

E-Gardening Newsletter

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March 26th EXPO 2022 Homesteading Heroes

Many people saw the problem of empty grocery shelves starting in early 2020 and are now researching information on gardening and plants so they can raise their favorite vegetables and herbs at home and preserve their harvest.

Help is arriving! The Ellis County Master Gardener Association will be hosting the **21st Annual Lawn and Garden Expo**, featuring **Homesteading Heroes**, at the Waxahachie Convention Center on the 26th of March. The Expo will open on **Saturday at 9:00 and will close at 4:00 pm.**

The Expo will offer a plant sale consisting of vegetables, flowers, and plants that are adapted to the North Texas Blackland Prairie climate. And, to let people know what to do with the fruits of their gardens, the Expo will feature presenters

on: "How Grandma survived the Depression"; "Preserving your Harvest"; "Raising Chickens"; "Growing Fruit Trees"; "Bee Keeping"; and "Composting". A children's area will be provided where children can have fun learning about gardening and nature. And, there will be over 100 vendors featuring lawn and garden items.

Tickets will be **available at community sponsors for free** and **\$5.00 at the door** on the day of the Expo. Organizers recommend that if you plan to purchase plants you should bring a wagon or something to carry your plant treasures out to your car. The Master Gardeners are grateful for the support of the Expo sponsors that make the Expo possible for Ellis County residents.

Expo sponsors include:

The Waxahachie Sun
 AmeriGrafix
 Acker Bradbury Builders
 Marilyn Norcross, Realtor, City Real Estate
 CNB of Texas
 Earthtones Design

Guardian Southwest Printing
 HEB
 KBEC 1380 Radio Station
 Leaf Filter North Texas
 Living Magazine
 Texas Gardeners Magazine

Texas Tree Farm
 Tex-Scapes
 The Greenery
 Travis Equipment
 Circle H Contractors
 Cowboy Bank of Maypearl

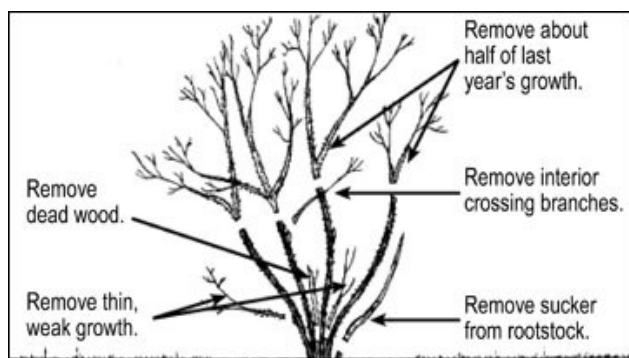
WHAT TO DO THIS MONTH... February



PLANTING

- Cool-season vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale and potatoes should be planted mid-month, or about 4 weeks prior to the average last freeze date (March 15 in Ellis County). Beets, carrots, lettuce, radishes, spinach, Swiss chard and “greens” (collard, mustard and turnip) should be planted 2 to 4 weeks prior to the average last freeze.
- Plant asparagus crowns in 10-12 inches of soil. When buying plants, biggest is not always best, especially with bare-root plants. Small to medium sizes establish faster.
- Dig and divide warm-season perennials (cannas, coneflowers, perennial salvia, mums) before they break dormancy.

FERTILIZING AND PRUNING



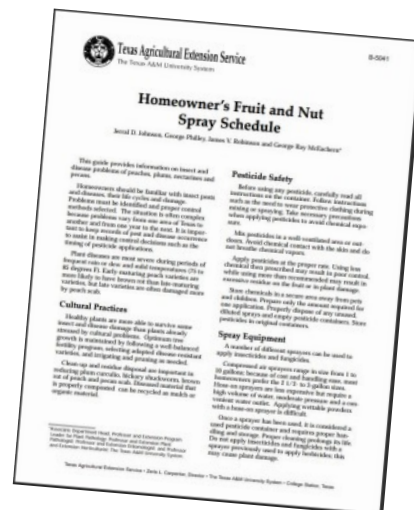
- Prune bush roses around Valentine's Day. Prune old, dead and weak canes back to the ground. Leave 4 to 8 vigorous canes, removing one-half of their growth above an outward-facing bud. Wait to prune climbing or leaning roses until after they bloom. Prune errant canes any time to maintain shape.
- Herbaceous perennials and ornamental grasses may be cut back now. Prune autumn sage (*Salvia gregii*) by 50%. Mexican heather grass does not require pruning.

- Dig and divide large clumps of ornamental grasses, especially if the center of the plant has died.
- Cut or mow liriope before new growth emerges. Trim Asian jasmine back to 4 or 5 inches.

