lawns early in the month to control winter weeds. Depending on the type of weed targeted, it may be necessary to apply two products – one for grassy weeds (annual bluegrass, ryegrass, etc.) and another for broad-leaved weeds (chickweed, clover, dandelions, henbit, etc.)
- ◆ Make final application of Image® or SedgeHammer® before mid-month to control nutsedge in warm-season lawns.
- ◆ Remove webworms from pecan trees. Cut off the ends of branches as soon as the webs appear. Tear open large webs to expose worms for the birds. Spraying is not practical.
- ◆ Spray roses suffering from black spot and powdery mildew with labeled fungicide.
- ◆ Prepare beds for spring-flowering bulbs. Add organic matter to improve water drainage.

### Twig girdler damage is a sign of the beginning of fall

*Greg Grant, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Smith County*

Have you recently noticed small limbs on the ground from your pecans, hickories, persimmons, elms or other trees? Do they look like they've been cut off and stuck in a pencil sharpener? If so, these are caused by an insect known as a twig girdler. (Pictured R: Twig girdler, *Oncideres pustulatus* LeConte (Coleoptera: Cerambycidae), female. Photo by M. E. Rice)

Twig girdlers are common throughout most of Texas. The odd fallen branches caused by these insects always provoke curiosity. Most people don't even realize they have them until autumn when the limbs start dropping to the ground. Twig girdlers are members of the insect group known as long horned beetles. The male twig girdler has antennae almost twice as long as the length of the insect's body. The female only has antennae that are equal to the length of her body. Twig girdlers range in size from one-half to eleven-sixteenths of an inch long and are cylindrical in form. These insects are light to dark brown in color with a gray band across the middle of the wings. They may even be densely speckled with pink, orange or dark yellow spots. They are stealthy, so you are almost guaranteed to never see one.

August through October is when these insects begin their chewing habits. After mating, the female girdler selects a living branch on a host tree, straddles the branch and penetrates the bark by cutting deeply into the wood with her mandibles. She cuts a small section at a time. This process continues until a clean incision has been excavated around the small branch. The female girdler is careful not to completely sever the branch from the tree, leaving it connected by a center portion of heartwood.

The female girdler then bites up to 10 or so notches into the bark of the branch, singly deposits eggs in the notches and covers them with a protective secretion. During fall and winter months, these limbs die and break from the tree. The larvae hatch and feed on the dead wood of the girdled branch, burrowing just beneath the bark. The life cycle of this insect is complete in one year.

Trying to control them is mostly futile. The most effective method is to gather the girdled limbs and dispose of them as they fall. It's one more reason to get up from the couch or the computer. Disposing of these limbs eliminates the source of the larvae that would otherwise develop into adult girdlers the following summer. For country folks like me, burning the limbs is one way of control. You could also shred and dispose of them. Repeated applications of an insecticide into the tops of your trees is not an environmentally sound practice, nor would it necessarily be successful. To be honest, other than picking them up to make the place look tidy, I generally do nothing at all, as the damage to the trees is hardly noticeable. I've always just thought of them as part of fall.



## Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



**Indian Blanket** ~ Sunflower Family (Asteraceae)  
*Gaillardia pulchella* Foug.

Region: 1 through 10 (Ellis Co. is Region 4)  
Size: 1 – 2½ feet  
Blooms: February – December, Annual

As Texas' annual spring bluebonnet show fades, Indian blankets begin to bloom. Acre upon acre of them can be seen in fields, pastures and on roadsides. The ancestor of several cultivated varieties, *Gaillardia* is now planted along interstate highways. Seasonal color of wildflowers along the right-of-way has proven to be practical as well as beautiful, saving the cost of constant mowing. This flashy flower tops a bushy little plant, with two-inch wheels of red petals tipped with yellow. The center disk starts out yellow turning dark red with age. Flowers are solitary on a stem. Of the seven *Gaillardia* species in Texas, this one and *G. amblyodon* are annual; the others are all perennial. Flower colors can vary from all red to all yellow.

## Ellis County Master Gardener Meet and Greet

Information and Orientation Session



Monday, October 14, 2019, from 5:30pm—8:30pm  
Program begins at 6:30pm  
First United Methodist Church  
505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie, TX 75165  
No Charge for this Meet and Greet



The Ellis County Master Gardeners invite all who are interested to join us for an orientation and informational meeting about joining the Ellis County Master Gardener Association. Find out who we are, what our mission is all about and how you can be part of it. Applications for the ECMGA training will be available during this event.

