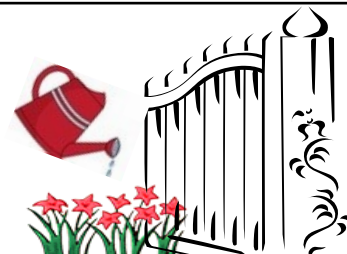


# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume XII, Issue 12

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

December, 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

## The 2020 Master Gardener Calendars Are HERE!!

Available December 3



The Ellis County Master Gardeners are proud to present our 14<sup>th</sup> annual gardening calendar. Our theme this year is "*Native and Adapted Plants.*"

As always, this beautiful and informative calendar includes month-by-month gardening information, soil preparation, fertilization, moon signs, average temperature and rainfall each month, holidays, as well as the sponsor's events.



### 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!

Scotty Rigsby

Your **FREE** copy is now available at all of the calendar sponsor's locations. While you are there to pick up your calendar, please shop at their businesses. You might find just the Christmas gift you are looking for. Also thank them for sponsoring this year's gardening calendar! Without them there wouldn't be a calendar.

Merry Christmas to all and a Happy New Year!

### The Ellis County Master Gardeners and Sponsors

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## Want to Become A Texas Master Gardener?



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

### What is a Master Gardener?

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

### Is the Master Gardener Program For Me?

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

Do I want to learn more about the culture and maintenance of many types of plants?

Am I eager to participate in a practical and intense training program?

Do I enjoy sharing my knowledge with people?

Do I have enough time to attend training and complete volunteer service hour requirements?

Do I have special interests that could benefit the community or an interest in developing one? (e.g., bird or butterfly knowledge, native gardens, wildflowers, etc.)

Do I have a sincere interest in nature or gardening?

### Training

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

The Master Gardener training course will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. every Friday beginning January 31, 2020, and ending March 20, 2020, at the Ellis County Texas AgriLife Extension Office, 701 South I-35E, Waxahachie, TX 75165.

### Volunteer Commitment

In exchange for the training, participants are asked to volunteer at least 75 hours of service by November 30th to earn the title of "Texas Master Gardener". The volunteer time will take place during the normal work week with the exception of the Annual Lawn & Garden Expo which is held the last Saturday of March.

The type of service done by Master Gardeners varies according to community needs and the abilities and interests of the Master Gardener. Some Master Gardeners answer telephone requests for information related to gardening while others staff plant clinics or displays in shopping malls, farmers' markets or community centers. Master Gardeners may speak to local groups and conduct workshops or they may help establish school and community garden projects, work with 4-H youth or assist their agent with news and radio releases related to gardening. The Master Gardener Coordinator in the county Extension office decides how volunteer time can best be used.

### Certification

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

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

If you are interested in the Master Gardener Program, an application can be found at <https://txmg-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/ellis/files/2019/10/MG-Class-Application-2020.pdf>. You can also contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office in Ellis County at (972) 825-5175 or e-mail [Ellis-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:Ellis-tx@tamu.edu). Applications will be mailed upon request and must be returned no later than December 31, 2019, at which time you will be called to set up an interview.

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





## IT'S DECEMBER ..... WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

### Planting

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

### Fertilizing and Pruning

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

### Garden Watch

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

What is red and used around December for decorations?

You are correct, it is the common holiday flower the red poinsettia! Have you ever wondered how it got its name? Joel Roberts Poinsett was an Ambassador to Mexico. President John Quincy Adams appointed him in the 1800's. During his time in Mexico he enjoyed visiting the countryside for plants. He came across the red flowered plant that would someday have his name. When he returned to the United States, he brought cuttings to a friend who was a horticulturist. Some articles state he had a greenhouse and found the plant in the corner of the greenhouse coming up through the brick. This plant has many uses in its native country. The Aztecs used this plant to treat fevers, for decoration and dying textiles. It was also used for measuring gold.

Why did this plant become associated with our Christmas traditions? There are many legends and theories on the origin of its use and meaning at Christmas. One legend is that a child did not have a gift to carry to the chapel on Christmas eve so she stopped along the road and picked weeds and made a bouquet. The flowers are said to bloom with bright red flowers when placed on the altar. Poinsettias are called the "flower of the Holy Night" because their red bracts are said to represent the flaming Star of Bethlehem. Native to Mexico the plant was cultivated by the Aztecs. We have adapted this plant for one of our Christmas holiday flowers. In America the first poinsettias were sold in Pennsylvania. It took until the 1900's before these flowers were produced for commercial production. One of the most interesting facts about poinsettias is that the colorful parts of the plant are not petals - they are modified leaves called bracts. This flower has come a long way from Mexico to be popular throughout the United States.