GARDEN WATCH

- Begin controlling insects and diseases on fruit and nut trees. Spraying is essential for a successful harvest. Contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service – Ellis County for a copy of “Homeowners Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule”. Or you can download a PDF [here](#).
- Look for aphids and caterpillars on vegetables, and control with insecticidal soap and Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), respectively.
- Check for scale insects adhering to the trunk, branches and leaves of hollies, euonymus, shade trees, fruit and pecan trees. Apply horticultural oil to control these and other over-wintering insects.

For the more difficult-to-control crape myrtle bark scale, apply a neonicotinoid insecticide, such as imidacloprid, as a soil drench to the root zone of infested trees.



972 825-5175 Ask a Master Gardener



Ellis County Master Gardeners are available to answer your gardening and landscape questions. By utilizing the vast libraries of research-based information gathered from Texas A&M University as well as other reliable sources specifically targeted to address our unique Ellis County challenges, our Master Gardeners are prepared to provide the guidance you need to help you be successful. In addition to providing timely answers to many of your questions, we can provide links to research-based topics of interest to you.

Like the title says, we can be reached by contacting the Ellis County Agrilife Extension Office at 972-825-5175. ***The Ellis County Master Gardener helpdesk is staffed Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am-12pm and 1pm-4pm*** or you can leave a message and a Master Gardener will respond as soon as possible.

We look forward to hearing from you!



Vegetable Varieties to Plant in February for Ellis County

Asparagus: Apollo, Atlas, Jersey Gem, Jersey Giant, Jersey Knight, Purple Passion, UC-157

Beets: Chioggia, Detroit Dark Red, Pacemaker II, Red Ace

Broccoli: Bonanza, Early Dividend, Green Comet, Packman, Premium Crop

Brussel Sprouts: Diablo, Royal Marvel, Tasty Nugget

Cabbage: Ace, Early Jersey Wakefield, Ruby Perfection

Chinese Cabbage: Brisk Green, China Flash, China Pride, Jade Pagoda, Michihili

Carrot: Big Top, Bolero, Nantes Half Long, Purple Dragon, Red Core Chantenay, Royal Chantenay, Scarlet Nantes, Sweet Treat, Touchon (Heirloom), *Baby Carrots* – Short'n Sweet, *Processing* – Danver 126

Collard Greens: Champion, Flash, Georgia Southern

Garlic: Elephant, Mexican Purple, New York White

Kale: Dwarf Blue Curled Scotch, Dwarf Blue Curled Vates, Nero di Toscana, Rebor

Kohlrabi: Early White Vienna, Grand Duke, Purple Danube

Lettuce: *Butterhead/Bibb* – Buttercrunch, Esmerelda, *Crisphead/Iceberg* – Prizehead, *Looseleaf* – Brunia Red, Green Ice, Red Fire, Red Sails, Redina, Salad Bowl (green), Vulcan Red, *Romaine* – Freckles, Giant Caesar, Little Caesar, Plato II

Mustard Greens: Florida Broadleaf, Savanna, Southern Giant Curled

Onions: Bermuda, Crystal Wax (Short Day), Early Grano 502 (YWR, Short Day), Granex (YWR, Short Day), Red Burgandy (Short Day), Yellow Sweet Spanish (Long Day), Yellow TX Supersweet 1015 (Short Day), *Bunching* – Evergreen Long White, Southport White

Parsley: Italian Flat Leaf, Moss Curled, Pagoda, Plain Italian, Triple Curl

English Peas: Little Marvel, Maestro, Mr. Big, Sugar Bon, Sugar Mel, Sugar Snap, Sugar Sprint, Wando

Snap Peas: Cascadia, Sugar Ann, Super Sugar

Irish Potato: All Blue, Caribo, Desiree, Kennebec (White), Norland (Red), Red LaSoda, Russian Banana (Fingerling), White Cobbler, Yukon Gold

Radish: Champion, Cherriette, Cherry Belle, Easter Egg, French Breakfast, White Icicle

Spinach: Bloomsdale, Melody, Space, Tyee

Swiss Chard: Bright Lights, Bright Yellow, Fordhook Giant, Rhubarb Red

Turnip: *Roots* - Royal Globe, White Lady, *Roots and Greens* – Just Right, Purple Top White Globe, Shogoin, Tokyo Cross