Master Gardeners extend research based-horticultural education to an ever-increasing gardening audience and provides a viable way to meet the public demand for horticultural information. The Ellis County Master Gardener program follows the State of Texas Master Gardener Program, and are representatives of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. As such, Master Gardeners follow the research-based recommendations of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

- \* Open to any resident of Ellis County or nearby areas 18 or older
- \* Selection is based on the volunteer needs of our organization and the qualifications of the applicants
- \* All applications will be kept in strict confidence and privacy is respected
- \* Requirements: interest in helping people, ability and desire to learn, willingness to provide unbiased, research-based information and be a team player
- \* GARDENING EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE NOT REQUIRED

The application period will be open from October 14, 2019, through January 1, 2020. No applications will be accepted after January 1. Classes in the past have been held at First United Methodist Church Waxahachie in the month of February; every Tuesday and Thursday 8:30am—4pm. A change in location and dates are currently being considered. The training includes approximately 70 hours of research-based horticultural education and materials and is limited to 20 participants. The cost will be determined at a later date. Registration applications will be available at the Meet and Greet session.



## Fall Vegetable Gardening Guide

Larry Stein and Joe Masabni  
Texas A&M Agrilife Extension



However, too much water is just as harmful as not enough. Soaking-wet soil will cause root rotting and subsequent stunting or death. So check the soil moisture by feeling the soil before applying water. If the soil balls together, it still has enough water; if not, apply water.

Buy the largest transplants possible. Even though larger transplants cost more, their root systems will spread faster and the plants will produce more fruit sooner.

Or, grow your own larger transplants by planting small ones in potting soil and evenly mixing in slow-release fertilizer pellets such as Osmocote®. Add a water-soluble fertilizer to the irrigation water and place the plants in full sun (with shade after 3pm). Keep the transplants moist, but don't over-water them.

*Ellis County is in Region III related to this article.*

*Your mind is a Garden,  
Your thoughts are the seeds,  
You can grow flowers,  
Or you can grow weeds.*

*Author unknown*

Fall crops generally do better when started from transplants than from seed. Transplants should always be used for growing tomatoes and peppers. The trick to establishing healthy transplants during late summer is to make sure they have plenty of water. Transplants in peat pots or cell packs with restricted root zones require at least two weeks for their root systems to enlarge enough to support active plant growth. Until that time, they may need to be watered every day or the plants will be stunted or even die.

Table 1. Average planting dates for fall vegetables in various growing regions of Texas.

Vegetables	Region I	Region II	Region III	Region IV	Region V
Beans, snap bush	Jul 15	Aug 1	Sep 1	Sep 10	Oct 1
Beans, Lima bush	Jul 15	Jul 25	Aug 20	Sep 1	Sep 15
Beets	Aug 15	Sep 1	Oct 15	Nov 1	Dec 15
Broccoli	Jul 15	Aug 1	Sep 1	Oct 1	Nov 1
Brussels sprouts	Jul 15	Aug 1	Sep 1	Oct 1	Nov 1
Cabbage	Jul 15	Aug 1	Sep 1	Oct 1	Nov 1
Carrots	Jul 15	Aug 15	Nov 10	Nov 20	Dec 15
Cauliflower	Jul 15	Aug 1	Sep 1	Oct 1	Nov 1
Chard, Swiss	Aug 1	Aug 15	Oct 1	Oct 20	Dec 15
Collards	Aug 1	Aug 15	Oct 10	Oct 20	Dec 15
Corn, sweet	Jul 1	Aug 10	Aug 20	Sep 10	Sep 20
Cucumber	Jul 15	Aug 1	Sep 1	Sep 10	Oct 1
Eggplant	Jul 1	Jun 15	Jul 1	Jul 10	Aug 1
Garlic (cloves)	Jul	Aug	Oct	Nov	Dec
Kohlrabi	Aug 15	Sep 1	Sep 10	Oct 1	Nov 1
Lettuce, leaf	Sep 1	Sep 15	Oct 10	Nov 1	Dec 1
Mustard	Sep 1	Oct 1	Nov 1	Dec 1	Dec 15
Onion (seed)	Not recommended	Not recommended	Nov 1	Dec 1	Dec 15
Parsley	Sep 15	Oct 1	Oct 10	Nov 1	Dec 1
Peas, southern	Jun 15	Jul 1	Aug 1	Aug 15	Sep 1
Pepper	Jun 1	Jun 15	Jul 1	Jul 15	Aug 1
Potato	Not recommended	Aug 1	Sep 1	Oct 1	Not recommended
Pumpkin	Jun 1	Jul 1	Aug 1	Aug 10	Sep 1
Radish	Sep 1	Oct 1	Nov 25	Dec 1	Dec 15
Spinach	Aug 15	Sep 1	Nov 15	Dec 1	Dec 15
Squash, summer	Aug 1	Aug 15	Sep 10	Oct 1	Oct 10
Squash, winter	Jun 15	Jul 1	Aug 10	Sep 1	Sep 10
Tomato	Jun 1	Jun 15	Jul 1	Jul 10	Aug 1
Turnip	Sep 1	Oct 15	Nov 1	Dec 1	Dec 15

