

E-Gardening Newsletter

Calendar of Events

August 6 – **Master Gardener Booth at Waxahachie Farmers' Market** – Discuss hot weather gardening: hats, sunblock, water, timing chores for early morning or evening.

August 13 – **Master Gardener Booth at Waxahachie Farmers' Market** – Come by our booth for ideas on perennials that can take the heat.

August 20 – **Master Gardener Booth at Waxahachie Farmers' Market** –

Pop Up Horticulture Day

Featuring: Feeding Butterflies – Pollinator Friendly Plants!

Monarch Butterflies have been declared endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The threat is from loss of habitat and climate change. Learn about butterfly friendly plants and how you can help Monarchs and other butterflies. Children can learn about feeding/watering butterflies with a free Flutter-By Feeder.

August 27 – **Master Gardener Booth at Waxahachie Farmers' Market** – We're here to help with your gardening questions.

Watch this space for information on our **Fall Bulb Sale** featuring *Crinum asiaticum*, big white spider lilies that would love to flower in your garden next summer!



what to do in AUGUST

PLANTING

- Plant these fall vegetables early in the month: beans, cucumbers and squash. Follow up late in the month with trans-plants 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 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.

A Master Gardener told me to put well-composted manure on strawberries, but it didn't work for me. I'm going back to using whipped cream.

WATER RESTRICTIONS THE GARDENER'S WORST NIGHTMARE

by Jessi Harbor, Ellis County Master Gardener

Water Restrictions. These are a gardener's worst nightmare, right? I started nursing my seeds in January just to watch the poor pepper and tomato plants drop their leaves and turn brown when I stopped watering during voluntary water restrictions. Then- when I misunderstood the next level of restrictions, my water was temporarily shut off. How Rude.

But wait- water restrictions do serve a purpose. Growing up on a shallow well, I learned early on that you can run out of water. Pumps can burn out if they run too long. The city of Gunther Tx, located in Grayson county, has issued a water emergency asking its residents to stop all outdoor watering in an attempt to avoid running out of water. An emergency order was released in Maypearl, Tx, on July 21st, halting all outdoor watering due to the "dangerously low" water levels in the storage tanks. You can check the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality website for a list of public water systems that have reported restrictions or check with your water provider.

Water shortages are no joke. But there are things we can do now and in the future to help us manage our landscapes during a drought.

What to do now:

1. Assess the situation

- What plants do you have? Which ones will go dormant and come back vs. which ones will not return if they die? What is the financial investment in the plants?

2. Prioritize

- My vegetable garden is already gone. The St. Augustine I foolishly sodded in a full sun- no irrigation- zone has died. The Bermuda grass will come back no problem. But my new fruit trees, citrus trees, and Shumard Oak I planted this year take priority. If I can use water- these will be the ones I try and save.

3. Use Gardening best practices.

- **Mulch.** As a somewhat lazy gardener- I never got around to mulching my trees. I go out each morning and check and see if they need water when I check on my chickens. Then- I water. However, I am restricted to watering one time a week now. How will I keep these trees already showing stress alive in the extreme heat and drought? Mulch is a great place to start. And it will probably save me money compared to how much I spent on watering.
- **Water early or late** in the day to reduce water loss through evaporation.
- **Use drip systems or soaker hoses.** I can no longer be lazy and put my sprinkler on my oak tree. I went to the local big box store and picked up a short soaker hose to wrap around the tree. This is best practice anyway. I'm getting water to the exact place I need it, and the slow watering rate will help as well. Now the water is actually going to the tree instead of straight through the cracks in my blackland prairie clay soil.



4. Relocate or Shade.

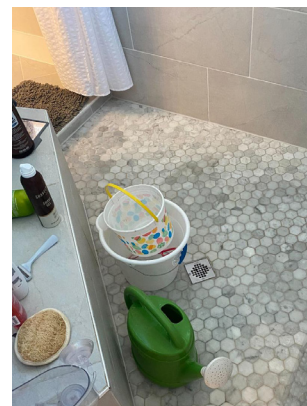
- I have moved potted trees I am trying to keep alive into partially shaded areas. My fence blocks

the west sun for a few feet starting at about 5:00. Sheltering my plants in the evening may be just enough to help keep them alive.

- Erect shade. If time and budget aren't a problem, you can add shade cloth above plants and bushes you want to save- and animals. We have attached shade fabric around our chicken run to help them stay cool. You can do the same for your plants.

