



ECHO



Texas AgriLife's Community Horticultural Outreach

Work Opportunities



Dear Collin County Master Gardeners,

It has been a busy year. I have been working hard to develop relationships and partnership with people and organizations throughout the county and beyond. That hard work is starting to pay off. There are numerous new volunteer opportunities available to you and much more to come. There are numerous Master Gardeners who have been helping Extension Horticulture fulfill its mission in Collin County. I hope to pique the interest of those among you who still need those volunteer hours to retain you title as a Texas Master Gardener. The latest Collin County Master Gardener Association eMinders has a long list of projects that needs your help.

The McKinney Green Garden at the Gabe Nesbitt Park is an excellent project to literally "get your hands around." We will be meeting there on September 26th, 27th and 28th at 8 AM to help install the new plants. Last year, some of you were involved in selecting and designing a wonderful garden that displays many water conserving plants in different gardens themes. Please come and offer your helping hand to demonstrate effective landscaping to our community.

The Myers Park and Event Center is a 175-acre county park located northwest of McKinney. This beautiful park holds vast potential for the Collin County Master Gardener Association. The park staff is eager to provide a site for us to demonstration effective gardening practices, and research plants that have the potential to receive the Earth Kind designation. The Master Gardener design committee has developed landscape designs for highly visible location in the park. We need your help to bring the project to life by preparing the beds, obtaining and installing plants, and developing signs. The Earth Kind research garden is designed to be the first of its kind and I will need your help to make this project a success.

I appreciate your willingness to volunteer for the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Our mission is to improve the lives of people, businesses, and communities across Texas and beyond through high-quality, relevant education. Your help is greatly needed for Extension Horticulture to meet our goals and fulfill our mission. Please contact the Extension Office, Master Gardener Project Leaders, or me to sign up to help with all of our exciting projects in Collin County.

Sincerely,
Greg Church, Ph.D.
County Extension Agent - Horticulture

September-October 2008

Educational programs of Texas AgriLife Extension serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.

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Gardening in the Cool

By Mary Nell Jackson

Indoor gardening can be a challenge for some, but for four friends who happen to be Master Gardeners, creating and designing terrariums was just the thing when the thermometer read 100 this summer. Getting an early start under the shade of the pool porch gave the five of us a perfect excuse to garden and beat the heat.

Each of us was responsible to find our containers and bring plants to use and share. Our hostess had graciously gathered the supplies for us to share and sent each of us information on “The Art of Designing Terrariums.”



“I observed the moisture which during the heat of the day rose from the mould condensed on the surface of the glass and returned whence it came, thus keeping the earth always in the same degree of humidity.”² The terrariums used today are small ornamental versions of the Wardian case.

Planting a Terrarium

Containers: Choosing your container is the fun part of the design. Clear glass containers work best but plastic ones can be used; do not choose a tinted

History

The meaning of terrarium is: little world¹. We learned from our research that a terrarium is a miniature greenhouse. The University of Missouri Extension website provided us with a brief history of transparent containers. These containers date back 2,500 years and originated in Greece. Terrarium culture in the United States originated in New England; housewives placed squawberry (or partridge berry) in hand-blown glass bowls.³

Dr. Nathaniel Ward, an amateur naturalist who practiced medicine in the East End of London must be credited with the invention of the terrarium. The year was 1827. Ward had placed a caterpillar to pupate in mold at the bottom of a glass jar. He stoppered the jar and forgot it. He eventually discovered later that a tiny fern and a blade of grass were growing out of the mold. Ward watched the fern and grasses grow for four years, during this time no water was added or the cover removed.²

His observation follows:

glass container it could reduce the light. A terrarium has no drainage holes, it is self contained. Fish bowls, fish tanks, glass jars, jugs, or bottles make good choices. The container you choose can be open or closed [with a lid]. Your container should have a wide enough mouth for inserting your plants easily. Some of the most interesting terrariums have containers that came from garage sales or trash piles. Be creative.

The open containers are called bottle gardens. The plants in closed containers should be chosen to tolerate high humidity while containers without covers will require more frequent watering. Open containers are less subject to disease.