### Indian Trail Master Naturalists' Events



Join the Indian Trail Master Naturalists at their monthly meeting on Monday, September 23, 2019. The program for the evening is entitled "Native Grasses, the Foundation of Prairie Ecology & Restoration". John Snowden will provide a discussion on the importance of our Texas native grasses. John is aggressively involved in public education and currently intensely active in volunteer prairie restorations across the metroplex, winter transplants, seeds, educational demonstrations and pollinators projects. Each outing in nature with friends and family brings new details which John uses in his endeavors. John's message is Go, See, Enjoy, Learn!

The program is free and begins at 7pm following 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, September 21, 2019, 9am. Wildflower Walk.** Members will be leading a walk at Mockingbird Nature Park. Join in this half-mile stroll along the trails to identify wildflowers. Free to the public. Participants should bring drinking water and wear comfortable shoes. The walk will be canceled if raining. Info at: <http://txmn.org/indiantrail/> or email: [Information@itmnc.com](mailto:Information@itmnc.com)

**Before you Plant: Soil Preparation, Amendments**

*Joseph Masabni, Assistant Professor and Extension Horticulturist  
Patrick Lillard, Extension Assistant, The Texas A&M University System  
Texas A&M AgriLife Research Extension, Water University*



The soil is a storehouse for all the elements plants need to grow: nutrients, organic matter, air and water. Soil also provides support for plant roots. When properly prepared and cared for, soil can be improved each year and will continue to grow plants forever. Uncared for soil will soon become suited only for growing weeds.

**Soil types**

Texas gardeners must work with many different soils. Some are very sandy, some are sticky clay and others are rocky and shallow. Sandy soils do not hold enough water; in windy areas, blowing sand can injure vegetables. Clay soils hold too much water and do not allow enough air to enter the soil.

Vegetables need a deep and well-drained soil with adequate organic matter. Good garden soil with proper moisture will not form a hard ball when squeezed in the hand. It should crumble easily when forced between the fingers. It should not crack or crust over when dry.

**Soil improvement**

Almost all garden soils can be improved by adding organic matter to make soil more workable.

Organic matter loosens tight clay, helps sand hold more water, makes soil easier to dig and adds nutrients.

Some common organic matter additives are:

- Plant materials: This includes leaves, straw and grass clippings. Work material into the soil several months before planting to allow it time to decompose. Most gardeners do this during the winter.
- Manure: Use composted manure and incorporate it into the soil well ahead of planting. Do not use fresh manure as it can damage plants and introduce diseases. Apply 30 to 40 pounds of composted manure for every 100 square feet.
- Compost: Compost is a nutrient rich soil conditioner consisting of decayed plant material. Incorporate up to 2" of compost into beds or pre-sodded turfgrass areas to improve drainage and increase your soil's nutrient availability. Consider topdressing (and rake) in 1/4" to 1/2" of finely screened compost in poor draining areas of your lawn. This technique also works well after aeration in high traffic situations to reduce compaction. You might also consider spreading compost around newly planted trees, shrubs and perennials before you apply mulch. If you have a more sandy soil, compost can also serve to improve our soil's ability to hold water and prevent excess nutrient leaching. Make certain you work your compost into the soil before planting.
- Sawdust: Compost this before adding it to the garden. Do not use uncomposted sawdust because it will rob the soil of nitrogen and consequently, starve the plants of this essential nutrient.
- Green manure: Plant rye or oats in the fall and plow or spade it under in the spring. These cannot be used if a fall garden is planted. Do not add more than a 4-inch layer of organic material.

**Amendments for North Texas Clay Soils**

A number of amendments can be added to your soil, but what you need depends on the specific characteristics of your site. Drainage, fertility, pH balance and a host of other factors should be considered.

