



## McLennan County Master Gardeners

Horticulture Newsletter

Spring, 2007

[www.mclennanmastergardeners.org](http://www.mclennanmastergardeners.org)

Call 757-5180 for information on upcoming extension events.

### **From McLennan County Master Gardeners:**

## **EarthKind™ Rose Symposium**

The McLennan County Master Gardeners and Texas Cooperative Extension will host an EarthKind™ Rose Symposium on Saturday, April 21 in the Connally Building on the Texas State Technical College campus. The conference will be from 9am to 6pm and pre-registration is required by April 10. Fee for the day-long event is \$56 and includes all course materials and a 2 gallon potted rose that is part of the EarthKind™ rose research program. The EarthKind™ roses are high-level performers with easy maintenance: less water, less pruning, no chemicals, and in any soil type.

Speakers are:

- **Dr. Steve George**, of Texas Cooperative Extension
- **Mark Chamblee**, of Chamblee Rose Nursery in Tyler
- **Gaye Hammond**, of the Houston Rose Society
- **Steve Huddleston**, from the Fort Worth Botanic Garden
- **Rachelle Kemp**, a horticulture instructor at TSTC

Following the lectures, attendees will tour the EarthKind™ rose trial bed near the horticulture department. Local Master Gardeners planted 45 roses, 3 each of 15 varieties, in January, 2005, as part of the EarthKind™ rose research. Members have regularly monitored and documented various traits to determine if these varieties can receive the EarthKind™ designation.

A registration form for the symposium is included with this newsletter and must be returned by April 10. Call (254)757-5180 or visit [www.mclennanmastergardeners.org](http://www.mclennanmastergardeners.org).



## **Plant Sale - May 19**

The McLennan County Master Gardeners will hold their fifth annual plant sale on Saturday, May 19 from 9am to 3pm. The sale will be held on the vacant lot at 4605 West Waco Drive. Members will have plants which they have divided and transplanted from their yards. All plants will be from the local area, thus promoting plants which grow well and are adapted to this area.

Shop at reasonable prices for annuals, perennials, roses, native plants, cacti and house plants.

## **Superstar Bed At Carleen Bright Arboretum**

See pictures of the Master Gardener Superstar Bed taken by Dr. Jerry Parsons following his lecture on Superstars in October at the Arboretum. Go to [aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu](http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu) and click on "Texas Superstars". Then click on "Texas Superstar Trial Garden" and then "McLennan Co. Master Gardener Superstar Garden".

***Plant Sale!!!***

*May 19  
9am – 3pm*

*4605 West Waco Dr.*



## Hummingbirds

Hummingbirds will be arriving in the Central Texas area in March. A good way to attract hummingbirds is to have (or plant) a hummingbird garden. In addition to providing them a natural diet of nectar plus insects and spiders, it will attract them to your nearby feeders. Select a variety of plants that will bloom at various times during the season to enable you to have the hummers stay throughout the season. Since the little birds have no sense of smell, the flowers that attract them are those that are highly visible (such as the red colored flowers) and contain larger amounts of nectar. The long bill and long tongue allow them to reach the nectar while hovering over the blossoms, many of which are tubular in shape. Among the plants that attract and feed hummingbirds are lantana, Turk's Cap, mimosa, cypress vine, morning glory, four o'clocks, bee balm, impatiens, petunias, native sages and penstemmons.



In addition to food sources, hummers need convenient perching places in the garden. They spend about 80% of their time sitting on limbs, twigs, wires, etc. between feeding and fighting off rivals. Hummingbirds also need fresh, shallow, and moving water and they especially like to fly through fine sprinklers.

Feeders should be placed where they are protected from the wind and in some shade. The sugar water solution is a supplement to their natural diet. To make the solution, combine 1 part sugar and 4 parts water. Boil 1 to 2 minutes (helps retard fermentation). Cool, then store in refrigerator. Red food coloring is not needed and never use artificial sweeteners in place of white sugar. Keep the feeders clean and filled with fresh sugar water every day or two as it will spoil quickly in hot weather.