My gardening friends had both open and closed containers. We set about to assemble our terrariums. There were more plants than we could use, everyone shared, and we soon learned that less in these small spaces was best. We had all cleaned our containers at home and were ready to plant when we ar-

(Continued on page 3)

(Indoor Gardening—Continued from page 2)

rived. We learned in our research that it was best to wash the containers with hot soapy water to avoid contamination with algae and fungal diseases as they thrive in enclosed, humid environments.

Assembling a terrarium is much like making lasagna; it is layered with the following:

1st layer-gravel or small pebbles (our host chose Aquarium Gravel she purchased at a pet store). This ½ inch layer is your drainage material.

2nd layer-place ½ inch horticultural charcoal above the pebbles to keep the soil from developing a sour smell⁴

3rd layer- sphagnum moss may be placed over the charcoal. This layer prevents the soil from sifting into the drainage area⁴

4th layer-is a good potting soil. Some info said damp soil and others said do not wet soil, so we did not add water to our soil

Before adding your plants you must decide on the location of your terrarium and its light source, plus how you want to view your plants. Do you want to have a back and front or panoramic view?

The last step after you have added the soil is optional: you might choose to cover the bare soil with pebbles, decorative sand or moss.

After the four steps were met, we went about adding our plant material. Some of the literature advised to shake all the soil from the plants roots to reduce the size of the root ball and soak the plant in water; we chose to shake our plants and add them to our creations. This is the tricky part — the opening of your container. There are all sorts of instruments you can use to insert your plants: a dibber, long wooden pencil, long teaspoon or your fingers. After the plants are inserted, you need to tap down the soil. A handy item to do this chore can be made with a long skewer inserted into a bottle cork; the cork is your tapper and does a very good job. It is important at this stage to be sure the plants are properly seated in the

soil. Some soil will be on the leaves, an artists' brush or discarded make-up brush will do a fine job in cleaning your design.

Adding the water to your terrarium is a very important step. Some

advice we researched noted to add ½ cup, but most of us were more cautious and added less. You can always add more but too much will ruin your hard work. You never want to see water on the bottom layer of pebbles/gravel, this is too much.

I thought the U.C. Davis website gave good advice about the humidity of the terrarium. It said the terrarium may take a few days to reach its humidity; if you see an excess amount of moisture, you can remove the cover to increase ventilation. The lid may be removed for brief periods of 10 to 15 minutes, but do not leave the cover off.¹ The idea of a terrarium is for the moisture to condense on the cool glass and run back into your mini garden.

We had lists of proper plants for our terrariums as listed in the next paragraph, but it isn't always possible to find those listed. Three of us shopped at the same place and found some good selections. The big box stores had few of the plants we needed. Most of the plants cost about \$2.99 for a 4" pot, and many could be shared. Plant tags usually have the light conditions; but try to stay away from the ones that require high light. Following are some of our choices.



(Continued on page 4)

(Indoor Gardening—Continued from page 3)

- Selaginella, 'Ruby Red'
- Hedera helix Ivy, 'Sliver Dollar'
- Cryptanthus, 'Red Star'
- Hedera helix Ivy, 'Lauren's Lace'
- Dracaena, 'Magenta'
- Dracaena, 'Sanderiana'
- Polka-Dot Plant
- Hemigraphis alternata, 'Purple Waffle'
- Fittonia, 'White Brocade'

We also brought plants from our gardens, jade plant, Begonia, 'Don Miller,' jewels of opar, and others that we felt might survive. Time will tell.

The University of Missouri Extension website recommends the following plants for terrariums: Partial list:³

Airplant	Aluminum plant
Coral berry	Arrow-head plant
Artillery plant	Asparagus fern
Baby tears	Begonia
Bird's Nest Sansevieria	Bloodleaf
Bunny-ears cactus	Chinese evergreen
Club moss	Creeeping fig
Croton	Devil's ivy
Potho	Dwarf floxinia
Dwarf natal plum	Dwarf Pomegranate
Earth stars	English ivy
Pink Polka dot	Gold dust dracaena
Goldfish vine	Heart-leaved philodendron
Hen and chicks	Irish moss
Jade plant	Maidenhair fern
Miniature holly	Parrot leaf
Joseph's coat	Piggy-back plant
Prayer Plant	Rattlesnake plantain
Devil's backbone	Rosary vine
Spider plant	Airplane plant
Spotted evergreen	Stonecrop
Swedish ivy	False holly
Table fern	Venus fly trap
Waffle plant	Wintergreen

