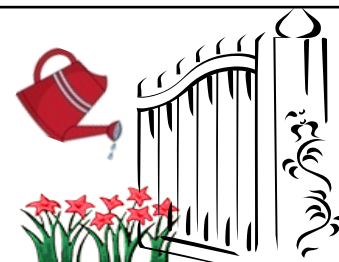




# Ellis County Master Gardener's E-Gardening Newsletter



Volume XII, Issue 5

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

July, 2020

**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 Seery, Bree Shaw

## WHAT DO MASTER GARDENERS DO DURING SHELTER IN PLACE

by Maureen Niitkowski, President ECMGA

For the last three months the Ellis County Master Gardeners have been unable to host our annual Lawn and Garden Expo, teach in person, be present at farmer's markets or even hold meetings. For all of us this has been upsetting and very trying. We miss our fellow members and the gardening public. So, what have we been doing?

I expect that the additional time we have spent in our own gardens has polished, expanded and even diversified them. Some of the projects therein have finally been attempted, and the weeds never had a chance. Since more people have been walking rather than going to the gym, I have had a few stop by while I am working in the garden and comment (from a safe distance) on the blooms. I know this has happened to others, and in that regard we are still teaching.

Some Master Gardeners have been taking photos and writing about gardening. Our Facebook folks and E-Garden staff have stayed busy to keep information flowing. The scholarship committee has awarded three college scholarships to Ellis County students while this year's interns are working on their volunteer hours for certification. There are online programs through Water University and Texas A&M to be shared and enjoyed by all. Another resource is the Texas Agrilife office here in Ellis County which has forwarded questions from home gardeners to us. The most frequently asked question thus far has been about crape myrtles, which suffered a die-back due to a few days of freezing in late winter. My favorite question was about crawdads in the lawn and answering it expanded my knowledge of that critter substantially.



## Listen to KBEC

Saturday mornings at 8:10 am 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 Rigbsby



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## ELLIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER MONTHLY MEETING



Due to COVID-19 and the restrictions in place by the CDC there are no near future meetings scheduled at this time.

Follow us on Facebook or at our website [www.ecmga.com](http://www.ecmga.com) to keep up with what is happening this summer.

## IT'S JULY ... WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

### PLANTING

- Plant tomatoes and peppers from four-inch pots. Visit <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable> for recommended varieties.
- Early July is the time to plant small and medium pumpkins for a Halloween harvest.
- Plant heat-tolerant annuals that have been acclimated to hot, sunny conditions. This includes moss rose, purslane, trailing lantana, purple fountain grass, firebush and copper plants.
- Lawn grasses can be planted this month, but you will need to water twice daily for short intervals to keep soil surface moist until the grass has established good roots, usually in two to three weeks.

### FERTILIZING and PRUNING

- Fertilize plants that bloom on new growth, such as crape myrtles, tropical hibiscus and roses, with a high-nitrogen fertilizer to promote late-summer growth and fall blooms. Apply same fertilizer to boost summer annuals and fall-flowering perennials.
- Light pruning of erratic spring growth may be done to maintain the natural form. Dead and diseased wood from trees and shrubs should be removed. Major pruning should be postponed until mid-winter.
- Deadhead all blooming plants. Remove dead leaves and spent blooms from container plants.

### GARDEN WATCH

- Be a "plant health" detective! Plants respond in various ways to heat and drought stress. These symptoms are often misdiagnosed as an insect or disease problem. Correctly identify the problem before turning to a pesticide.
- Galls on leaves of oaks, hackberries and other trees are caused by many species of gall-forming insects and are a result of the female stinging the leaf tissues as she lays her eggs. Galls are harmless since the insect doesn't feed on plant tissues.
- Watch for lawn pests. Dry, light-colored areas in sunny parts of St. Augustine are probably the result of chinch bugs (small black insects with a white diamond on their backs). Apply Merit (imidacloprid) or other labeled insecticide. Grub worms are the culprits if the turf turns brown and easily comes up when pulled on. Treat with a granular insecticide.
- Rapid death of established landscape plants and orchard trees during the summer may signify the presence of cotton root rot, a soil-borne fungal disease common in our calcareous clay soils. Since there is no effective control, verification by the Plant Diagnostic Lab at Texas A&M (<http://plantclinic.tamu.edu>) will help you know what plants can be used as replacements.