Hummingbirds are between 3-1/2 and 5 inches long and consume half their weight in sugar each day. They are miniature flycatchers, feeding on the small insects as they catch them in mid-air. The black-chinned and ruby-throated are among the varieties most frequently seen in this area.

Provide for their needs of shelter, food, and water and they will give you many hours of delightful viewing with their dives, aggressive attacks and territorial antics.

## Outdoors in the Spring

Set the mower down a notch or two to remove the winter-killed stubble. Do not fertilize until you have mowed twice, usually about mid-April. Use a slow release fertilizer with a ratio of 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 to provide the balance of nutrients needed by the turf. Once regular mowing has begun, mow frequently enough to only remove 1/3 of the leaf blade at a time. The clippings can be left on the turf to mulch and decompose or be collected and put in the compost pile. Do not waste the clippings by bagging and sending them to take up valuable landfill space.

Divide the summer and fall-blooming perennials before their growth begins. Roses should have been pruned in mid-Feb. or March (except climbers which are pruned immediately after they bloom). Apply light amounts of fertilizer to the pansies and violas for continued blooming. Plant gladiola corms every two weeks for a long season of blooms. Caladiums are planted after the soil warms - in early May.



Spring-blooming perennials can be pruned after they have bloomed.

Continue planting shrubs and trees. Dig the hole as deep as the container and 2-3 times as wide. Add back the native soil when planting and cover with three inches of mulch. Water deeply and regularly for the first two years of planting.

Most spring blooming annuals cannot tolerate cool soil temperatures and will need planting after the danger of frost is past. If purchasing potted annuals, select short, compact plants with buds, rather than in full bloom. There is a large variety of annuals available in the seed racks at the nurseries. Try some new varieties this year.



Don't let the weeds get ahead of you. Mulching the flower beds will discourage weeds, making fewer to be removed by pulling or applying a herbicide. When applying herbicides or pre-emergent weed killers, follow the label directions carefully.

Who plants a seed beneath the sod  
and waits to see, believes in God.

*Anonymous*

## Easter Lilies



The Easter Lily, the traditional time-honored flower of Easter, is highly regarded as a joyful symbol of beauty, hope and life.

The *Lilium longiflorum*, Latin name for Easter Lily, is known for its fragrance and form. Look for a plant that is pleasing from all angles, a medium-to-compact plant that is well-balanced and proportional in size.

The best selection would be a plant with one or two open or partly open blooms and three or more unopened buds of different sizes. The ripe puffy buds will open within a few days, while the tighter ones will bloom a few days after that.

As the flowers mature, remove the yellow anthers before the pollen starts to shed. This gives longer flower life and prevents the pollen from staining the white flowers. When a mature flower starts to wither, cut it off to make the plant more attractive while you enjoy the fresh, newly-opened blooms.

A healthy plant will have an abundance of dark, rich green foliage. Avoid waterlogged plants, especially if the plant looks wilted.

In the home, Easter Lilies prefer moderately cool temperatures (60-65 degrees). Avoid placing near drafts and exposure to excess heat. The plant will thrive near a window in bright, indirect natural daylight. They prefer moderately moist, well-drained soil. Water when the soil surface feels dry to a light touch, but avoid over-watering. If the pot is wrapped in decorative foil, be careful to not let the plant sit in trapped, standing water.

After the last bloom has withered, cut away and place the potted plant in a sunny location. Continue to water thoroughly as needed and fertilize with a slow-release food every six weeks. After danger of frost is past, the pots can be moved outdoors to a sunny location. To plant the Easter Lilies outside, prepare a well-drained garden bed in a sunny location with rich, organic matter. (Good drainage is the key to success with lilies, and a raised bed would be advisable.)

Plant the Easter Lily bulbs 3 inches below ground level, and mound up an additional 3 inches of topsoil over the bulb. Plant bulbs at least 12 to 18 inches apart in a hole sufficiently deep so that the bulbs can be placed in it with the roots spread out and down. Work the prepared soil in around the bulbs and roots and water in immediately.