You can see by the accompanying photos that we had a great time creating our terrariums and educating ourselves on the art of the terrarium design. It was a fun activity to garden and stay out of the sun. Now all our terrariums need is a bit of that sun to survive. Each creation was as different as each gardener, much like our own outdoor gardens. I hope I remember to be stingy with the water!



References

- ¹U.C. Davis Website: Terrariums
²The Plant Hunters, Tyler Whittle, Lyons & Burford Publishers, 1997
³University of Missouri Extension: Website, Terrariums
⁴South Carolina Master Gardeners Manual
⁵The American Horticultural Society Encyclopedia of Gardening, DK, 1993
- Bibliography
 Gardens of Invention, George Drower, First Lyons Press, 2003

Good Sources for Terrarium Plants:

Plant & Planters www.plantsandplanters.net
 1050 N. Greenville Ave.
 Richardson, TX. 75081 🌸



About the Author: Mary Nell Jackson, class of 1997, is a herb lover and discovered her love for writing about the garden a few years ago when she penned an article about gardening in her p.j.'s.

Bulb Sale

By Dawn Oldfield

*“Everything that slows us down
and forces patience, everything
that sets us back into the slow
cycles of nature is a help.
Gardening is an instrument of grace.”*

- May Sarton

It is hard to imagine with recent temperatures soaring well into the 100's that the crisp, cool days of autumn are right around the corner. And, after that the long, dark days of winter. Gardeners will soon be longing for the hues of spring against the bare ground of the winter garden.

Gardeners who have patiently waited out winter will be rewarded with some of spring's earliest bloomers ... bulbs. A flourish of crocus, narcissus, or tulips are a welcome sight and amicable companions to emerging perennials. If only those gardeners had planted bulbs in the fall ... CCMGs to the rescue! CCMGA is preparing for our 5th Annual Fall Fundraiser: Bulbs for North Texas Landscapes.

Once again we will be selling a mixture of spring/summer blooming bulbs, including lovely new tulips, narcissi, lilies and more. These bulbs are those which will reward gardeners with a beautiful display that will thrive – and sometimes multiply – in our difficult soils and climate extremes. Many of these bulbs are not available in local nurseries.

The color palette is a varied one, featuring flowers in pastels, and bright shades of white, blue, yellow, red and bi-color. Most of our selections will display their beauty between the months of March-May, while one lovely lily saves her performance for June/July.

Choose one or select a few, but you'll be tempted to take them all home! These are the ten becoming bloomers for sale during this

year's
Bulbs
for



North Texas Landscapes fundraiser.

- Crocus tommasianus roseus
- Narcissus Quail
- Ipheion uniflorum Rolf Fiedler
- Narcissus Tahiti
- Leucojum aestivum Gravetye Giant
- Narcissus Thalia
- Longiflorum-Asiatic Lily Rodela
- Tulipa clusiana Cynthia
- Musacari neglectum
- Tulipa clusiana Lady Jane

It is best to plant spring bulbs after the soil cools. Store them in a cool, dry, ventilated place until planting time. This is usually between October-December in North Texas. Planting instructions will accompany each order.

The fall fundraiser is open to everyone. Master Gardeners, family, friends and neighbors are welcome to participate. A color brochure, description of bulbs available for sale and an order form are available for downloading at the CCMGA Website: ccmgatx.org/Docs/2008_BulbOrder.pdf. Orders must be accompanied by a check payable to CCMGA and must be received by October 3, 2008. Please mail orders to Collin County Master Gardeners Association, 825 N. McDonald St., Suite 150, McKinney, TX 75069. Bulb orders may be picked up at the meeting on October 23rd, or at the Extension office on October 24th. 🌸



About the Author: Dawn Oldfield is a class of 2004 CCMG, our group's public relations coordinator, and is passionate about roses, water conservation, and traveling the gardens of the world.