## July Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian  
Ellis County Master Gardener*



**White Milkwort** – Milkwort Family (polygalaceae)  
*Polygala alba* Nutt.

**Region:** 2 – 10 (Ellis County is Region 4)  
**Size:** 8 - 16 inches  
**Blooms:** March through October

Milkworts do not have the sticky white sap that oozes from milkweeds when they are cut, so don't let the similar names confuse you. White milkwort has many erect stems growing from a woody base. The tiny leaves are sparse. They alternate up a stem that ends in a spike-like raceme of densely clustered, quarter-inch white flowers. Certain species in this family were believed to increase the flow of milk when grazed by cows. The botanical name is from the Greek words *poly* (many) and *galu* (milk). The dried, powdered root is commercially marketed for the treatment of respiratory ailments. Over twenty-five species of milkwort are found in Texas.

## IT'S AUGUST ... WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

**PLANTING**

- Plant these fall vegetables early in the month: beans, cucumbers and squash. Follow up late in the month with transplants of broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage and cauliflower. Acclimate transplants to full sun before planting. Water immediately after planting.
- Plant bluebonnet and other spring wildflowers starting this month. Select a sunny, well-drained area with minimal vegetation. If planting into existing vegetation, mow area as short as possible; then lightly disturb with a disk or rake. Drag seeded area to ensure good seed-soil contact.
- Plant fall-flowering bulbs such as spider lily, naked lady lily, rain lily, oxblood lily and fall crocus. Place in the ground twice as deep as the diameter of the bulb.
- Dig and divide daffodils, daylilies, iris, liriope, oxalis and other spring-flower perennials.

**FERTILIZING and PRUNING**

- Caladiums require plenty of water if they are to remain lush and active until fall. Fertilize with 21-0-0 at the rate of 1/3 to 1/2 pound per 100 square feet of bed area and water thoroughly.
- Plants with yellowed leaves and dark green veins may be suffering from iron deficiency. Apply an iron/sulfur product.
- Prune bush roses by removing dead canes and weak, spindly growth. Cut back tall, vigorous bushes to about 30 inches. Then apply a complete fertilizer and water in for beautiful fall blooms.
- Pinch flowers from coleus, basil, mint, caladiums and other plants where flower buds and flowers stop production of new foliage.

**GARDEN WATCH**

- By now you know the real winners and losers in your landscape. Replace the “losers” with a Texas Superstar®. These plants have been tested and proven to be outstanding performers under our growing conditions. Visit [www.TexasSuperstar.com](http://www.TexasSuperstar.com) for a list of these amazing stars.
- Control fire ants in your lawn with mound treatments, as opposed to baits, since ants are foraging less now. Organic insecticides such as pyrethrins and spinosad can be sprinkled on or drenched into the mound.
- Continue to follow the “Homeowners Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule” to protect pecan trees against pecan weevils and hickory shuckworms, and to control peach tree borers on peach and plum trees.
- Order spring-flowering bulbs for planting in November and December. Remember ‘biggest is best’ in regard to bulb size. Be aware of “bargain” bulbs as they may be small or of inferior quality.

## August Texas Wild Flower of the Month

Submitted by Melinda Kocian, ECMGA

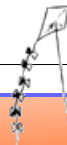


**White Pricklepoppy** – Poppy Family (Papaveraceae)  
*Argemonesquarrosa* Greene

Region: through 7 (Ellis County is Region 4)  
Size: 3 – 4 feet  
Blooms: April – October, Annual/Biennial

Pricklepoppy often colonizes several acres of abandoned fields or overgrazed land. Plants in this family, which include the opium poppy, are slightly poisonous. White Pricklepoppy is easily recognized by its large, cup-shaped flowers with wrinkled petals. It is centered with a globe of numerous yellow or reddish stamens surrounding a purple stigma. Alternate leaves are stiff, stalkless and blueish green, with conspicuous blue veins. They are deeply lobed and edged with spine-tipped teeth. The plant has yellow sap. Flowers and sap of related species vary in color. Flowers may be pale pink, white, lavender or yellow and the sap can be red, orange, yellow or milky white. Although avoided by livestock, pricklepoppy is very attractive to its insect pollinators. You can usually observe their feeding frenzy by taking a close look into the flower's center. Seeds of Argemone yield oil and are used for food. They can also be ground and applied to sores.