As the original plants begin to die back, cut the stems back to the soil surface. New growth will soon emerge. You may be rewarded with a second bloom later this summer, but most likely you will have to wait until next June or July to see your Easter Lilies bloom again.

Easter Lily bulbs are surprisingly hardy even in cold climates. Provide winter protection by thickly mulching the ground and then carefully removing the mulch in the spring to allow new shoots to come up, as your Easter Lilies will keep on giving beauty, grace and fragrance in years to come.

## Tomato Tips

. . Tomatoes should be grown in an area that receives sunlight for at least six hours a day for maximum yield.

. . Good soil is essential for their growth and yield. Improve poor soil with organic matter and proper fertilization.

. . Give each plant a well-prepared space of at least two square feet to allow for mature size.

. . Select varieties that resist the common diseases. Look for VFN after the variety name that indicates that it has resistance to verticillium wilt, fusarium wilt, and nematodes.

. . Plants can be grown from seeds, with many varieties to choose from in the seed catalogs. They must be started early to be ready by planting time.

. . When buying plants, look for healthy and vigorous transplants. Use a starter solution when planting. Mix one tablespoon of a balanced fertilizer in a gallon of water or purchase a starter solution at a garden center. Place one cup of the starter solution in the hole before placing the plant in it.

. . It is best to set the transplants in the garden on a cloudy day or late in the afternoon. Protect them from high winds or cold temperatures for several days until they have acclimated to their area. Milk cartons or fabric row covers work well.



. . Almost all tomato varieties should be staked, caged or some method used to keep the fruit off the ground.

. . Tomatoes can be grown in a five-gallon container or large barrel, especially a short, stocky variety. Read the plant description on the label.

## Why Garden?

*Garden for safe, healthy food.* Reports of food-borne illnesses and contamination regularly appear in the news media. Growing concerns about pesticides in our food supply have led to an increased interest in organic gardening and availability of organic produce. An easy solution is to grow your own vegetables. Start your own garden and know the food you're eating is fresh and safe with fantastic flavor not always found in grocery store produce.

*Garden to add beauty.* A house with a nice yard is a pleasure to look at and satisfying to live in. Your home can be made more inviting simply by adding a container of colorful flowers near the front door. Trees and shrubs not only provide color and shade, but shelter for birds and wildlife. Think of the garden as another room to be enjoyed whether you are inside or outside the house.

*Garden to meet people.* Gardening is a great way to expand your social circle. Whether it is with someone who lives down the street or halfway around the world on the Internet, gardeners love to talk about plants. Surplus tomatoes, a bouquet of flowers, or an extra plant, are gifts to be shared with friends and neighbors. Meeting other gardeners through clubs, plant organizations and gardening websites is an easy way to share information and ask questions.

*Garden for emotional needs.* Gardens play an important part in our well being. A garden can serve as a tranquil retreat or a private escape from the demands of everyday life. The beauty of flowers can lift spirits, while pulling weeds can be a great release for stress and excess energy. A harvest of colorful flowers or tasty vegetables provides a sense of achievement and feeling of success. Gardening provides a spiritual connection to life. It is a miracle to take a tiny seed, nurture it, and watch it grow into a beautiful flower or delicious food for your table.

*Garden for lasting memories.* Gardening is a fun activity that can be shared with children, even if the garden is a single container or small spot in the yard. Today's kids are missing the joy of cutting a bouquet of flowers for their mom or tasting the sweetness of a cherry tomato picked right from the plant. A garden provides a way to remember a special person or time of life.

Gardening is a satisfying activity that provides a lifetime of benefits. Tending a garden contributes to improving your own living space, the environment and our planet. Take time to get outdoors and find out for yourself!



...from *The National Garden Bureau*



EarthKind™ Rose Symposium...April 21...9-6

**Pre-register by April 10**

## Ways to contact us...

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**Sincerely,**

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**Donald W Kelm  
County Extension Agent-AG  
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