This N That

Greg and Tina Church Say Thank You

We received this thank you note from Greg and Tina Church for the baby gift from CCMGA.

*Dear Master Gardeners,
Thank you for the Target gift card!
It was so kind and generous of you to think
of our son.
We hope each of you will soon meet little
Mark!
We appreciate your thoughtfulness!
Sincerely,
Greg and Tina Church*

New Members

Welcome to our two newest Master Gardeners, who have transferred to us from Big Spring, in Howard County. Make a note of their contact info:

D.W. Overman and Jane Overman
2310 Sherbrooke Lane
McKinney, TX 75070
972-540-0485
joverman77@hotmail.com

Heirloom Gardening Continuing Education

The 3rd Central Texas Gardeners Conference, a day long event on Saturday, November 8, 2008, (8 AM to 4:30 PM) is coming up. It's being presented by the Master Gardeners of Comal (chair), Guadalupe, Travis and Hays counties and graciously hosted by Texas Disposal Systems at their Exotic Game Ranch & Pavilion just south of Austin near Buda.

The conference theme is "Heirloom Treasures – Jewels of the Garden." Master Gardeners attending are granted 8 hours continuing education credits. Organizers are promoting the conference to Master Gardeners (first) and

then the public – both are welcome to register and attend. Visit www.tcmastergardeners.org for more information.

Tommie Clayton/Susan Jung
CTGC Representatives/Travis County MG Association
(TMGA Alternate Delegate/Delegate)
tjcgrc@swbell.net
susanjung@msn.com

Tip: Keep Your Nails Clean

Of course you always wear gloves when you garden, and there are absolutely no holes in your gardening gloves. For the rest of us, though, those who begin weeding bare-handed, you can save your nails by dragging them over a bar of soap first. By getting soap lodged under your nails, it blocks dirt. Any soil that happens to be on your fingers afterward will be washed away more easily with that soap primer.

Biodegradable Planters

Your pots and containers can now be as earth-friendly as your plants. Coir-based planters are lightweight and beautiful and will break down in landfills or even your compost pile. They generally last five years. Visit www.ecosourceonline.com for details.

Tip: Cool Not Always Best

Cut flowers should be placed in a vase of water that is bathwater temperature (90 to 100°). Warm water travels up the stem better, allowing the blooms to stay hydrated. HOWEVER, spring-flowering bulb cut arrangements do best in cooler water, about the same as your average swimming pool. 🌸

What I Did Last Summer

By Katherine Ponder

I went to Ft. Worth. It's not a world away or particularly exotic, but at times, it seemed like it. I went with my family to this neighboring city and enjoyed a fast getaway. For my sake, everyone tramped to the Botanic Garden in 100° heat. It *was* truly like another land.

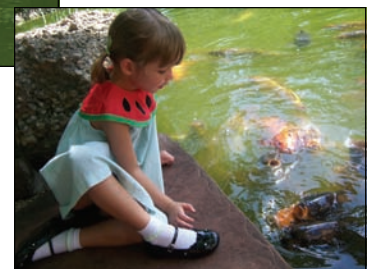
The Botanic Garden is the oldest in Texas and was originally built during the Great Depressions. Its Japanese Garden is the only area at the Botanic Garden with an entry fee, but it's a nominal \$2-\$3.50. This lush garden is situated on an old gravel pit, and tons of stone have been brought in. There are cleverly hidden pavilions, winding paths, an inspiring arched Moon Bridge, Japanese sculptures, meditation areas, ponds, and much more. My children were entertained by the Koi fish, which accept food from your hand, provided by dispensers that give you a handful of food for \$.25 each turn. We loved the ducks, turtles, and one amazing bird that swooped down and caught a small perch while we watched. I was most impressed by— of course — the incredible plants.

From weeping willows to bamboo, Nandinas of all sizes, low-growing juniper, and colorful Japanese Maples, the garden is an oasis in the Texan heat. The various species of pine trees are delicate yet hardy enough to last. It didn't even *feel* as hot in the gardens. There were ferns in the deep shade and even some moss growing on rocks. Hollies abounded and even the typical Liriope and Barberries seemed more beautiful in this setting.