## IT'S SEPTEMBER ... WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

### 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.

## September Texas Wild Flower of the Month

*Submitted by Melinda Kocian, ECMGA*

### **Antelope Horns** – Milkweed Family (Asclepiadaceae) *Asclepias asperula* (Dene.) Woods

Region: 4 through 8 (Ellis County is Region 4)  
Size: 1 – 2 feet  
Bloom: March - November, Perennial



An antelope horn is a milkweed with stout, spreading stems. It forms a low clump one to two feet across. Chartreuse, star-shaped flowers are clustered at the end of the stems in three to four-inch balls. Most leaves are opposite and sometimes are folded together along the mid-rib. Antelope horns thrive in a sunny location in well-drained sand or gravel. The plant provides an important food for butterfly larvae, but like almost all of the milkweeds, is extremely poisonous to livestock. However, it has been used medicinally for several hundred years. The fluffy hairs attached to the plant's flat seeds, and exposed when the okra-shaped pods open, are used to insulate gloves and vests.

## ECMGA 2020 INTERNS



Robert Franks  
Garyesue Hooper

Lynda Johnson  
Janet Madison

Rhonda Marusak  
Marilyn Nash



## WHY I BECAME A MASTER GARDENER

*By Robert Franks, Master Gardener Intern*

I have wanted to sign up for the Master Gardener class for several years but due to timing, hours, obligations, etc. it never worked out. When we began classes this winter, I understood that this year's class was going to be different due to the class size, but I appreciated the decision to go forward with the class. We could not have foreseen the intervention of the Corona Virus, however. Thankfully, we had the state minimum hours for the class and only missed one class by the time everyone was required to self-isolate.

While attending Texas A&M I had the opportunity to take some Horticulture and Agronomy courses as well as Entomology and Mycology courses. I learned so much in the Master Gardener classes about topics that I had forgotten as well as topics that were entirely new to me. Now there will be no Expo, no Farmer's Market (for a while) and the rain and in-home isolation slowed down my home gardening efforts. I put in some winter vegetables, which did nicely, but the summer vegetables are not producing yet.

I was getting concerned about getting my intern service hours. Thankfully, those hours were reduced. I was able to work with the scholarship committee to review twelve applications from some very qualified young people. It was difficult to isolate the top five candidates but reading their applications gives me some faith in America's youth and their future leadership capabilities. The Interns have all been trying to isolate ourselves. I have hosted two Zoom meetings for the Master Gardener Interns to share what has been going on in our personal gardens and share ideas about how we can earn Intern hours during the Covid-19 pandemic. Recently I picked up a rain barrel at the Water University site on Coit Road, and participated in an online session on rainwater harvesting.

I dug up all fourteen of my knockout roses that were planted in my front beds that were infected with the Rose Rosette virus. My project now is to replant my front flower bed with Texas native and/or adapted shrubs and flowers, as it faces west, and I have no trees for shade. This will have to wait until I feel more comfortable getting out and doing the shopping required to pick out just the right plants.

I am looking forward to what the future will bring. Stay safe and stay healthy.

*By Marilyn Nash, Master Gardener Intern*

My desire to become a master gardener happened out of years experiencing the Master Gardeners at Farmer's Market in Waxahachie, TX. The Master Gardener booth was filled with happy gardeners willing to share their knowledge and receiving their monthly E-Gardening newsletter available to the public.

Some of my best memories of the Farmer's Market include the following:

Grillfest: featuring Mark Arnold, Ellis County Extension agent and chief griller, grilling vegetables and fruits at the market. Also present were master gardeners chopping the fruits and vegetables and giving away samples of the grilled items. This is a great public service and led to more vegetable grilling for the remainder of the public.

Taste of the Market: Featuring flavored water and food items prepared from fruits and vegetables available at the farmers market as well as flavored vinegar and herbs.

Succulent Event: Complete with tips and examples of succulents to take home.

Plant Sales: I love the inexpensive plant sales and enjoyed the variety of plants available. I always knew the plants sold were good for this area and usually did well in my garden.

Iris giveaway: This is always an exciting event. I now have irises from all over the county, which will need to be thinned.

I have had conversations about why I should become a Master Gardener from several people over the years. Having the time to attend classes was all I needed to commit. The Master Gardener program is well organized with a superior textbook, wonderful speakers, club members and documentation.

This year the Covid-19 pandemic has put a damper on the Master Gardener events, however it gives us the ability to concentrate on what we can do; clean up our own gardens, study and reorganize, promote gardening as a way to get fresh food and learn more to help others when this Covid-19 event is over.

