

E-Gardening Newsletter

In this issue:

EXPO! [Page 1](#)

April To-Do List
[Page 2](#)

April To-Do List
[Page 3](#)

Love Your Blackland Soil
[Page 4](#)

Wildflower of the Month & Learning Garden Workday
[Page 5](#)

Gardening with
Rodney [Page 6](#)

Dunaway Junior Master
Gardener Program [Page 7](#)

Coming May 7th
Waxahachie Farmers' Market
with new parking and improved building amenities

**WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED THE 2022
LAWN & GARDEN EXPO**





Educate Yourself!

In April, there are six Gardening Classes led by Master Gardeners at Waxahachie ISD's Lighthouse for Learning. These classes will be at Global High School, 275 Indian Dr., Waxahachie, TX 75165 (behind HEB).

A downloadable catalog can be found [HERE](#). There is a link to register online on the same page; OR call 972 923-4631; OR register in person at WISD Administration, 411 N. Gibson Street, Waxahachie, TX 75165.

Courses offered by Ellis County Master Gardeners

USING HERBS IN TEXAS LANDSCAPE \$15

Learn how herbs can meet a variety of needs and play an important role in our Texas landscapes. This class will cover how to plan for and start herbs in the garden or in containers.

APRIL 4TH 6-7:30PM at Global High Instructor: Alica Thompson, Ellis Co. Master Gardeners



EARTH-KIND COMPOSTING. IT'S EASIER THAN YOU THINK! \$15

Compost is a gardener's gold. We will discuss why and how to compost household and yard waste. Come and discover Earth-Kind ways you can incorporate composting into your home maintenance routine to harvest your own garden gold.

APRIL 7TH 6-7:30PM at Global High
Instructor: Ginger Cole, Ellis County Master Gardeners

GROWING "HATCH" STYLE GREEN CHILIES IN ELLIS COUNTY \$15

Green chilies are a culinary delight when they hit the grocery stores. Why wait? Learn how to grow your own green chilies varieties here in Ellis County plus, learn a few tips on preparation.

APRIL 11TH 6-7:30PM at Global High Instructor: Tom Graves, Ellis Co Master Gardeners



GOOD BUGS, BAD BUGS \$15

This class will help you identify some of the most common good and bad insects and get some ideas on how to keep the less-desirables from ruining your garden without killing off the good insects that are a help and even a necessity to successful gardening.

April 21st 6-7:30PM at Global High
Instructor: Maureen Nitkowski, Ellis County Master Gardeners

PLANT PROPAGATION - PART 1 \$15

Learn how to reproduce plants from seeds. This class will cover the advantages of seed propagation and methods to improve your rate of seed germination.

You will gain an in-depth understanding of plant development from seeds. **April 25th 6-7:30pm**
Instructor: Walt Friis, Ellis County Master Gardeners



PLANT PROPAGATION - PART 2 \$15

Learn how to propagate plants from some of your favorites or from some of your friends' plants. This class will give you information on different methods of propagation such as layering, cuttings and plant division. You will have both classroom and hands-on activities. **April 28th 6-7:30pm**
Instructor: Walt Friis, Ellis County Master Gardeners

WHAT TO DO THIS MONTH..... April



PLANTING

- Plant warm-season annual flowers. For sun (6+hours per day): angelonias, copper plants, firebush, lantana, moss rose, purslane, pentas, ornamental sweet potatoes and zinnias. For shade (less than 4 hours per day): begonias, coleus, impatiens and perilla. Select short, compact plants.
- Plant okra and southern peas (black-eyed peas, etc). Squash, cucumbers and melons can still be planted. ☐ Many herbs can also be planted from transplants (dill, parsley, fennel, mint, oregano and thyme).
- Now is the best time to plant Bermudagrass and St. Augustine grass sod. Grade and smooth area prior to installing sod to ensure good soil contact. Keep moist until roots are established.
- Seeded varieties of Bermudagrass may be sown starting mid-month. Keep soil moist until seeds germinate and grass has established a good root system. ☐ Select caladium tubers now, while ample stocks are available, for May planting.



