



E-Gardening Newsletter

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Calendar of Events

- October 1** – Master Gardener Booth at Waxahachie Farmers’ Market – What are you growing in your fall garden?
- October 3** – Lighthouse for Learning – Master Gardener Maureen Nitkowski will teach you about **Growing Fruit Trees** in our soil and climate.
- October 8** – Master Gardener Booth at Waxahachie Farmers’ Market – Learn how to protect your garden from winter’s chill.
- October 15** – Master Gardener Booth at Waxahachie Farmers’ Market – **Crinum Lily Sale!** Large bulbs at small prices! Buy Crinum asiaticum, big white spider lilies for your summer garden. Proceeds go to our scholarship fund.
- October 17** – Lighthouse for Learning – Master Gardener Rob Franks speaks about growing **Pocket Prairies** while Master Gardener Sheila Cloonen teaches about **Texas Trees – Tree Planting and Care.**
- October 22** – Master Gardener Booth at Waxahachie Farmers’ Market – On this last day of Farmers’ Market, Master Gardeners join the City of Waxahachie in their **Tree Giveaway!** We’ll have information on getting your new little tree off to a good start.
- October 24** – Lighthouse for Learning – Master Gardener Janet Madison teaches **Gardening for a Lifetime**
Lighthouse for Learning classes are at Global High School, 275 Indian Drive, Waxahachie. Register for classes online at www.WISD.org or call 972 923-4631.



PLANTING

- Plant cool-season annuals such as pinks, snapdragons and ornamental cabbages and kale early in the month. Wait until temperatures have cooled to plant pansies and violas.
- Complete planting these fall vegetables early in the month: radishes, spinach and turnips.
- Last chance to sow wildflowers in order to have blooms next spring. Always purchase "fresh" seed.
- Purchase spring-flowering bulbs while selection is good. Chill tulip and Dutch hyacinth at 45°F for 60 days prior to planting. Daffodil and grape hyacinth require no special handling but should be stored in a cool location until planting (soil temperature below 55°F). Recommended daffodil varieties include Ice Follies, Fortune, Charlton, Cheerfulness and Tahiti.
- Fall is a great time to set out perennial herbs, including thyme, oregano, rosemary, parsley, lemon balm, pineapple sage and Mexican mint marigold. Work a few inches of compost into soil prior to planting and mulch the plants after planting.

FERTILIZING AND PRUNING

- Remove annuals that have completed their life cycle. Leave seed pods to self-seed next year (cleome, cosmos, four o'clock).
- Continue to feed tropical plants in containers and hanging baskets with water-soluble fertilizer. Cut back or repot overgrown houseplants and fertilize with same fertilizer.
- Spring and summer-flowering shrubs and vines (including climbing roses, wisteria, etc.) should not be pruned at this time because they have already established their buds for next year's bloom. Prune these plants immediately after they stop blooming next year.

GARDEN WATCH

- Watch for brown-patch fungus on St. Augustine lawns. Water only in the mornings and apply turf fungicide at first sign of fungus.
- Watch for cutworms and looper caterpillars on young leafy vegetables. Products containing Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) are safe to control these pests. Control aphids with a strong spray of water or insecticidal soap.
- Attention: Christmas cactus owners! To initiate flower buds, give the plants bright light each day followed by 12-14 hours of total darkness at night, for 30 days starting mid-month. And keep night temperatures under 65°F.

Garden Chrysanthemums (*Chrysanthemum morifolium*)

Sharon McIver – Ellis County Master Gardener



Everywhere you look, retail stores and garden centers are adorned with beautiful displays of garden chrysanthemums, often referred to as “mums”. These plants thrive in our North Texas Fall climate and will flower annually. Mine often produce a colorful show of vibrant flowers both in early Spring and again in Fall before the first heavy frost. Garden mums are available in a wide variety of colors ranging from white to red, yellow, orange, pink, purple and more in many colorful hues. The flowers vary in style including Anemone, Pompom, Daisy,

Spider and more. These perennial plants generally last about five seasons before having to be replaced. Chrysanthemums belong to the Asteraceae family which includes many other well-known flowers such as sunflowers, zinnias, and dahlias. This family of flowers has a single flower head with many hundreds of tiny flowers that grow out of one head.