It's definitely worth the short drive to go check out the Japanese Garden and all of the gardens. When cooler weather brings colorful foliage, it will be a brilliant treat!

Visit www.fwbg.org/japanese.htm for information on this garden.

Share your garden vacations with us! Send photos and a brief (or longer) description of the garden and your experience to: KatherinePonder@yahoo.com. 🌸



About the Author: Katherine Ponder, class of 2003, is editor of ECHO, a freelance writer, and a fan of perennials..

Anoles in the Garden

By Nancy King

What is an anole? I never knew this little lizard existed until a few years ago, when a friend walked over to my large pot of garlic chives and said, “You have anoles here!” And sure enough, in the pot, hidden and protected by the chives, were small brown lizards.

Since that time, green anoles (*Anolis carolinensis*) have thrived in our garden, and I now see several every time I’m outside. It’s fun to watch the large males display their pink dewlap as they march along the top of the fence or along the deck railing. I see them on crape myrtle trunks, hiding under the ivy and other leafy plants, on my large roses – just about everywhere that offers them some protection from predators, but never in the grass.

Green anoles are native to the eastern half of Texas and in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. They’re considered arboreal lizards because they can be found in trees, but also live in and under lower plants such as shrubs and ground-cover. Anoles need shady places and a moist environment, so an area that is watered will appeal to them.

Even though they’re called ‘green anoles,’ this species is capable of color change, usually from green to brown. Males are bright leaf green when they march along trying to interest a female. Their dewlap, the fan-shaped area under their chin used for territorial and courtship displays, is a bright pink. However, anoles can change slowly from green to brown, influenced by environment, temperature and even mood. I’ve also seen them colored a dull yellow, or even very dark, almost black, but most times when you see them they’ll be green or brown. When an anole is bright green and stops moving to bask in the sun, as they often do, you could easily mistake it for a leaf.

Anoles are diurnal (day active). Breeding occurs from spring through fall and small eggs (usually only one) are laid in most areas with



loose ground covering. When they hatch, the young are only about 2 ½ inches long. Adults can be 5” to 8” long, including the tail.

These attractive lizards are beneficial, eating insects. They will eat almost anything small enough to capture, including moths, crickets, and spiders. They may jump half a foot to catch an insect flying by.

Although they look soft and appealing to touch, anoles are fragile and should be left alone. They can be easily injured and will lose their tail if they sense danger. Also, their main predators are birds, and a bird attack is another way an anole can lose its tail, if not its life.

In the winter they hibernate and they don’t always pick the best places – we found one under our display of fall pumpkins when we removed it in December. When disturbed, they find a new place to hibernate. And like many Texas animals, they come out for a succession of warm days, even in winter.

Anoles are enjoyable to have in your garden both because they reduce the number of insects and because they’re fun to watch. If you wish to encourage them around your deck and in the garden, you’ll have to provide them with trees (small trees are fine) and leafy cover from Acanthaceae plants and vines. They run from sheltered area

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Anoles

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to sheltered area, so from under a



vine on a deck post to under a pot to under a chair and so forth. They seem to grow accustomed to having people around in time and show little fear, even to the point of jumping

on your chair while continuing to chew on an insect.

The Mediterranean gecko (*Hemidactylus turcicus*), an introduced species found in North Central Texas, is sometimes confused with the green anole. So this might explain why the Geico gecko of TV fame looks suspiciously like our green anole, and not at all like the little brown gecko he's supposed to be! 🌸



About the Author: Nancy King is a 2003 CCMG and a writer busy with multiple professionally published works.

State Directors Board Meeting

Mary Means attended the State Directors Meeting on August 2 in College Station, Texas, as a delegate from Collin County. The meeting was recorded, and this recording is available online on the state website. Minutes of the meeting are also available online.

There were a couple pieces of information that came out of the meeting that are worth mentioning. The first item involves the Master Gardener license plates. License plates are going to change to show the new name of AgriLife Extension. A prohibitive cost has been resolved, so the plates will change. The plates with the new name will be available some time this fall, so be careful when ordering the license plates. Make sure that the plates will have the new AgriLife Extension name on them.