~ Most heavy clay soils benefit from the addition of gypsum. It adds some nutrients but, more importantly, it loosens clay soils and makes it more workable. Spread about 3 to 4 pounds of gypsum per 100 square feet over garden soil after it has been dug in the winter. Work it into the soil or allow it to be washed in by rain.

~ Add sand or organic matter to clay soil to make it more workable. Mix 2 inches of clean sand and 3 inches of organic matter, such as leaves, with the soil. Do this during the winter.

~ Expanded Shale is a porous, lightweight aggregate with the ability to improve drainage in clay soils and hold moisture at the same time. Expanded shale is most effective as incorporated into soil when establishing a new planting bed. Add up to 3" then till or mix in thoroughly to a depth of 6" with a shovel or spade.

Healthy soils are the foundation of a water efficient landscape. They help to cycle nutrients, reduce runoff and have the potential to absorb any excess nutrients or pollutants. To improve your soil's ability to infiltrate water and maintain soil available nutrients, amend your soil as needed.

**Don't Guess, Soil Test!**

[soiltesting.tamu.edu](http://soiltesting.tamu.edu) is your one-stop shop for everything you need to get your soil sample submitted to Texas A&M AgriLife scientists for testing.

One of the best methods for evaluating your soil is to collect and mail a soil sample to the Texas A&M Soil Testing Laboratory. Step-by-step instructions for submitting your sample are available at <http://soiltesting.tamu.edu>. For as little as \$10 per sample you will receive a detailed analysis of your soil and recommendations on how you can improve soil fertility.

**ECMG Lawn and Garden EXPO**  
**Saturday, March 28, 2020**



## Light House for Learning

(With the Ellis County Master Gardeners)

For reservations, contact Melissa Cobb at (972) 923-4631 or [mcobb@wisd.org](mailto:mcobb@wisd.org)

Register online at [https://www.wisd.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC\\_ID=1080753&type=d&pREC\\_ID=1369108](https://www.wisd.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1080753&type=d&pREC_ID=1369108)

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



**Monday, September 23 ~ Building a Pocket Garden:** A vertical garden is a method to grow plants in a container that can hang on a wall. Found in nature and ancient civilizations, living walls have been thriving for centuries on walls all over the world. In this class we will demonstrate several ways you can make your own vertical garden. A handout will be provided to help you complete your home project. The class will include a demonstration on making your own herb pocket garden. *Instructors: Jane Sloan and Ruth Spurr*

**Thursday, September 26 ~ Perennials for All Seasons:** Perennials are valued mostly because they return to the garden each year. However, the gardener needs to know which ones will bloom the longest, when they bloom and how they add to the landscape in other ways before choosing new additions to their gardens. *Instructor: Maureen Nitkowski*

**Monday, September 30 ~ Texas Superstars:** Learn a brief history of how plants have been named Texas Superstars and how they were found. Highlights of these superstars include annuals, perennials, fruits, trees and many more. *Instructors: Susan Ellis and Gayle Johnston*

**Thursday, October 3 ~ Earth-kind® Composting: It's Easier Than You Think:** Compost is a gardener's gold. We will discuss reasons and ways to compost. There are many methods to compost household and yard waste. Come and discover Earth-Kind® ways you can incorporate composting into your home maintenance routine and harvest your own gardener's gold. *Instructor: Ginger Cole*

**Monday, October 14 ~ Texas Pecans: Tree Planting and Care:** Who in the south doesn't love pecans in just about everything. If you would like to grow your own, this class will teach you what pecan trees will grow best in our area, how to plant both bare root or container grown trees, proper care after planting and how to control any possible pests. *Instructor: Sheila Cloonen*

**Thursday, October 17 ~ Kokodama and Hydroponics:** As gardeners, we are always looking for new ways to display plants and you will see the uniqueness of Kokodama, which means clay (koke) ball (dama). The inspiration for this concept lies in Japanese bonsai technology for processing moss. With its natural appearance and materials, the Kokodama is a counterpart to the usual plastic hanging pot. **Hydroponics** - the process of growing plants in sand, gravel, or liquid, with added nutrients but without soil. Let's explore how you can grow insect-free lettuce & herbs in your garage all winter with easy to acquire materials. *Instructor: Susan Gilliland*

**Thursday, October 24 ~ Gardening Alternatives:** Come hear about raised bed gardening, square foot gardening and container gardening in Ellis County. Our soils require special techniques for successful fall and spring vegetable gardens. We're here to help! *Instructors: Joan Brammer and Susan Hall*

**Monday, October 28 ~ Decorating your Front Entrance with a Beautiful Fall Garden in Containers:** Instructors will demonstrate putting your container or containers together and answer questions. Come and have fun creating a fresh fall "curb appeal" to your home. Must bring your pots and plants. Soil will be provided. *Instructors: Jesika Lopez and Mattie Thompson*

All classes cost \$14.00 and are taught from 6:00-7:30 pm at Waxahachie High School, Career & Technology Department, 3001 US Hwy 287 Bypass, Waxahachie, TX 75167. Students and teachers will enter the building on the west side of the campus in the Billy Bates Career and Technology Center. There is both a separate parking and a separate entrance there.