Many believe that the poinsettia is a poisonous plant. It does contain a latex sap that could make an animal sick. Ohio State University has studied the plant and determined that at least fifty leaves would need to be eaten by a child of about fifty pounds to be lethal. Sick yes, lethal no.

Since the discovery of the poinsettia there have been new varieties developed. One, it is not always red; new colors and sizes have been created. If you like red, then this is your holiday plant. But, you can also find pink, white or many additional colors.

*Submitted by Jane Slone, ECMG*

## Featured Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener



**Small Coast Germander** - Mint Family (Loasaceae)  
*Teucrium cubense* Jacq.

**Region:** 2-4, 6, 10 (Ellis Co. is Region 4)

**Size:** 2 feet

**Blooms:** March – December, Annual/Perennial

Germander is represented in Texas by three species with several subspecies. Germander has square stems and opposite leaves. All species form colonies. Small coast germander (pictured) has lobed, cleft or scalloped leaves. Stalked white flowers are three-fourths of an inch long. *T. laciniatum*, cutleaf germander, flowers in the leaf axils. It has half-inch white flowers and the broadly lobed leaves are incised nearly to the midrib. *T. canadense*, American germander or wood sage, has flower spikes up to eight inches long, with individual flowers reaching a length of one-half to three-quarters of an inch. They may be creamy white, pale pink or pale lavender.

## Winterizing Your Lawn ~ Help For A Summer Stressed Lawn

By Shirley Campbell, ECMG

Following our long, hot, dry summer, homeowners are asking what they can do to ensure their lawns will survive the cold weather ahead. How well you manage your lawn in late fall and early winter will have a tremendous influence on its survival. It will be especially true this year as we went without rain for roughly three months and many lawns are under stress and need all the help they can get.

Four basic management practices for lawn care will help you through until spring:

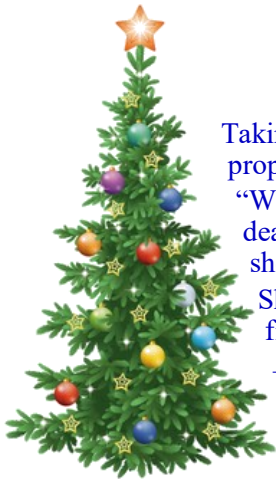
1. To rake or not to rake. Most trees begin losing their leaves after the first frost which normally occurs mid-to-late November. A light blanket of leaves on the lawn can actually be beneficial to help protect the turfgrass from extreme cold --- a thick layer of leaves can create problems by reducing oxygen availability to the plants. While turfgrasses may be dormant, they're still live plant tissues and require oxygen. There are areas where the wind can blow leaves causing them to pile up and form a thick layer. These piles need to be removed with a rake. Or, forget the manual labor of raking and try mowing fallen leaves. Use a mulching mower and you can let leaf pieces lie. Or, attach the grass catcher to collect chopped leaves for the compost pile or for mulching planting beds. Leaves mow best when they're dry. You can also rake leaves out from around shrubs onto the lawn so they're accessible for mowing.
2. Another concern with allowing tree leaves to remain on turfgrass is how this affects the application of pre-emergent herbicide for winter weed control. You should have made your first application of a pre-emergent herbicide in September. However, some homeowners and lawn care service companies make a second application in late November or December. If a blanket of leaves is on the lawn, it will be difficult to properly water the herbicide into the soil to control emerging weeds.
3. Watering is a must. Proper irrigation is one of the most important cultural practices at this time of year. The number one reason for losing turfgrass in Texas is desiccation, not low temperature kill. Desiccation is death from drying. Again, while your turfgrass plants may be dormant (brown) they're still alive and require moisture to survive. Water is a good insulator against temperature change in the soil. If a freeze occurs, the temperature of a dry soil will drop more than the temperature of a moist soil. The root systems of your turfgrass plants are the most sensitive parts to low temperatures. Generally, you should give your landscape one inch of water every 30 days if it's not getting adequate rainfall.
4. Cool-season grasses need nutrition. If you have tall fescue or have overseeded with perennial rye, late November to early December is primetime for fertilization. While a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio fertilizer will work fine, all you really need to apply at this time to cool-season lawns is a nitrogen only fertilizer such as urea or ammonium sulfate.