Another item from the meeting regards our annual conference. Dallas County has been selected as the site for the Master Gardener State Conference in 2010. Representatives from Dallas County gave a presentation during the meeting. After a time of discussion, a vote was taken and Dallas County was voted to be the site for 2010. No further information about the 2009 conference was learned be-

cause no representatives from Harrison County were in attendance.

Committee leaders encouraged participation from each county. For example, we were encouraged to turn in articles from our county for publication in the state newsletter. Counties were also encouraged to have Earth Kind demonstration gardens somewhere in their county.

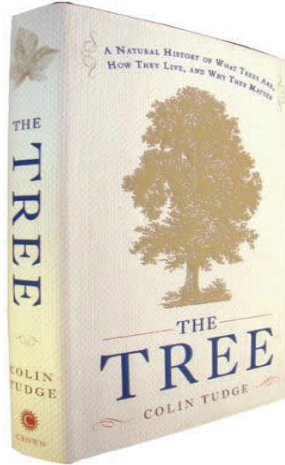
Nominated state officers for 2009 were introduced. Delegates will vote for 2009 officers at the next directors meeting in December. Several state By Laws changes were proposed at the meeting. One of the changes involves the name change to AgriLife Extension. Another change involves the use of email rather than paper mail. Delegates will vote on the changes at the next Directors Meeting, which will be held on Saturday, December 6, 2008, in College Station. 🌸

Meeting minutes can be accessed at www.texasmastergardeners.org ("Members Only" page password is "sunset", no quotation marks, all lower case). When the "Members Only" page comes up, click on "Minutes" then click on the "Aug 2, 2008".

Book Review

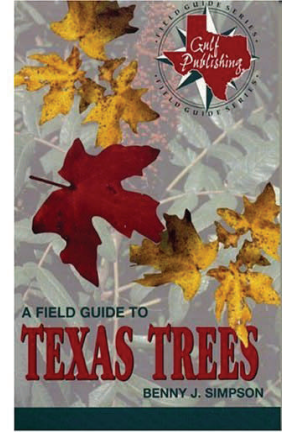
By Kathleen Brooks

The Tree: A Natural History of What Trees Are, How they Live, and Why they Matter by Colin Tudge was required reading in my daughter's college-level sustainability class. "Modern forest science can be breathtaking," says Tudge. Most Master Gardeners will feel this way about his book with its stories about reproduction and survival. Tudge studied trees of the world traveling extensively after starting his own tree nursery at age 11. The section on the adaptability of Redwoods makes them even more magnificent than previously thought. Instead of suffocating when silt piles around their trunks over their 1,000 year lifespan, they reroot themselves! And "Of Figs and Wasps" details the "wonderful mutualism" tracing this relationship back for tens of millions of years through DNA. This book contains many interesting stories, such as how "rubber" got its name, which we do not have space for here. If you are a tree-hugger be sure to pick up a copy.



A Field Guide to Texas Trees.

"For 35 years I have wandered the prairies and hills of Texas searching for trees of beauty that I feel should become part of our planned landscape." Benny Simpson wrote this in the



introduction to his book "**A Field Guide to Texas Trees.**" Many of you may not be aware of Benny Simpson's work on native trees. His book covers the natural history and distribution range of 222 species of trees considered to be native to our state. Even as he wrote this guide, he was investigating 83 additional species found in the wild. If you search the aggiehorticulture web site for trees, his name is predominant. And if you are looking in the bookstore for this excellent guide, check the "botany" area. Gardening has been the destination of choice, but botany holds treasures too. 🌸



About the Author: Kathleen Brooks, Class of 2005, lives to read, research and learn.

*"Pleasure for an hour, a bottle of wine;
pleasure for a year, marriage; pleasure
for a lifetime, a garden."*

– Chinese proverb

Trainees Up and Learning

Thirty-five new Collin County Master Gardener trainees are up bright and early every week, ready for their classroom training. They are an eager group and enjoyed a welcome luncheon on August 19. The group will continue meeting every Tuesday from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. through November 11.