The history of garden chrysanthemums traces back to early 15th century China where, according to early writings, they were used as a flowering herb thought to have lifegiving powers. The plant was used in teas, tonics, and astringents. The Chinese city of Chu-Hsien (which means Chrysanthemum City) was named in honor of the flower. Around the 8th century A.D., the chrysanthemum surfaced in Japan where the flower was so well-liked that it appeared as the crest and the Emperor's official seal. The first chrysanthemums to reach Europe were probably introduced by Dutch explorers during the 18th century. French Huguenots imported a variety of forms from the Dutch and developed Old Purple, one of the basic mums of European gardens. The Old Purple chrysanthemum was introduced to the Americas in 1798 by John Stevens, a Hoboken, New Jersey, nursery man.¹ Today, mums are enjoyed worldwide.



Garden mums do best when planted in early spring in a well-drained site that receives an abundance of sunlight. Spacing should be about 24 inches apart to allow the plants to spread and form mounds as they mature. Plant at a depth equal to the container the plant was purchased in and water thoroughly after planting. Fertilize the plants to encourage development of thick green foliage and enhanced flower production. Water in dry fertilizer after it is applied. Fertilizer should not be applied after flower buds appear. As always, follow label instructions.² When starting mums indoors from seeds, allow about 10-15 days for the plant to develop before transferring to the ground. It will take about another 10-12 weeks before the transplants will bud.

1 [gertens.com/blog/the-history-of-chrysanthemums](https://www.gertens.com/blog/the-history-of-chrysanthemums)

2 Rodriguez, David Texas A&M university County Extension Agent-Horticulture for Bexar County. Extension Education in Bexar County Weekly Newsletter, Plant of the Week, October 2, 2006.



Rob Franks – Ellis County Master Gardener

Where the first settlers came to North Texas in the mid-1800's they were astounded by the vast prairies of tall grasses and native shrubs and trees; the soil was very rich and was quickly converted to range and row crops. Existing animals including bison were considered as obstacles to progress and also eliminated. When plants, insects, and birds have evolved together over thousands or millions of years they form a supportive relationship, called a Biome, that is adapted to the climate and soil in that region. Over the last 260 years prairie Biome was lost and the plants and animals that depended on it.

Many years ago, I read Rachael Carson's ***Silent Spring*** and became part of the movement to restrict use of commercial pesticides and herbicides. We took it as a call to manage our lawn and gardens using natural methods to protect the environment and to attract butterflies and birds to our yards. Recently, I read Douglas Tallamy's book ***Nature's Best Hope*** which convinced me that what I also need to do is convert my lawn and gardens to native Blackland prairies by removing non-native plants and replacing them with plants that evolved within the region where I live. Native Insects and birds are declining in number and already several species have become extinct while others are getting close. While imported European honeybees do pollinate crops, most plants are pollinated by native bees, wasps, and flies. Our existence may depend on their continued existence.

There are many examples of large parcels of land that are protected by organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and government established National Parks, National Grasslands, National Monuments, and National Seashores have set aside large tracts of land that protect native forests, prairies, and the animals living within them. While this does help preserve some Biome diversity, those tracts actually consist of a minimal amount of land and are separated by vast distances consisting of paved areas (highways, parking lots, buildings) and monoculture (agriculture and lawns) which do not provide migration avenues or food for native birds and insects. Today, many insects including bees, butterflies, fireflies, and predatory insects are declining dramatically in number, as are many birds.

Saint Augustine and Bermuda grasses are not native to North America and they have seen widespread use in the establishment of lawn turf and grazing pasturage. Today, almost 80% of the plants in your yard evolved in Europe, Africa, South America, and China and they do not support any North America Biome.