Taken from an article by Dr. James McAfee, who passed away in 2015. Dr. McAfee worked for 40 years in the turfgrass industry as an associate professor and turfgrass specialist with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. We master gardeners had the privilege of Dr. McAfee teaching many of our training classes.



## Oh, Christmas tree ... How do protect and dispose of thee?

Writer: Paul Schattenberg, [paschattenberg@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:paschattenberg@ag.tamu.edu)



Taking proper care of and precautions with Christmas trees can keep them from catching fire until they can be properly disposed of, said a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service specialist in family and community health.

"While Christmas tree fires are fairly rare, they can still cause serious property damage and possibly injury or death," said Joyce Cavanagh, College Station. "The fires typically start due to an open flame from a candle or a short in the electrical lights, but there are other ways Christmas trees can catch fire."

She said it is important to properly maintain Christmas trees and take steps to help ensure they do not catch fire. She and the National Fire Protection Agency offered the following tips for Christmas tree safety:

- Provide a direct water source for your tree or water it frequently to keep it from drying out
- Inspect holiday lights for frayed wires or wear that might spark a fire
- Never use candles as tree decorations and buy electrical lights that meet independent laboratory testing standards and are labeled flame-retardant

— Keep the tree three feet or more away from any heat source such as a fireplace, stove, radiator or candle

— Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit in the event there's a need to escape

— Turn off the tree lights when going to bed or away from home

— Remove the tree from the home when needles start dropping and turning brown

Cavanagh said even though a Christmas tree has been removed from a home, it may still present a fire hazard.

"Dried-out trees constitute a real fire danger and should not be left in the garage or placed outside next to the exterior walls of your home," she said. "See if your community has a Christmas tree collection or recycling program, make arrangements for pickup from the appropriate removal service as soon as possible."

Cavanagh said for proper and safe disposal of Christmas trees, all ornaments, tinsel, ribbon, lights and other non-organic materials should be removed.

"If needles drop onto the floor during the process of tree removal, it's better to sweep them up as opposed to vacuuming, because the needles can clog your vacuum cleaner," she said.

Cavanagh also said large Christmas tree disposal bags are an excellent way to cut down on the mess and are available at many home improvement stores.

"Most communities have curbside Christmas tree collection for a few weeks after Christmas and some offer it throughout the month of January," she said. "And many communities also have free tree drop-off locations. Some debris removal services may require trees to be cut into 4-foot or shorter lengths, so it may be necessary to cut the tree in half."

Should the designated Christmas tree collection time be missed, Cavanagh said unflocked trees can usually be chopped up and put into the organic or yard waste container for collection during the next regularly scheduled pickup.

"Flocked trees will likely need to be chopped up and disposed of along with your regular solid waste," she said.

Cavanagh also noted tree recycling and mulching programs are gaining popularity in many communities.

"You can check with your local department of public works for information on whether this service is available in your area," she said. "For these programs, they chip and shred the trees, then make the mulch available for use in your garden. Your hauler can usually notify you of pickup dates in your area and what you need to do to get your tree ready for recycling."

Note: The City of Waxahachie's annual Christmas tree pickup is in early January. Check their website for specific dates. Homeowners can put their trees out at the curb and the garbage company will pick them up. If a resident wishes to dispose of their tree sooner, they can take it to the Citizen's Convenient Station located at 499 Lions Park Road which is open from 8am-4pm Tuesday-Saturday, excluding New Year's Day. Whether taken to the curb or turned in at the convenient station Christmas trees must be bare of any decoration or ornaments, including tinsel and ornament hooks. The trees will be mulched, chipped and recycled.

Residents of Midlothian can dispose of their trees on their normal scheduled trash days. The trees need to be cut into three foot sections and bundled before placing at the curb.



The Ellis County Master Gardeners will have their annual Christmas celebration on December 10, 2019. The members will provide Christmas creations which will be auctioned during a silent auction. All proceeds are donated to local charities. Start the new year with us January 14, 2020, for our next regularly scheduled meeting.





## SITE PREPARATION FOR FRUIT TREE PLANTING

*by Dr. Larry A. Stein, Professor & Extension Horticulturist, Texas AgriLife Extension Service*



Before a fruit tree is planted, there must be adequate space. Most fruit trees require an area twenty five feet by twenty five feet; dwarfs need about twelve feet by twelve feet. The site must have full sun. A single peach tree can easily produce two bushels of fruit, about one hundred pounds, so don't plant too many fruit trees for your needs.