5. Gray Water Recycling

- My great-grandmother grew up during the great depression. It left scars on her life and a few odd practices. Why were there bowls in all the sinks that captured the water when you washed your hands? And buckets in the shower? I no longer think this is odd. I now have a bucket in my shower capturing the water that comes out of the faucet while waiting for the water to warm up. I get about 1/2 gallon of fresh water each time I shower. This is just enough that I can keep the citrus trees on my porch alive. Can I get the rest of my family to do this? Probably not, but that 1/2 gallon daily may save my investment in the citrus trees.
- You can also recycle kitchen water. I set a bucket by the kitchen sink to empty the kids' water bottles in before I wash them. I can also save water from pasta and soaking dishes. "Some detergents may have a high salt content in the form of sodium, chloride or boron, which could potentially 'burn' a plant," I'm not great about tracking what soaps I can and can't put in my garden, so I avoid the soapy sink water. I make a trip to the apple trees each day to empty my kitchen water savings.
- Get creative. Are there other places you can save water from?



6. Other options?

- There are a lot of products on the market claiming to help. I have ordered a few to test myself. Rings that go around trees and slowly drain water over 8 hours. 30-day tree watering rings. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of data to support whether these will help or not. I'm desperate to keep my plants alive and am willing to experiment a bit, knowing they may or may not be of help.

What should you do to plan ahead for droughts? Let's talk about that next month. In the meantime, check out WaterSmart and Earth-Kind from Texas A&M to help you brainstorm how to build drought-tolerant landscapes. Another great resource is waterisawesome.com which provides outdoor watering tips and alerts.

Maybe these tips will help you think creatively about how to conserve water and take care of your garden during these dry times. Check regularly with your water provider or municipality- as water restrictions are frequently changing. Everyone can do their part to help save this precious resource.



Resources:

List of Texas PWSs Limiting Water Use to Avoid Shortages. (2022). Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/drinkingwater/trot/droughtw.html>

WaterSmart Landscapes for the Upper Texas Gulf Coast | Teaching, Research, Extension and Service. (2022). Tamu.edu. <https://watersmart.tamu.edu/>

Schattenberg, P. (2012, December 7). Can gray water keep Texas landscapes green? – AgriLife Today. AgriLife Today. <https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2012/12/07/gray-water-landscapes/>

Russell, A. (2022, July 14). Tips for gardeners during a Texas heat wave – AgriLife Today. AgriLife Today. <https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2022/07/14/tips-for-gardeners-during-a-texas-heat-wave/>

Efficient Use of Water in the Garden and Landscape – Earth-Kind® Landscaping Earth-Kind® Landscaping. (2022). Tamu.edu. <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/drought/efficient-use-of-water-in-the-garden-and-landscape/>

Home. (2022). Water Is Awesome. <https://waterisawesome.com/>

Flame-Proof Perennials

for Ellis County

Maureen Nitkowski, Ellis County Master Gardener

By definition, perennial plants live for more than two years. Annual plants complete their life cycle in one year, while biennial plants require two years. There are perennial plants which work well even in the hot North Texas summer. They do need a minimum amount of water but are "flame-proof" in terms of the heat they can withstand. This is a list of tough beauties which have been tested and approved by Texas A&M Agrilife Research.



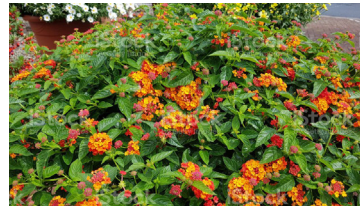
Red Yucca (*Hesperaloe parviflora*)- red flowers attractive to hummingbirds; very low water



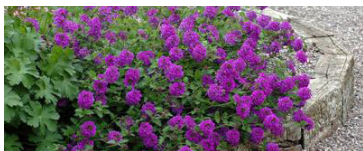
John Fanick Phlox (*Phlox paniculata*)- deep pink flowers attractive to butterflies & other pollinators



Blue Salvia (*Salvia longispicata*, "Mystic Spires")- deep blue flowers attractive to pollinators (*Salvia farinacea*, "Henry Duelberg")- blue flowers attractive to pollinators



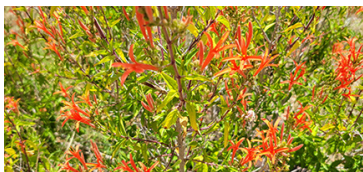
Lantana (*Lantana camara*, "New Gold")- spreading shrub, pollinator friendly (*Lantana montevidensis*)- trailing form, purple or white flowers, can freeze



Verbena (*Verbena canadensis*, "Princess Dark Lavender")- butterfly favorite



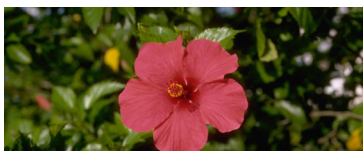
Blue Mist (*Conoclinium coelestinum*)- pale blue button flowers, Queen & other butterflies



Flame Acanthus (*Anisacanthus quadrifidus*)- flame-orange flowers, woody shrub, hummingbirds!