Current Master Gardeners can attend the sessions for continuing education if they like. The morning sessions count for three hours, and afternoon sessions will count for two hours. Space is limited, however, so please contact Diane Sharp (rlds@airmail.net) if you plan to attend. 🌻



Garden Checklist for September/October

By: Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX. The following information was compiled from the 2007 updates available at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/newsletters/hortupdate/>.

September

- 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.
- Continue a disease spray schedule on roses as blackspot and mildew can be extremely damaging in September and October.
- 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.
- Plan to plant wildflowers in early September and October. Check supplies now and order seed for planting in open sunny areas. Consider bluebonnet, Indian paintbrush, cone-flower, fire-wheel, black-eyed Sysan, evening primrose and many others. Soils should be lightly cultivated prior to planting.
- Divide spring flowering perennials such as iris, Shasta daisy, gaillardia, rudbeckias, cannas, daylilies, violets, liriop and ajuga.

October

- October through November is an excellent time to purchase bulbs while you still have a good selection in the garden center. They may be planted at any time with the exception of tulips and hyacinths.

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- Chill tulip and hyacinth bulbs in the refrigerator until mid or late December before planting. The lower part of the refrigerator is best. Do not leave bulbs in airtight bags during refrigerated storage.
- Plant bulbs in well prepared beds so the base of the bulb is at a depth that is three times the diameter of the bulb. In sandy soil, set slightly deeper and in clay soils less deeply.
- Start collecting leaves for the compost pile. Be sure to have extra soil available so that each 6 inch layer of leaves may be covered with several inches of soil. Always wet the layer of leaves thoroughly before adding the soil. Add about one pound of a complete lawn or garden fertilizer to each layer of leaves to provide the necessary nitrogen for decomposition.
- In addition to bulbs, check your nursery or garden center for started plants of snapdragons, pinks, sweet williams, poppies, and calendulas. Planted now in south and east Texas, they will usually provide a riot of spring color; wait until late winter or early spring to plant in north Texas.
- Keep Christmas cactus in a sunny spot where night temperatures can be kept below 65 degrees F. or if you allow the plant to become excessively dry. They should also be kept in total darkness from 5:00 pm until 8:00 am for about 30 days in October to initiate flower buds.
- If you have saved seeds of your favorite plants, allow them to become air dry, then place them in an airtight container and store in the refrigerator. Be sure to label each packet carefully. Remember, seed from hybrid plants will seldom resemble the parent plant.
- Prepare beds for planting pansies when the soil has cooled. They need a well-drained soil and exposure to at least a half-day of sun. It is best to use started plants, as seeds are difficult to handle.
- If you are planning to save caladium tubers for another year, dig them in late October, and allow to dry in a well ventilated by shady area. After 7 to 20 days, remove leaves and dirt, then pack in dry peat moss, vermiculite, or similar material for storage. Pack tubers so they do not touch each other. Dust with all-purpose fungicide as you pack. Place container in an area where temperature won't drop below 50 degrees F.
- If twig girdlers have worked over your trees so that many twigs and branches are dropping, make sure these are collected and destroyed, as the eggs are deposited in that portion of the branch that drops to the ground.
- There is still time to divide and reset such perennials as phlox, violets, hollyhocks, irises, day lilies, and shasta daisies.
- October is a good time to reduce the insect and disease potential in next year's garden. Clean up the garden, removing all annuals that have completed their life cycle. Remove the tops of all herbaceous perennials that have finished flowering or as soon as frost has killed the leaves.
- Holly plants with a heavy set of fruit often suffer a fertilizer deficiency. An application of complete fertilizer late this month can be helpful and provide a head start next spring.
- Plant seeds of sweet peas in south and east Texas during October/November. Select a site where there is at least a half-day of sun and protection from north winds. 🌸

Thanks to ECHO Newsletter contributors:

Kathleen Brooks
Greg Church
Nancy Harmon
Mary Ann Hicken
Mary Nell Jackson
Mary Means
Dawn Oldfield
Katherine Ponder
Claudia Ross
Diane Sharp
Dr. William C. Welch

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sions, comments and suggestions to:

Editor, Katherine Ponder at:
katherineponder@yahoo.com



CCMGA
Texas AgriLife Extension
825 N. MacDonald Street
Suite 150
McKinney, TX 75069