It is also becoming more obvious that something is wrong with our global climate and it appears that apparently nothing can be done about loss of habitat, decreasing availability of water/ floods, increasing droughts and decline of pollinators and birds. All these problems seem to be of such a magnitude that an individual can do nothing to prevent or remedy them. Few people can donate a million acres or more to land conservation; however, there

is something that everyone can do their own yard, changing one small plot of land (usually under 1/2 acre) to reestablish the integrated Biome web. If homeowners would convert even a piece of their lawn and flowerbed space to native plants, that would represent a huge expanse of land. In fact, some cities have already passed ordinances to eliminate turf grasses and require planting native grasses, flowers, bushes, and trees.

If the environment isn't enough of a reason to go native, please consider: native plants have evolved to withstand drought which reduces watering (cost of watering); native plants resist native diseases and insect pests (less spraying of pesticides and costs of spraying); native plants thrive on local soils (no fertilizing and costs of chemical fertilizers which poison our waters); native plants require less mowing (less lawn maintenance and fewer greenhouse gases from mowers, edgers and leaf blowers as well as costs); and, finally, native plants have evolved to self-seed.

What I am suggesting is not to till your entire lawn and flower beds under but to dedicate a portion of your yard to a pocket prairie area. Putting this in your backyard might even keep your HOA out of your business. While in the front yard you can plant clusters of native flowers in the beds which look like a deliberate batch of flowers.

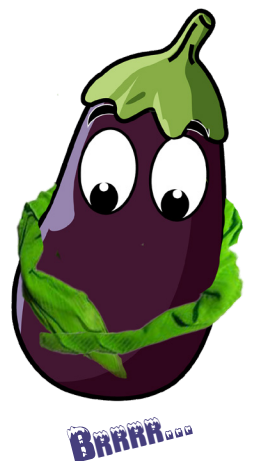


If you want to learn how to physically create a pocket prairie, come to the presentation at **Lighthouse for Learning** at Global High School in Waxahachie on Monday, October 17 at 6:00 pm. Register online at www.WISD.org or call 972 923-4631.

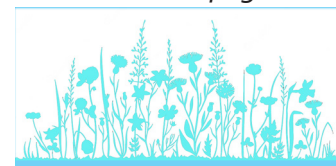
The average first freeze date for our North Texas is November 22nd, however, the earliest first freeze has been October 22nd. It's nearing the time to think about preparing our plants for winter cold. Watch for next month's e-newsletter to learn how to prevent or limit frost and freeze damage. In the meanwhile, don't wait until the first Blue Norther hits Collin County, heading our way!

Remember the toilet paper shortage of 2020!

NOW is the time to buy Frost Cloth!



It's Time to Plant Wildflowers



Marj McClung, Ellis County Master Gardener

How To Begin:

Site Selection: Wildflowers need about eight hours of direct sun each day. They also need good drainage. A long-term wildflower area will at times look “weedy”, but plants need to set and drop seed for the next year’s flowers. Place the wildflower bed where “natural” looks good. You will also need access to water for times when rainfall is sparse, especially when seeds are germinating and becoming established.

Soil Preparation: Soils should not be heavily compacted (you may need to till) and may need amendments to provide good drainage. Existing plants including grasses need to be removed. Wildflowers don’t compete well with grasses or clover. Rake all debris out of the wildflower bed before planting.

Timing the Sowing: Fall, mid-September to mid-November, is the best time to sow wildflower seed in our area. Some seeds will germinate quickly to establish roots while others will not germinate until spring. You can wait until spring to sow (mid-February through mid-April), however, be ready for dry weather. After germination, wildflower seedlings may need supplemental watering.

Sowing: Mix seed with sand, potting soil or perlite (4 parts carrier to 1 part seed) for even distribution of seed. Sow half evenly over the bed, then sow the remaining half perpendicular to the initial sowing. Walk over the bed or roll it to press seed into the soil. It is alright if some of the seeds are still visible.

Wildflowers for Spring and Summer

(Spring and Summer wildflowers pictured on next page)

Bluebonnet (*Lupinus texensis*): The state flower of Texas is a lovely blue and enriches soil as a legume. Seed is designed to germinate over several years, so for good germination, get seed that has been scarified for more flowers in the first year of planting.

Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium langloisii*): This member of the iris family has blue flowers growing in a bunch with grassy foliage.

False dandelion (*Pyrrhopappus pauciflorus*): This flower is a pale yellow compared to the gold of dandelions and has black anther tubes in the center of the flower. It is a morning flower that doesn’t last long after noon.

Horsemint (*Monarda citriodora*): This plant has flowers circling the stem in layers and looks like a pagoda. It has a strong lemony fragrance from the leaves and is a good nectar source.

Indian Blanket, Firewheel (*Gaillardia pulchella*): The flower petals of deep orange with yellow tips makes this a bright display of color. Native bees like it.

(Wildflowers for Spring and Summer continued on next page)



Bluebonnet



Blue Eyed Grass

Wildflowers for Spring and Summer



False Dandelion



Horsemint



Indian Blanket



Indian Paintbrush



Mexican Hat



Milkweed



Plains Coreopsis



Prairie Verbena



Wine-cup

Showy Evening
Primrose

(continued from page 4)

Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja indivisa*): This bright orange flower provides a contrast to Bluebonnet blue. It is a larval host as well as a nectar source.

Mexican hat, Prairie coneflower (*Ratibida columnifera*): This flower has red-orange petals tipped in yellow that hang down from the long cone in the middle.

Milkweed: Green milkweed (*Asclepias viridis*) and Antelope Horn milkweed (*Asclepias asperula*) are the most common milkweeds for our area although others grow here as well. They have white and green flowers and are important host plants for Monarch butterfly caterpillars. They are also good nectar sources.

Plains coreopsis, Golden tickseed (*Coreopsis tinctoria*): This golden yellow flower with a reddish orange center is an annual but may last several years before dying. It is a nectar source and produces a red dye.

Prairie verbena (*Glandularia bipinnatifida*): These clusters of purple flowers are a good source of nectar. Individual flowers resemble little gingerbread men.

Wine-cup (*Callirhoe involucrata*): The goblet shaped flowers grow low to the ground and are a deep pinkish purple.

Showy evening primrose, Pink Ladies (*Oenothera speciosa*): Opening in late evening, these flowers attract moths and provide early morning color.

Fall Wildflowers *continued on next page*



Fall Wildflowers (what you are seeing now)

Fall Wildflowers

Broomweed (*Amphiachyris dracunculoides*): These small yellow flowers grow on a widely branched stem. Pioneers cut several stems and tied them to a stick for use as a broom. Bees love this plant.

Eryngo, Candelabrum Plant (*Eryngium leavenworthii*): These are the bright purple prickly cones. Not a thistle, these are a nectar source and seed source for ground birds.

Goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*): Sprays of small, golden flowers attract insects each fall. The pollen is too heavy to be wind borne. This spreads aggressively by underground runners.

Maximilian Sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*): These sunflowers grow in large colonies and provide nectar for butterflies and bees and seed for birds. The plants put out a chemical to retard growth of other plants near it.

Prairie Agalinis (*Agalinis heterophylla*) These tubular pink flowers are a good nectar source. The plant is semi-parasitic on roots of nearby plants.

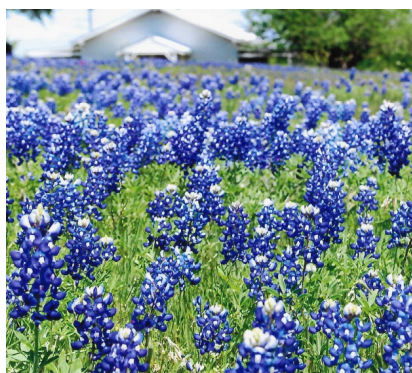
Snow on the Prairie, Snow on the Mountain (*Euphorbia bicolor*): The white and green seen in fields are modified leaves called bracts. This is a relative of the poinsettia. The flowers are small and in the center. It produces seeds eaten by birds.

Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*): These make tall plants with bright yellow flowers that follow the sun. Butterflies and bees love them and the seeds feed birds.