Fruit trees are best planted in midwinter to allow time for root development prior to spring growth. During the months prior to planting, the site should have been prepared as follows: clear the site of perennial weeds and till an area at least four feet by four feet well. Any hard pan (layer) beneath the soil should be broken up. Level the site and till again.

Organic matter may be added to the planting area, but it is unnecessary, and never add fertilizer. To allow for soil water drainage the site may be built up so that the tree will be sitting on a small berm.

Seed the site in annual rye grass. At planting time (January is best), kill the rye grass berm area with glyphosate herbicide (the dead root channels from the rye grass allow for better water intake in the planting area). Plant the tree in the middle of the killed sod area in a hole as big as the root system, usually about 12 inches square, and at least 18 inches deep. Plant the tree and refill the soil to the same depth that the tree grew in at the nursery, being careful the tree does not settle too deep.

In April or May, as the grass greens up, spray three or four feet around the base of the tree with glyphosate herbicide. It is critical that this be done if the tree is to perform well; if you do little else, maintain this weed-free circle around the tree, and the tree will do better than if nothing at all is done.

The best tree to plant is the variety adapted to and recommended for your area. Select mid-size trees; they are cheaper and grow better than the larger trees. And, it is far easier to cut three to four-foot trees back to 18 to 24 inches than to prune five to six foot trees. Such strong cutback is necessary to remove apical dominance, put the top in balance with a reduced root system and force out strong vigorous shoots, which are easy to train.

The trees should have healthy white roots with no brown streaks. Also, check for borer presence or damage. With proper care it is highly possible for your fruit tree to fruit the second year after planting.



*Top left picture: High-quality, tree-ripened fruit ~ Bottom right picture: Peach bloom in Texas*



## Ellis County Master Gardeners EXPO

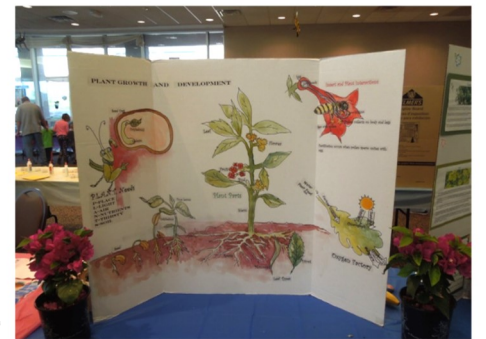
Coming March 28, 2020

*Ask the Expert, adult workshops, children's workshops, variety of vendors, plant sales and door prizes.*



**Interested in becoming a  
2020 Expo Sponsor Or  
Expo Exhibitor?**

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



## Featured Recipe of the Month

### Healthy Green Bean Casserole

*From Well Plated By Erin Clarke*



*Healthy Green Bean Casserole. Clean eating recipe without canned soup! Delicious, from scratch recipe with incredible flavor. A classic family favorite!*



Yield: 10 servings

#### INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup whole wheat panko breadcrumbs	3 T all-purpose flour
1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese	2 cups 2% milk
2 T chopped fresh parsley — <i>plus additional for garnish</i>	1 t kosher salt
4 Extra-virgin olive oil — <i>divided</i>	1/2 t black pepper
2 1/2 pounds green beans — <i>trimmed</i>	1/8 t ground nutmeg
1 medium onion — <i>very thinly sliced</i>	7 ounces 2% Greek yogurt
8 ounces baby bella (cremini) mushrooms — <i>sliced (do not use plain white mushrooms, as they do not have much flavor)</i>	