## Ellis County Master Gardeners' Fall Plant Sale

October 5, 2019

Come out to Coleman Junior High School Parking Lot, October 5, 2019, 9 am - Noon, and pick up perennial plants, trees and shrubs to enhance your home..



## All About CANTALOUPE

*Food Technology and Processing, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension*

### Nutrition Information

Cantaloupe is a low-calorie, nutrient-rich fruit. It is rich in Vitamin A and Vitamin C. It is also rich in potassium, folic acid and moderately rich in micronutrients (zinc, copper, iron). It is naturally low in calories (29 calories per ½ cup serving), sodium and fat.

### Planting and Harvesting Cantaloupe

Cantaloupes are planted in Central Texas starting in March to April, when the soil temperature is 75-89°F, and can be harvested from June to November. There needs to be at least 110-140 frost-free days for cantaloupes to fully mature. Therefore, it would be best to plant well in advance (4-5 months) of the first frost to have production in the early fall. Cantaloupe plants are good producers and are easy to grow in a well-drained home garden.

Plant Cantaloupe March to April     Harvest Cantaloupe June to November

### Storing Cantaloupes

Cantaloupes should be stored in the refrigerator immediately after harvest. Before storing in the refrigerator, any dirt adhering to the outside should be washed off thoroughly. Additionally, as a food safety precaution another thorough washing before cutting the fruit is necessary.

### Choosing and Freezing Cantaloupes

Cantaloupes should be selected as fully ripe fruit. This is accomplished by selecting fruit by its indication of full maturity, which are: 1) stem separation from the fruit 2) thick, coarse and corky netting or veining which stands out on the surface and 3) yellowish-buff, yellowish-gray or pale yellow skin color between the netting. A ripe cantaloupe will also have a pleasant cantaloupe odor when the stem scar is held under the nose. The stem scar will also yield slightly to light pressure.

Avoid cantaloupes that appear to be overripe. The indicators of over ripeness are a pronounced yellow rind color, softening over the entire rind, and soft, watery and insipid flesh.

After choosing cantaloupes that are fully ripe, they can be easily frozen for later consumption. Cantaloupe pieces need to be syrup packed but do not need to be treated to prevent discoloration. The procedures to freeze cantaloupe are outlined below.

### Freezing Cantaloupe

Cut into slices, cubes, or balls.

Use a syrup solution of 2 cups of sugar to 4 cups of water (50% sugar solution).

***Note:** This solution can be lowered to 25% sugar (1 cup sugar to 4 cups of water) depending upon how sweet the cantaloupe tastes and your preferences.*

## Featured Recipe of the Month

### Black Pepper and Honey-Marinated Cantaloupe with Basil

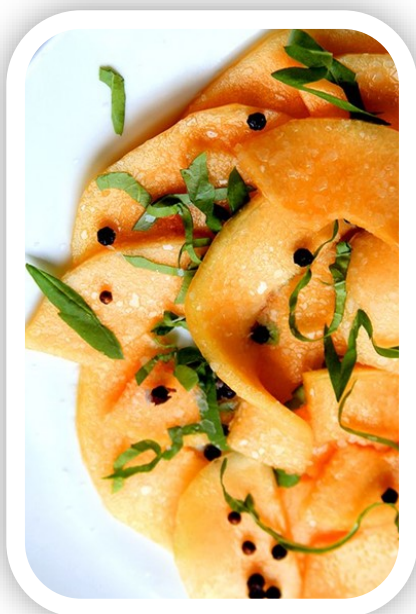


#### Ingredients:

- ◆ ½ cup honey
- ◆ 2 tsp. whole black peppercorns, crushed
- ◆ 1 slightly underripe cantaloupe, peeled, seeded, and thinly sliced
- ◆ 2 sprigs basil. plus 3 tbsp. thinly sliced
- ◆ Flaky sea salt

#### Instructions:

- ◆ Whisk honey, black pepper, and 1 cup boiling water in a 9" x 13" baking dish; allow to cool.
- ◆ Add cantaloupe; toss to coat.
- ◆ Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 4 hours or up to overnight
- ◆ Drain and discard excess syrup from cantaloupe. Sprinkle with thinly sliced basil and salt.