Napier Grass (*Pennisetum* x "Princess Caroline")- large-leaved bunch grass dies back in winter



Hibiscus sp.- large flowers, red, pink or white; butterflies & pollinators; more water in heat



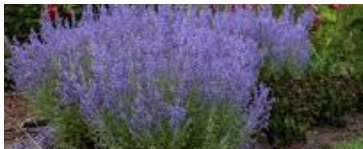
Turk's Cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*)- sun or shade, white, pink or red flowers



Autumn Sage (*Salvia greggii*)- woody shrub, variety flower colors; trim back after first bloom



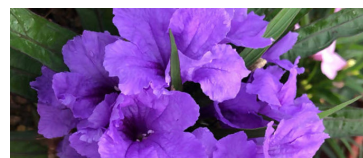
Rock Rose (*Pavonia lasiopetala*)- pink flowers, pollinator friendly; reseeds.



Russian Sage (*Perovskia* sp)- pale lavender airy flowers; very low water



Mexican Bush Sage (*Salvia leucantha*)- purple blossoms late summer to autumn; very low water



Dwarf Mexican Petunia (*Ruellia brittoniana*)- low-growing pink, white or purple flowers



Linheimer Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia lindheimeri*)- bunch grass, drought-tolerant

For more information on these plants and others, please go to: ["Texas Superstars- Strong and Stunning Plants for Texans"](#), and ["Earth-Kind Landscape"](#).



Texas Star Hibiscus

by Marj McClung, Ellis County Master Gardener

There are many hardy hibiscus varieties that provide summer blossoms for our enjoyment. These are the rose mallows, Rose of Sharon, Altheas, and Confederate roses that graced our grandmothers' gardens and delight us today. One, because of the star shape of its flowers stands out.

In white or red, the *Hibiscus coccineus* or Texas Star Hibiscus has large flowers (3-4 inches) waving 3 to 6 feet in the air. Unlike other hibiscus, the petals are separated and narrow, making a perfect "Lone Star". Each flower lasts only a day. This plant will bloom from late June through October, attracting hummingbirds and butterflies. It may also attract law



enforcement since the leaves bear a resemblance to marijuana.

Grow Texas Star Hibiscus in soil with good drainage. It does best in a sunny location. It will likely need supplemental irrigation during the heat of our summers. The plant is winter hardy but benefits from extra mulch to protect the roots. Foliage will die back with cold weather, but it is best to leave it and prune back in early spring before new growth starts. Lightly fertilize in spring or early summer.

The plant produces seed pods which can be planted in early spring. You can also propagate Texas Star Hibiscus from cuttings or by dividing large clumps of the plant.

Wildflower of the Month

Dayflower – Dayflower family
(Commelinaceae) *Commelina erecta* L.

Region: 1 through 10, (Ellis Co. is Region 4)

Size: 6 – 18 inches

Blooms: May - October, Perennial



Melinda Kocian



Dayflower is first erect, then trailing, occasionally reaching three feet. There are a number of species in Texas similar enough to be difficult to distinguish. All have three petals, the upper two of which can range from white to, more commonly, a beautiful clear blue. Below these is a third, insignificant, whitish petal which may or may not be noticed. Several buds are clustered in a boat-shaped, sheathing bract, forming a spathe, from which the flower stalks emerge. Squeezing the spathe gently will produce a tear-like drop of liquid, suggesting another common name, widow's tears. The base of the long, linear leaves wraps the succulent stem in a sheath. Dayflowers close early in the day. Edible stems, leaves and flowers of tender young plants have a pleasant flavor used raw, stewed or sautéed.

Chile Peppers for August

By Arlene Hamilton, Ellis County Master Gardener

You're probably as tired of talking about the hot weather as I am. So, let's talk about some wonderful plants that love the long hot summers of the Southwest and inspire passion around the world. Chile Peppers (*Capsicum* spp.) are favored in our gardens, on our plates and even in our medicine cabinets.