#### INSTRUCTIONS

*PREP TIME: 15 MIN COOK TIME: 35 MIN TOTAL TIME: 55 MIN*

- \* Position a rack in the upper third of your oven and preheat to broil. Lightly coat a 2-quart, broiler-safe baking dish with nonstick spray.
- \* In a small bowl, stir together the Panko, Parmesan, parsley, and 2 tablespoons olive oil. Set aside.
- \* Blanch the green beans: Bring a very large pot of water to a boil. Prepare an ice water bath and set out a large, clean kitchen towel. Place the beans in the water and cook just until crisp-tender, about 3 minutes. Plunge into an ice bath to stop the cooking, then drain and transfer to the towel. Lightly pat dry.
- \* Meanwhile, heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large, wide saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and mushrooms. Cook, stirring frequently, until the onion is soft and golden and the mushrooms brown and have given up their liquid, about 15 minutes. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil. Sprinkle the flour over the top. Cook, stirring, for 1 to 2 minutes more, until all of the flour turns golden and no white bits remain.
- \* Slowly add the milk a few splashes at a time, stirring between each addition to prevent lumps from forming. Increase the heat to medium high. Stir in the salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Cook and stir, allowing the sauce to bubble, running a wooden spoon or spatula along the bottom of the pan. Continue cooking and stirring until the sauce reduces and thickens to resemble a creamy gravy, about 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the Greek yogurt.
- \* Transfer half the green beans to the prepared baking dish. Spread half the sauce over the green beans. Add the remaining green beans and top with the remaining sauce. Sprinkle the breadcrumb mixture over the top.
- \* Broil, watching closely, until the casserole is bubbling and beginning to brown on top, 1 to 3 minutes, depending on your broiler. Let stand for 10 minutes prior to serving. Garnish with additional fresh parsley.

#### Recipe Notes

Green beans can be blanched 1 day in advance and the sauce prepared 1 day in advance. Store separately in the refrigerator, then gently re-heat the sauce on the stove until steaming before combining with the green beans. If the mixture becomes too thick, thin it out with a splash or two of milk. I haven't tested assembling the entire casserole in advance, but I think that you could layer together the sauce and beans in the baking dish, cover the dish with foil, then heat it (covered) in a 350°F oven until hot. From there, sprinkle with breadcrumbs and broil closer to serving.



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

- ☆ Don't forget to give your landscape a steady amount of water, through irrigation or by hand, if there is not adequate rain.
- ☆ As soon as the November weather appears to be settled, it is time to select and plant such annuals as pansies, violas and ornamental cabbages and kale.
- ☆ Plan now for your spring flowering season with a mixture of annuals and perennials.
- ☆ Don't get in a hurry to prune woody plants. Late December through February is usually the best time to prune them.
- ☆ Place orders for seeds this month so you will have them available when you are ready to plant. By ordering early, you will be more certain of getting the varieties you want. In addition to ordering seeds that you are already familiar with, try a few new kinds each year to broaden your garden contents.
- ☆ November through February is a good time to plant trees and shrubs.
- ☆ Bring in late-blooming plants such as decorative kalanchoes or Christmas cactus so they may finish flowering in the warmth of the house.
- ☆ Reduce the fertilization of indoor plants from late October to mid-March. An exception would be plants in an atrium or a well-lighted window.
- ☆ Drain gasoline from power tools and run the engine until fuel in the carburetor is used up.
- ☆ Drain and store garden hoses and watering equipment in a readily accessible location. The lawn and plants may need water during a prolonged dry spell.
- ☆ Continue to set out cool season bedding plants, such as pansies, violas, stock, snapdragons and dianthus.
- ☆ Use good pruning practices when selecting Christmas greenery from landscape plants. Don't destroy the natural form and beauty of the plant.
- ☆ Prolong the life of holiday-season gift plants by providing proper care. Check to see if the pot wrap has plugged up the bottom drainage. Don't overwater. Keep out of drafts from heating vents and opening doorways. Fertilizer is seldom needed the first few months.
- ☆ Take advantage of good weather to prepare garden beds for spring planting. Work in any needed organic matter and have beds ready to plant when needed.
- ☆ Don't forget tulip and hyacinth bulbs in the refrigerator. They can be planted any time in December if they have received 60 or more days of chilling.
- ☆ Want to start cuttings of your favorite Christmas cactus? As soon as it has finished blooming, select a cutting with 4 or 5 joints, break or cut it off, and insert the basal end into a pot of moderately moist soil. Place it on a windowsill or other brightly lit area. The cuttings should be rooted within 3 to 4 weeks.
- ☆ Don't spare the pruning shears when transplanting bare-rooted woody plants. Cut the tops back at least one-third to one-half, to compensate for the roots lost when digging the plant.
- ☆ Take advantage of bad weather and holiday time to study seed and nursery catalogues as well as good gardening books.
- ☆ Berry plants, such as holly and yaupon, may be pruned now while they can be enjoyed as cut material inside the house.

**CHRISTMAS FAIRY GARDEN WORKSHOP**

December 7, 2019 at 3PM

Make a Christmas themed winter wonderland for fairies to live! You'll love building this miniature garden for your Holiday season. We will have Christmas music playing for the whole family to enjoy! Building in groups is encouraged, just \$35 per creation.