*Yield: Serves 6-8*

**GARDEN CHECKLIST FOR SEPTEMBER***by Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist, TX A&M*

- ◇ Coleus and caladiums require plenty of water this time of year if they are to remain lush and attractive until fall. Fertilize with ammonium sulfate at the rate of 1/3 to 1/2 pound per 100 square feet of bed area, and water thoroughly.
- ◇ Rejuvenate heat-stressed geraniums and begonias for the fall season by lightly pruning, fertilizing and watering.
- ◇ Now is the time to sow seeds of the many cool-weather vegetables, greens and herbs that thrive through Texas' relatively mild winters. The fall and winter cool season is often more dependable for growing these crops than the spring season.
- ◇ Nick the seedcoats of Texas bluebonnets before planting to hasten germination or purchase started seedlings such as the popular "Maroon" variety.
- ◇ Don't allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture. Hollies will frequently drop their fruit under drought conditions. Some vegetables such as cucumbers or eggplants also become bitter if underwatered during peak growing times.
- ◇ Remove weak, unproductive growth and old seed heads from crape myrtles and roses to stimulate new growth for fall beauty.
- ◇ Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning until mid-winter. Pruning now may stimulate tender new growth prior to frost.
- ◇ Sow seeds of snapdragons, pinks, pansies and other winter flowers in flats for planting outside during mid-to-late fall.
- ◇ Prepare the beds for spring-flowering bulbs as soon as possible. It's important to cultivate the soil and add generous amounts of organic matter to improve water drainage. Bulbs will rot without proper drainage.
- ◇ Christmas cactus can be made to flower by supplying 12 hours of uninterrupted darkness and cool nights (55 degrees F) for a month starting in mid-October. Keep plants on the dry side for a month prior to the treatment.
- ◇ Divide spring flowering perennials such as iris, Shasta daisy, gaillardia, rudbeckias, cannas, daylilies, violets, liriopse and ajuga.
- ◇ Continue a disease spray schedule on roses as blackspot and mildew can be extremely damaging in September and October.

**Wildflower Backroads**

*By: Susanne Capehart  
Master Gardner Intern 2019*



Travelling down highway 287 with my husband on a sunny Saturday morning, I kept seeing patches of purple flowers on the side of the roads. I noticed down a dirt road there was the same purple flowers! Thinking to myself, I must find out the name of this beautiful wildflower! We turned back around and started down this dirt road. Finally, after the dust had settled and we came to a stop, I jumped out and went straight to this purple flower. It was interesting in the way that it looked. It was a collection of delicate purple flowers sitting on top of each other in a row. A tall, square and sturdy stem held the flower in the air making it easy for the butterflies to pollinate. Green, serrated edges of the leaves sit below the cluster of purple beauties bringing in the nutrients for the flower. When I moved the individual flowers, something odd happened that I've not seen on another flower. It didn't spring back into position but instead it stayed put where it was moved. Reaching into my back pocket, I brought out my phone and opened up the "iNaturalist" app to take a picture of this quirky flower and hopefully identify it. I get an immediate response, *Physostegia intermedia* or the common name Obedient Plant.

Let me introduce you to the beautiful Obedient flower. There are two species of this perennial plant. *Physostegia intermedia* blooms from April to July and *Physostegia virginiana* ssp. blooms from August to October. Their flowers begin blooming from the bottom of the cluster and completes its bloom at the top. The shades of the petals can range from white, light pink and lavender. The cluster of flowers can range from four to six inches in height, including the stem this plant can reach an astounding height of four feet!

So, why does it grow in our wonderful state of Texas? Since it is a native plant, it has the ability to grow in various soil conditions. It can even be used as an aquatic plant! The light requirements range from full sun, dapple shade to part shade. This wonderful wildflower can be propagated by using root division or by planting seeds.

If you are looking to encourage wildlife into your yard, this wildflower will bring pollinators and hummingbirds because they are nectar-producing plants. This particular wildflower has two different species that will provide food for wildlife in both the spring and fall months.

Reference: [https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=phin8](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=phin8)

<https://cdn-ext.agnet.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ERPT-009-using-plants-to-attract-wildlife.pdf>



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