FERTILIZING AND PRUNING

- Check new plant growth for aphids. A few can be tolerated but large numbers should be controlled. Washing them off with a strong spray of water may be all that is necessary for control.
- Eliminate fire ants in your landscape by broadcasting labeled bait while temperatures are between 70° and 90°. If fire ants are still present after using bait, treat the individual mounds with appropriate insecticide. Contact the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service – Ellis County at 972-825-5175 for more information.
- Look for rose rosette disease. New growth on diseased roses exhibit elongated/enlarged canes, reddish leaves and stems and excessive thorns. Remove and destroy infected plants and roots immediately. There is no proven control for this fatal disease.
- Soil purchased for use in beds, low areas and containers should be examined closely. Nutsedge and other weeds are often brought into the yard through contaminated soil sources.
- Watch newspapers and other media for information regarding wildflower trails, garden tours and plants sales



GARDEN WATCH



- If frost or freeze is predicted, cover tender vegetables and annuals with frost cloth. It can make a six to eight-degree difference.
- Beware of close-out sales on bare-root trees as survival rate is low when planted this late in the season. Spend a little more on container-grown plants.
- Control black spot, powdery mildew and thrips on roses with an appropriate fungicide or systemic insecticide. Use a stream of water or insecticidal soap on aphids.

Love your Blackland Soil

Prepared by MG Intern, Dottie Love



I'm a dirt nerd. A soil snob. Don't get me wrong, I appreciate a well-amended loam as much as anyone. But I'm from the Blackland, and it pains me when fellow gardeners roll their eyes in disdain of our beautiful dirt. Blackland soil is some of the richest on earth, and it's also our unofficial state soil. Here are some reasons to show it some respect!

Of the 1300 named soils in Texas, the dominant soil of the Blackland Prairie is known as Houston Black (named for Sam Houston) and is exclusive to that area. Houston Black is recognized throughout the world as a classic example of a "vertisol": black soil with a high percentage of clay called "smectite."

Smectite is what swells and shrinks and ruins our foundations; Houston Black is 60-80% clay. In dry times, vertisols form cracks up to 4" wide and 6' deep. As Blackland kids, we'd run the hose into cracks hoping to fill them up. Never happened, but the cracks would break into heavy clods and become perfect grenades for our battles (until somebody got hurt, which only took a minute).



Wet Blackland soil adheres to shoes in a grotesque sticky clump. In every rainy spell, countless flip flops vanish with an audible "Slurp!" into the morass. At my barn door there's a 16" deep boot-sucking mudhole that appears after only three days of rain. Have you ever slipped on Blackland mud? It happens before you know it, doesn't it? That's due to another characteristic of Houston Black: it has "slickensides." Formed by the soil's movements, it's shiny, waxy, and... slick.



Houston Black soil also features "hogwallows," shallow saucers with slightly raised edges called microbasins and microknolls, usually spaced 6 to 12' apart and 2-6" deep. Only found in expansive soil, hogwallows were recently renamed "gilgai," an Indigenous Australian term meaning "little water hole." Seasonal gilgai enabled humans and animals to move about in previously dry areas.

In spite of Blackland soil's bad habits, don't forget how fertile it is! And it's pretty when it's not bending your shovel. I didn't say "Love your dirt," I said "Respect your dirt."

For more info:

<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>

<https://casoilresource.lawr.ucdavis.edu/sde/?series=houston%20black#osd>

https://soilseries.sc.egov.usda.gov/OSD_Docs/H/HOUSTON_BLACK.html

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/stelprdb1237001.pdf>

For good soil texture for plant growth, 50% of the bulk of soil is weathered geologic material, i.e. minerals plus organic matter (decaying plants and animals). This is usually about 45% mineral and 5% organic. The other 50% should be half air and half water.

To amend clay soil we can use expanded shale, rock heated to high temperatures that make it porous or organic matter. Composted organic matter is best since the process of decay uses up nutrients plants need. Clay soil amended with compost has speedier drainage and more air pockets.

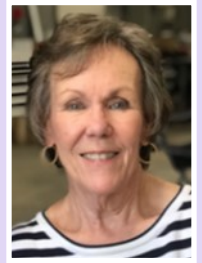
Wildflower of the Month

Barbara's Buttons – Sunflower Family (Asteraceae)
Marshallia caespitosa DC

Region: 1 through 8 (Ellis County is Region 4)

Size: 6-8 inches

Blooms: April through June, Perennial



Melinda Kocian



No one knows how Barbara's buttons got its name, but there is no doubt that this dainty little flower attracts the eye. Most often it is white, but it may also be pale pink, creamy or lavender. The flower head, topping a slender stem, is one and one-half inches across and is composed of numerous fragrant disk flowers that form a lacy-looking ball. Stems may be solitary, or several, forming a clump. There are two varieties of this plant. *M caespitosa* var. *caespitosa* has slender leaves, six inches long, crowded near the base, with bare stems supporting the flower heads. *M caespitosa* var. *signata* has leafy stems and is endemic to south and Midwest Texas, where it sometimes forms colonies.

Learning Garden WORKDAY

Volunteers were on hand to plant two Eldarica Pines in March. The Learning Garden is near the exit of Ghetzindanger Park and showcases (but not exclusively) edible landscaping.