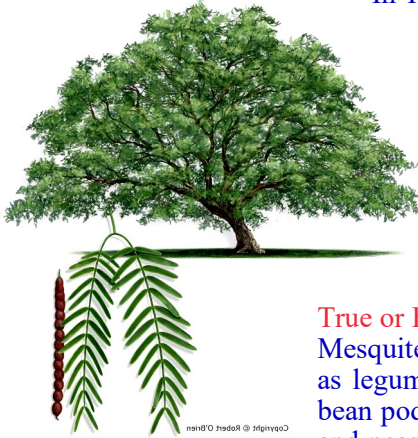


## Eclectic Gardening

With Jane Slone, Ellis County Master Gardener  
The Mesquite Tree (*Prosopis glandulosa*)



In Texas You love it or You hate it. Very few see the value of the mesquite tree!!!



Do you have mesquite trees? Probably not unless you live in the country. Most people do not consider the mesquite tree a favorable tree. The term 'trash tree' is used to describe the common mesquite tree. They are not considered beautiful; these trees do not provide great shade and they have thorns. The mesquite tree is a deciduous tree that is native to arid and semi-arid regions of Mexico, Southwestern United States, South America, Africa, India and the Middle East. It belongs to *Prosopis* genus, which comprises more than 40 species.

**True or False: Is the mesquite tree related to the common bean plant?**

Mesquite trees belong to the legume family. Peas, beans, shrubs and the mesquite tree are all classified as legumes. The definition of a legume is bean pods. The mesquite tree produces mass amounts of bean pods that scatter along with leaves that litter the yard in the fall. So yes, it is related to the beans and peas we cook and eat. The pods that fall on the ground are edible. However, I have never tried to eat the pods.

**Why are mesquite trees cut down and burned?**

Due to their invasive nature, mesquite trees are often referred to as devil trees by ranchers from Texas where these trees grow extensively. They are also blamed for absorbing water thereby lowering the water table and causing other trees to wither away due to lack of water. It also produces roots that can extend 150 to 200 feet down. Mesquite trees will not grow in soggy wet soil. So those who state that they compete for water may be misinformed. Mesquite trees can either grow as a single or a multiple-stemmed tree that might attain a height and spread of 20-30 feet over time, or as a shrub that is only 2-3 feet tall.

**Why is this tree important?**

One of the main purposes of the mesquite tree is to provide shade for wildlife. Also, the fruit serves as an important source of food for birds and animals as well as humans. Scientists are aware of the importance due to the tree's ability to produce nitrogen that is released into the soil. Nitrogen in the soil is beneficial to growing food crops.

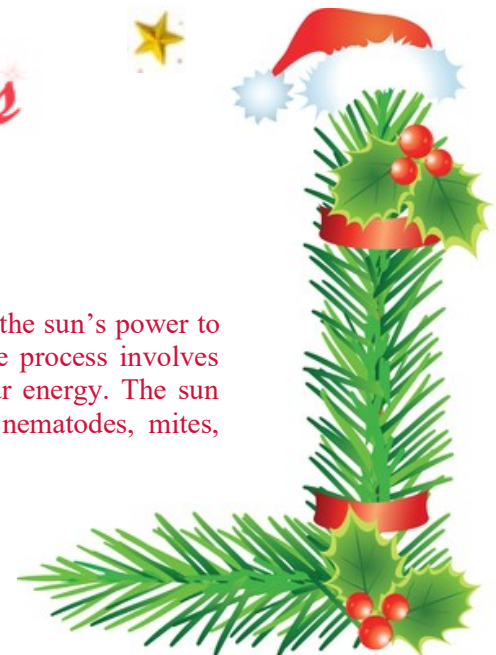
This is a quote and interesting fact I encountered on my search to provide the value of the poor lowly MESQUITE TREE.

"Is it a furniture, flooring and artisan's treasure or is it a noxious weed? Whether you swear by mesquite, or swear at it, there is no doubt that it is here to stay."

— Written by Mary G. Ramos, editor emerita, for the *Texas Almanac* 2006–2007



## Merry Christmas



### Extreme Gardening Topic

Soil solarization is an environmentally friendly method of using the sun's power to control pests such as bacteria, insects and weeds in the soil. The process involves covering the ground with a clear polyethylene cover to trap solar energy. The sun heats the soil to temperatures that kill bacteria, fungi, insects, nematodes, mites, weeds and weed seeds.

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