Sometimes the seeds planted at events germinate at all different rates. Sometimes they take years.

## ARTICLES by ECMGA INTERNS



## DEWBERRIES and DANDELIONS

*By Rhonda Marusak, ECMGA Intern*



Hi, my name is Rhonda and I am a Master Gardener Intern. Normally, I would be out attending lectures, weeding public gardens, teaching people what I have learned, working at the Farmer's Markets and functioning in a plethora of other useful Master Gardener Intern activities. But, like many of you, I am grounded, locked away in a global world of social isolation.

I have planted a vegetable garden, which I am maintaining with diligence hereto unknown to me. I am engaging in weed and insect stalking operations, which is mostly a good thing, but is bordering on obsessive. Plus, the garden is not growing fast enough to fulfill my needs. After all, you can only stare at your cucumbers for so long, willing them to produce so you can make pickles. I needed more to do.

Exasperated, I turned to Social Media, Netflix, old westerns, anything for something new, but my soul was not fed. I was at my wits end. I am sure you understand; I was in good company.

And then I made a new find... Nature's freebies. The first discovery was dewberries, or blackberries. Our fence line was covered with them. For several days, armed with a bucket and covered in protective clothing that would rival any for medical protection, I took life and limb in hand and picked through the brambles for enough of these tiny delicacies to make jelly, wine and a refreshing drink.

The activity was great, but short lived. What else could I find? Then I remembered a lecture in our Master Gardener class by Daniel Cunningham, from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, that led me to another wild treat... dandelions. Known mostly as a weed, this flower is not only edible, but nutrient rich as well.

Back to the pasture I went with my bucket, but not so much PPE. No stickers this time, no frightening bug infested briars, but I planned to be wary of other pasture denizens, such as snakes and overly large spiders. I bravely collected scores of golden blossoms to be used for much the same purposes as the berries.

My takeaway from these adventures has been more than just the physical rewards of jelly and wine. More even than the exercise I so desperately needed. It gave me a great sense of connection, not with other people so much, but with nature itself. There in the pasture, or walking along the fence line, I felt less alone.

## SNAILS IN THE GARDEN

*By Marilyn Nash, ECMGA Intern*

Snails are attracted to moist environments and feed on dried leaves and new plants. They can be very ravenous and completely demolish new plants in a very short time. They are also attracted to fermented beverages such as beer. To make a beer trap you can use any vessel you have on hand. Bury it in the ground leaving about one inch above the ground. Coat the inside of the top of the vessel with oil to keep the snails from crawling out and add beer. Check on the traps and remove snails.

Another method is manual removal. When you are in your garden and see a snail, pick it up and put it in a zip lock bag. It is amazing how many snails you can remove by this simple method. You can keep the bag until full, weigh it and brag to your friends. Another method is to use a snail bait. The snails eat it and crawl off to die in a remote location.



## LIGHT HOUSE FOR LEARNING

(With the Ellis County Master Gardeners)

Due to COVID-19 and the recommended restrictions in place for gatherings by the CDC, all fall classes have been cancelled.

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



## LAWN INSECTS

*From TexasAgriLife*

Three common lawn insects to be aware of during summer months are bermudagrass mites, grubs and chinch bugs.



**Bermudagrass mites** will thrive in hot temperatures and be very active during the summer. They are not visible to the naked eye. When severe infestation occurs, they will cause turfgrass to thin out and will create a tufted “witch’s broom” appearance.

There are several insecticide options for severe cases, but one effective tactic is to scalp the infested area and remove the grass clippings, physically displacing many of the mites. [Learn more about bermudagrass mites »](#)

Damage from turf-feeding **grubs** is most visible during summer and early fall. Grub damage appears as irregularly shaped patches resembling drought stress. When grub infestations are severe, turfgrass can often be pulled up and rolled back as if it were new sod. Another sign is that animals (skunks, armadillos, possums) will start to dig up areas of your lawn. Timing is important for treating grubs. Waiting too long can drastically reduce the effectiveness of lawn insecticides. [Learn more about turf-feeding grubs »](#)



**Chinch bugs** are common summer pests in southern lawns. They cause the most damage to St. Augustine grass but can also affect other types of turfgrass. Chinch bug damage shows up as irregular-shaped patches that spread outward. If your yard has bermudagrass mixed in, you may notice tufts of bermudagrass still standing in the middle of dead or thinning St. Augustine. Chinch bugs are visible without magnification, but still somewhat small and sometimes hard to spot without help.