Western Ironweed (*Veronia baldwinii*): This plant has fuzzy clusters of purple flowers. The name comes from tough stems and rusty colored dried blooms.

Continue for References and Information specific to planting bluebonnets, including planting in Bermuda grass lawns.

Bluebonnet Lore and Fun Facts:



<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/flowers/bluebonnet/bluebonnetstory.html>

For Information about planting bluebonnets, including planting in Bermuda grass lawns:

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/flowers/BLUBONET.html>

References:

aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/wildseed

Wildflowers in Bloom site with planting information, seed sources, pictures of wildflowers, etc.

[wildflower.org.texas](https://www.wildflower.org.texas)

LadyBird Johnson Wildflower Center information and pictures of wildflowers for central Texas

Wildflower of the Month

**Gayfeather, Blazing Star – Sunflower Family
(Asteraceae) Liatris spp.**

Region: 1 through 10, (Ellis County is in Region 4)

Size: 1 - 3.5 feet

Blooms: August – October, Perennial



Melinda Kocian



Across Texas, one species or another of Liatris will be seen along roadsides in gravelly, sandy or calcareous soils, on plains, prairies, edges, hillsides, slopes and roadsides. The stiffly upright plants grow from a corm (an underground bulb-like stem) which may produce a few to many stalks forming a clump. There are no petals, but four to eight disk flowers form flower heads that cluster densely, opening from the top of a terminal spike downward. The spikes may be twelve inches in length. Leaves are mostly narrow and in some species are six inches long near the stem's base. They are crowded and spiral up the stem, becoming progressively smaller until they are small bracts in the flowering spike. Liatris has had many medicinal uses: as a diuretic, a mild kidney, or liver tonic. A root tea has been used for laryngitis.

Pumpkin Fun

Kim Rainey, Ellis County Master Gardener

Scientists believe that pumpkins originated in North America about 9000 years ago. The oldest pumpkin seeds have been found in Mexico and date back to somewhere between 7000-5550 B.C.. Pumpkins are grown on every continent except Antarctica.

Every single part of a pumpkin is edible: the skin, leaves, flowers, pulp, seeds, and stems.

The word "pumpkin" originates from "pepon," which means "large melon" in Greek. It then evolved to "pompon" in French and "pumpion" in Britain. The Americans later changed it to "pumpkin," the name we still use today.

How To Preserve A Carved Pumpkin: Hollowed-out carved pumpkins are more likely to deteriorate quicker than uncarved pumpkins. Be sure to clean out your pumpkin thoroughly when you carve it. To help keep your pumpkin fresh, a quick soak in a bleach solution will do the trick.

Just follow these simple steps: Rinse your carved pumpkin with water. In a bucket large enough to fit your pumpkin, mix one tablespoon of bleach per quart of water. You'll need enough of this mixture to completely submerge your pumpkin. Dunk the pumpkin in the water, holding it under the surface (you'll want to wear gloves), and let it soak for 2 minutes. Remove the pumpkin from the bucket and let the pumpkin air dry. Smear petroleum jelly all over the outside and inside of your pumpkin to keep it from drying out. Spray carved pumpkins daily with water that's mixed with a few drops of bleach. This will help with hydration and protect against rot. Use battery-operated lights instead of real candles inside the pumpkin.



[Link to pumpkin carving stencils from Better Homes and Gardens.](#)



This is a white pumpkin with a blue iris painted on it; then inserted into an orange pumpkin.

The earliest pumpkin pie made in America was quite different than the pumpkin pie we enjoy today. Pilgrims and early settlers made pumpkin pie by hollowing out a pumpkin, filling the shell with milk, honey and spices and baking it.

[Family Friendly Pumpkin Recipe from Texas A&M](#)



Daily Visitors to the Learning Garden

Here are pictures of daily visitors to our garden. They obliged for a picture and I did tell them that they should check out our monthly newsletter. Also, we now have graphics of replacement stickers for our worn-out sign boards at Learning Garden.

Good news on the four o'clocks, they are back again in full bloom, with pink, magenta, and yellow flowers. Planning to keep them watered at least once a week when temps go up to the 90's.