Like tomatoes, beans, corn, and avocados; chile peppers are a New World plant, found in South America by Christopher Columbus as he searched for a route to India. He was searching for the home of the black pepper (*Piper nigrum*), the most expensive spice in the world at that time. Columbus returned to Europe with the holds of his ships filled with plants, seeds and peppers. Within a very short time chile peppers had spread throughout the world as their flavor and heat added zest to bland diets. Even the poorest could easily cultivate this inexpensive flavor enhancer.

There are hundreds of varieties of chile peppers in many shapes, sizes, colors and flavors, from sweet to searingly pungent, hot and sweet at the same time, green and vegetal, earthy, and fruity. Some favorites for the Texas garden are habanero, Anaheim, Hungarian banana, cayenne, Tabasco, Thai, and of course jalapeño. The tiny piquin brought to my garden by the birds that were frequent visitors to the tender perennial plant in the fall deposit the seeds throughout the area. It is a very fiery hot pepper that makes a wonderful condiment when the ripe peppers are added to a bottle of vinegar, aged, and then enjoyed splashed over salads, eggs, and vegetables.



August and September are peak times for harvesting chiles from your garden or shopping our local farmer's market. My, personal favorite chile is the Hatch, named for Hatch, New Mexico. We first came across this large, mild to hot pepper as we crossed southeastern Colorado several years ago. The markets, roadside stands and parking lots lining highway 50 boasted large tumble roasters grilling up bushels of Hatch chiles. You could catch the aroma long before you saw the grill. In mid-August our local HEB will be grilling up this year's batch but get there early if you want them hot off the grill. The season for fresh chiles is short but there are many Hatch chile products available throughout the year.



Once you get past the pain of cleaning and seeding chiles you are rewarded with not only the wonderful flavor but also the healthful benefits of chiles. All members of the capsicum family contain large amounts of vitamins C and A. By weight, fresh peppers have about three times as much vitamin C as oranges and as much vitamin A as carrots. The capsaicin oil that causes your fingers to burn while cleaning them is being studied as a medicine. Capsaicin is the active ingredient of creams for painful skin and nerve conditions including shingles and neuralgia. It is being tested in cream form for diabetic neuropathy, osteoarthritis, and rheumatoid arthritis.

continued on page 8



ANSWERING THE CALL...

Having what it takes to become a Master Gardener

Ellis County Master Gardeners hosted an informal Meet & Greet for those interested in taking the Intern

training for 2023. The group met on Tuesday evening, the 26th, at First Baptist Waxahachie from 5:30 until 7:00 p.m..

If accepted into the Master Gardener program, interns will pay tuition and be required to complete a minimum of 50 hours classroom training and a minimum of 50 hours volunteer work. The program offers instruction in lawn care; ornamental trees and shrubs; insect, disease, and weed management; soils and plant nutrition; vegetable gardening; home fruit production; garden flowers; perennials and annuals; and water conservation.

Classes will begin in September and continue through November 3rd. The morning sessions will be taught virtually by Texas A&M professors zoomed from the Texas Master Gardener Association. Afternoon sessions will be live presentations from local experts.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service also requires all volunteers who enter the Texas Master Gardener Program be initially screened through the Youth Protection Program and screened every three years thereafter.



Chile Peppers for August: continued from page 7

Pepper plants should be planted in the early summer after the soil has become warm. They grow best in loamy soil with organic matter and a little greensand added. Good drainage is important. Water frequently and feed once or twice during the season. A good way to preserve your pepper crop is to blacken the skin on the grill, remove the black and seeds then layer flat between sheets of waxed paper. Place these in zip topped freezer bags and freeze. These packets lay flat, taking up very little room. A few pieces make the base for Chile Rellenos casserole, chopped in salsas and chili, or added to all foods needing a bit of a kick.

Here's an easy recipe using fresh fruits and peppers found at the Waxahachie Downtown Farmers Market open every Saturday morning through October.

Melon Salsa: Combine 1 cup each, honeydew, cantaloupe, and watermelon seeded and cubed, 2 jalapeno or other hot pepper, seeded and minced, juice of one lime, a small bunch chopped cilantro, mint and basil, salt and pepper to taste. Combine all. Refrigerate overnight for best flavor. Serve with chips, or over fish, shrimp, or chicken.