## EXTREME GARDEN TOPICS

Extreme Use of Fish – Aquaponics is a soilless combination of fish and plant production using aquaculture and hydroponic systems. The fish supply an all-natural fertilizer source and then are harvested as a food source. Tilapia is the most common type of fish used in this production with catfish being second. Aquaponics uses one-sixth the amount of water to grow eight times more food compared to traditional agriculture and by eliminating soil, soil bore diseases are also eliminated.



### THE POTATO WAGON

*By Rhonda Marusak, ECMGA Intern*

Aged and worn, Old Red has seen many years,  
Some full of fun, some joy, some tears.

Companion of boys who'd conquer the world,  
From aboard a red ship, white sails unfurled.

Upon a roan stallion, hooves cleaving the ground,  
Bright fiery mane, fierce spirit unbound.

When their destinies called to each boy,  
They left behind their dear childhood toy.

Rusted and worn, Old Red stood alone,  
Until a new purpose, then a wagon reborn!

Garden companion, its grand new vocation,  
A blessed event, a savory coronation.

## WATERMELONS IN TEXAS

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension



Texas ranks 3rd in U.S. production.

Cash receipts exceed \$50 million. Statewide economic impacts exceed \$160 million.

Watermelons are the state's largest annual horticultural crop. Over 42,000 acres are grown throughout Texas in over 100 counties. Grower/shippers coordinate sales into large metro areas and out-of-state shipments. Roadside market melons come from smaller acreage and part-time farmers.

Sequential harvests start in April in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, in June and July in the Winter Garden and East Texas areas, and progresses to August in the Rolling Plains area, with late summer and early fall harvests in the Cross Timbers/DeLeon and southern High Plains.

Cultivar selection is an important management decision in combating pests and meeting market windows. Populations vary from 2,000 to 3,000 plants per acre and can be grown under a wide array of irrigation practices or dryland.

## MEDITERRIAN WATERMELON SALAD

*An easy, fresh and super light Mediterranean watermelon salad. Three main ingredients: watermelon, cucumber, and feta cheese. But to take it to the next level, we add some fresh mint, basil, and a honey vinaigrette. The perfect dish for your next neighborhood party!*

Author: [Suzy Karadsheh](#) (from Pinterest)

Prep Time: 15 mins

Total Time: 15 mins

Yield: serves 6 lx



### INGREDIENTS FOR THE HONEY VINAIGRETTE

- \* 2 tbsp honey
- \* 2 tbsp lime juice
- \* 1 to 2 tbsp quality extra virgin olive oil
- \* pinch of salt

### INGREDIENTS FOR THE WATERMELON SALAD

- \* 1/2 watermelon, peeled, cut into cubes
- \* 1 English (or Hot House) cucumber, cubed (about 2 cupful's of cubed cucumbers)
- \* 15 fresh mint leaves, chopped
- \* 15 fresh basil leaves, chopped
- \* 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese, more to your liking

### INSTRUCTIONS

- \* In a small bowl, whisk together the honey, lime juice, olive oil and pinch of salt. Set aside for a moment.
- \* In a large bowl or serving platter with sides, combine the watermelon, cucumbers, and fresh herbs.
- \* Top the watermelon salad with the honey vinaigrette and gently toss to combine. Top with the feta cheese and serve!

**Tip for Make-Ahead:** If you need to make this watermelon salad ahead of time, you can peel and cube the watermelon and cucumber, and prepare the remaining ingredients, then store each in the fridge in separate containers. Add the dressing and mix the salad together just a few minutes before serving.

**Tips for Leftovers:** Because this is a super watery salad, with watermelon and cucumber being the star ingredients, it is best to finish it on the same day you prepare it. However, if you have some leftovers, you can store in a tight-lid glass container for a night or two (test before serving.)