Gardening with Rodney

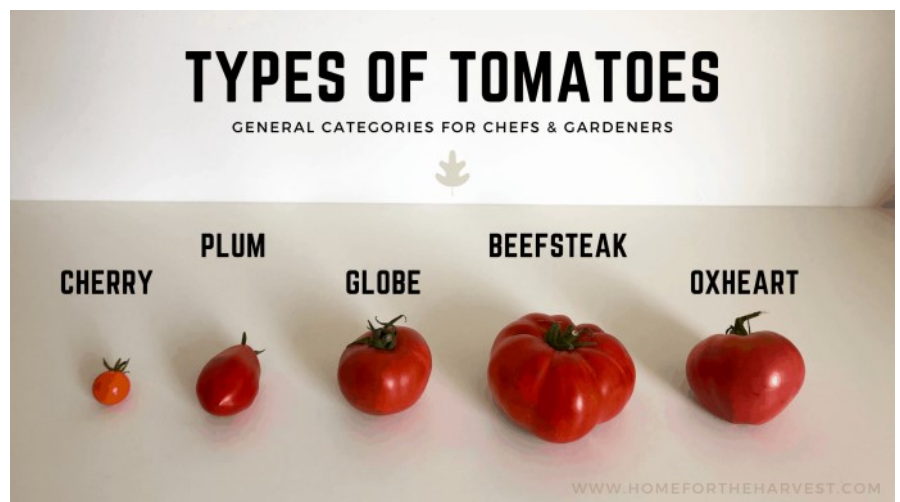
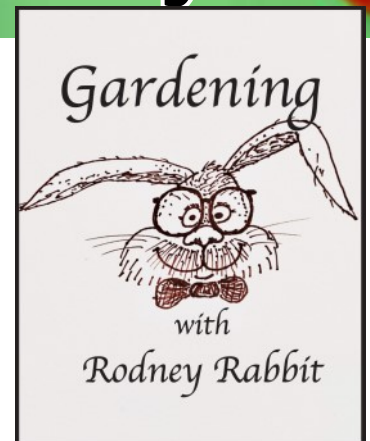
It is spring and a young gardener's thoughts turn to tomatoes. Rodney has wonderful memories of standing in the warm summer sun in his grandmother's garden and eating tomatoes right off the vine. Good memories, but the reality can be even better if the tomatoes that you plant are planted correctly and vines are tended to produce the best fruit.

- ⊗ Select a good site with full sun and with soil that drains well. Blackland soil can be amended by mixing in compost, not sand, in the top 4-6 inches of soil. Mix a good balanced fertilizer into the top three inches, following the directions on the bag.
- ⊗ Buy healthy plants 6-8 inches tall.
- ⊗ Prepare for staked or caged plants by planting at least 3 feet apart.
- ⊗ Plant in the evening or on a cloudy day to prevent drying out too quickly. Plant into holes 3-4 inches deep and before planting fill the hole with water and let it soak in. Plant each transplant slightly deeper than where it is growing in the pot it came in. Remove the bottom leaves off the plant (about 1/3 up) and lay the bottom in the hole and cover with soil so that only about 2/3 of the plant is above the soil. (think like the letter "L")
- ⊗ Water your new tomatoes slowly and deeply to encourage good root growth. You will probably have to water every day initially but they will be more water secure over time. Do not allow them to wilt.
- ⊗ Mulch around the plants with compost, leaves, or hay to prevent weeds and slow water loss.
- ⊗ If you plan to stake your tomatoes put the stake in shortly after planting to prevent root damage.
- ⊗ Once you begin to see fruit about 1 inch in diameter begin fertilizing every 3-4 weeks with a level tablespoon of fertilizer worked into the soil and water in.

Happy gardening and watch for future information on co-planting to control weeds and pests and information on pruning your tomatoes to encourage production.

Rodney

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/easy-gardening-series/>



Junior Master Gardener program starts up at Dunaway Elementary



The Dunaway Elementary School opened in 1987. It is a K-5th grade campus with approximately 450 students. Although previously in a different location on the campus, the garden has been in existence since 2010.

The Dunaway garden was started by Susan Howard, a first-grade teacher who has been at the school for 17 years. Susan will be retiring at the end of this school year, but she plans on continuing to volunteer with the garden after retirement.

When asked about her vision for the garden, Susan's goals included rainwater harvesting, composting & worm farming, a pathway leading from the school building to the garden, and starting a garden club!

Led by Agnes Douglas, Ellis County Master Gardener volunteers are helping to start a Junior Master Gardener program with the Dunaway school.