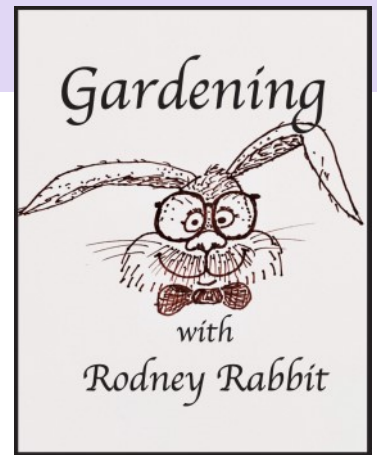
Starting from Seed

Dear Rodney,
I would really like to get a jump on my garden this year and I am thinking of starting my garden from seed rather than buying transplants. Do you have any tips?
Thank you, Chris

Chris, there are many reasons to start with seeds including being able to use heirloom seeds, getting the jump on pests, and harvesting an early bounty. Buying seed will also give you the opportunity to grow plants that you would not typically find at a retail garden center.

If you start from seed, be sure to start out with quality, fresh seed. Older seed are less likely to germinate. Quality seed from good vendors have a wealth of information on the package.

If there is no information on when and how deep to plant, proper spacing in the garden, or days to production you should choose another seed package. Seed labels will also tell you if those seed can be started inside in a pot or need to be directly sown into the garden.



It is easiest to start seeds in cell flats or small containers in a flat tray. The containers should be filled with a sterile seed starting mix that contains either peat or vermiculite to reduce the introduction of a pest or disease. The starting mix should be moistened prior to planting your seeds and should be monitored during growth to keep it moist but not wet (soggy). Planting in small containers with good drainage, inside a tray will allow you to monitor the moisture easily in addition to ease of relocating your seedlings. After the initial watering you may have to add additional mix and sprinkle it with water.

Plants need light to grow, especially seedlings, usually 12 to 16 hours to avoid thin, lanky plants. Do not leave the lights on continually as many seeds need a period of darkness to germinate. Sunlight from a south facing window will help provide light but a grow light with a timer works best. The light should be within 2 inches of the new pots and should be raised only as the plants grow. Your young plants should not be any colder than 60 degrees and here, temperatures in south facing windows can get too hot so temperatures in windows need to be monitored. Use of a heated seed mat under the trays can aid germination.

Too many seedlings in one pot allows roots to grow together and can cause damage when transplanting. Plant fewer seeds per pot and thin the new plants as necessary.

If you are starting outdoors use a clear plastic dome or covering that will fit over trays of plants to allow light in, but help keep moisture from escaping. This can also help retain heat in the root zone. Be sure to monitor plant growth to prevent the young plants from touching the plastic.

Transplant seedlings that outgrow cell packs into larger containers. Larger peat pots or plastic cups with holes punched in their bottoms work well. I have used sanitized yogurt cups with drain holes to start many plants inexpensively.

In Ellis County the average last freeze date is March 15 but can be earlier or later so monitor the long range forecast as it gets closer to moving your new plants into their new bed or pots.

Happy gardening,
Rodney

<https://extension.umn.edu/planting-and-growing-guides/starting-seeds-indoors>

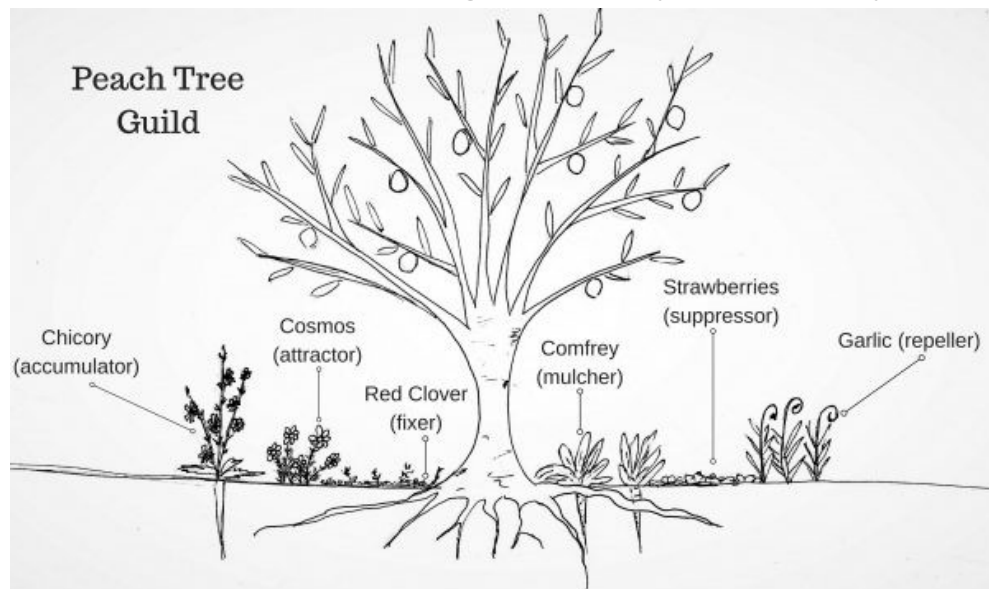
What is Permaculture?