## GARDEN CHECKLIST FOR JULY

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



- Caladiums require plenty of water at this time of year if they are to remain lush and active until fall. Fertilize with 21-0-0 at the rate of one-third to one-half pound per 100 square feet of bed area, and water thoroughly.
- Sow seeds of snapdragons, dianthus, pansies, calendulas, and other cool-season flowers in flats, or in well-prepared areas of the garden, for planting outside during mid-to-late fall.
- Plant bluebonnet and other spring wildflowers. They must germinate in late summer or early fall, develop good root systems, and be ready to grow in spring when the weather warms. Plant seed in well-prepared soil, one-half inch deep, and water thoroughly.
- Picking flowers frequently encourages most annuals and perennials to flower even more abundantly.
- It is time to divide spring-flowering perennials, such as iris, Shasta daisy, oxeye, gaillardia, cannas, day lilies, violets, liriope, and ajuga.
- Make your selections and place orders for spring-flowering bulbs now so that they will arrive in time for planting in October and November.
- Don't allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture.
- It is not too late to set out another planting of many warm-season annuals, such as marigolds, zinnias, and periwinkles. They will require extra attention for the first few weeks, but should provide you with color during late September, October, and November.
- Establish a new compost pile to accommodate the fall leaf accumulation.
- Trim off faded flowers on crape myrtles and vitex to encourage later rebloom.

## GARDEN CHECKLIST FOR AUGUST

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



- Reblooming salvias, such as *Salvia greggii* and *S. farinacea*, should be pruned back periodically during the summer. To make the job easier, use hedging shears, and remove only the spent flowers and a few inches of stem below. Fall-blooming perennials, such as Mexican marigold mint (*Tagetes lucida*), chrysanthemums, physostegia, and *Salvia leucantha*, should be pruned in the same manner during the summer to keep them compact, reducing the need for staking. This type of pruning should be completed prior to September 1, since flower buds begin forming about that time.
- 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 two to six inches deep, depending on the material used. In general, the coarser the material, the deeper the mulch. For example, a two-inch layer of cottonseed hulls will have about the same mulching effect as six inches of oat straw or four inches of coastal Bermuda hay.
- There is still time to plant some of the colorful, heat-tolerant summer annuals. You can direct-seed zinnias and portulaca, and purchase plants of periwinkle, salvia, marigold, gomphrena, celosia and purslane. Be sure to water transplants as needed until roots become established.
- Removing faded flowers from plants before they set seed will keep them growing and producing more flowers. A light application of fertilizer every four to six weeks will also be helpful.
- Now is the time to plan for next spring. Consider digging and dividing any crowded spring bulbs. Once the bulbs have matured and the foliage has turned brown, it is time to spade them up and thin out the stand. Crowded bulbs produce fewer and smaller blooms. They usually need thinning every three to four years.
- Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning from now until midwinter. Severe pruning at this time will only stimulate tender new growth prior to frost.
- Sow seeds of snapdragons, dianthus, pansies, calendulas and other cool-season flowers in flats, or in well-prepared areas of the garden, for planting outside during mid-to-late fall.

Continued on page 10

*Checklist for August, Continued*

- Plant bluebonnet and other spring wildflowers. They must germinate in late summer or early fall, develop good root systems, and be ready to grow in spring when the weather warms. Plant seed in well-prepared soil, one-half inch deep, and water thoroughly.
- Picking flowers frequently encourages most annuals and perennials to flower even more abundantly.
- Make your selections and place orders for spring-flowering bulbs now so that they will arrive in time for planting in October and November.
- Don't allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture.
- A late-summer pruning of rosebushes can be beneficial. Prune out dead canes and any weak, brushy growth. After pruning, apply fertilizer, and water thoroughly. If a preventive disease-control program has been maintained, your rose bushes should be ready to provide an excellent crop of flowers this fall.
- It is not too late to set out another planting of many warm-season annuals, such as marigolds, zinnias, and periwinkles. They will require extra attention for the first few weeks, but should provide you with color during late September, October, and November.
- Establish a new compost pile to accommodate the fall leaf accumulation.

**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, liriope and ajuga.
- Continue a disease spray schedule on roses as blackspot and mildew can be extremely damaging in September and October.



Are you a Facebooker? Ellis County Master Gardeners are on Facebook and we'd love to have you join us. Use our page as your point of contact to ask us gardening questions or get information about flowers, vegetables and herbs...we cover it all! You'll find us at the link below, and all you have to do is click the "Like" button to see our daily posts! We look forward to hearing from you with questions and comments.

<https://www.facebook.com/ECMGA>

**Indian Trail Master Naturalists Events**

[indiantrail/](http://indiantrail/) for

All events have been cancelled due to COVID-19 and the restrictions in place by the CDC.

For more info, call (972) 825-5175, email [ellis-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:ellis-tx@tamu.edu), or check the website <http://txmn.org/> upcoming events as the restrictions change daily.

**Upcoming Dates to Remember**

**September 7 ~ Labor Day**  
**September 22 ~ First day of Autumn**