Permaculture is about much more than gardening, but since it emphasizes the role of plants and animals in human life, many people come to permaculture through their love of gardening and agriculture. The aim of permaculture is to create ecologically sound, economically prosperous human communities. It is guided by a set of ethical principles—care for the earth, care for people, and sharing the surplus.

A main element of permaculture design is the thoughtful grouping of plants in communities. Both natural and ecological gardens stress the role of plant communities, groupings of trees, shrubs, and non-woody plants that naturally occur together. Vegetable gardeners use companion planting for pest control, better pollination, to provide habitat for beneficial insects, maximize use of space, and otherwise increase crop productivity.

Permaculture goes one step further. Plants are combined into synergistic groupings.

Permaculture calls these *guilds*. They form healthy interacting networks that reduce the



gardener's labor, yield abundantly, and help the environment by restoring nature's cycles. Permaculture combines natives, food plants, medicinal and culinary herbs, insect and bird attracting species, plants that build soil, and others, each serving more than one function. A guild is named for its dominant plant, often a tree, and has six elements.

The peach tree is the example here. Note that this

guild is all flowering plants, and that the bloom times overlap through the seasons, attracting beneficial insects even into winter. Clover fixes nitrogen and suppresses weeds. Comfrey provides nutritious mulch. Strawberries suppress weeds and bear fruit. Garlic repels pests and is an important culinary herb. Chicory's deep root draws minerals into the root zone. Baked and ground, the root is used in coffee and leaves can be eaten in salads. Cosmos' long bloom period attracts birds, bees and butterflies.

Take a look at the free e-book in the links below for diagrams of other useful guilds for our area.

References:

Gaia's Garden by Toby Hemenway

Designing for Permaculture by Bill Mollison Pamphlet VIII

Guild designs

<https://midwestpermaculture.com/plant-guilds-ebooklet-midwest-permaculture1/>

More info

<https://txmg.org/jcmg/permaculture-guild/>

<https://www.wildmeadowfarmnc.com/pecanguild>

Image:

[Planning a Fruit Tree Guild | Southern Exposure Seed Exchange](#)

Materials List for one 4'x 8' 1' raised bed

48 linear feet of pressure treated 2x6

12 linear feet of pressure treated 2x4

Aprox. 40 sq ft of heavy weed cloth

24 linear feet of 1x4

Tools: 3" wood screws with Drill and bits

for pre drilling holes and for driving screws

Skill saw—Tape measure—Level and

Square - Staple gun

I understand pressure treated wood is a questionable choice. I simply couldn't afford cedar and a little research gave me hope that the chemicals used for pressure treating are much less caustic than they once were. Cedar would definitely be the optimal choice.

MAKE YOUR BED!



Dig out the sod where your bed will go. Cut and screw together boards for first layer of raised bed.



We added 2 foot tall 2x4s to strengthen corners and to hold up chicken wire which will be wrapped around the bed at the end to keep out rabbits. Netting could also be hung across the bed to keep out birds.



We flipped the bed over like a table and stapled weed cloth to the bottom. After talking with fellow master gardener, Rob Franks, I decided to bring the weed cloth up on the outside of the bed and then cover it with another board to further insure grass would not sneak in through the bottom.



We added a deep layer of our home made compost (not the best because it is mostly rotted grass clippings) and then added bagged soil and compost. The 1x4's have been installed here to cover the weed cloth edges.



First planting! The smaller bed in the back will be used for asparagus as soon as I can find some crowns.

Some other creative raised beds.

Send in your pictures of creative or successful raised beds you have seen in use. There are many more options we can show. ellismga@tamu.edu



Around Town

New Construction around the Farmers' Market and Butterfly



New parking lot being prepared for the Farmers' Market. The Farmers' Market opens April 23rd this year.

Photo below: There is also a new restroom facility.



Looking from the Butterfly Garden towards the Farmers' Market. Butterfly Garden workdays are the 1st Tuesday of each month, weather permitting.

Winter workday at Getzendaner.

Standing around a decade old Crinum patch getting ready to dig, divide, and replant all in one day. Interns Mary Ann M. and Josh H. with Glenn S. and Allan R. Not in picture is Sarah G. who provided valuable knowledge and input on how to tackle the Crinum patch.



Pam Wheeler contemplating best and most creative way to design Coral Honeysuckle vines on tower at Getzendaner Learning Garden.

