



McLennan County Master Gardeners

Horticulture Newsletter

Winter, 2007

www.mclennanmastergardeners.org

Call 757-5180 for information on upcoming extension events.

From the Master Gardeners:

McLennan Extension Agent

We welcome **Shane McLellan** to the McLennan County Extension Office. Shane has been the Ag agent in Freestone County and will be replacing **Donald Kelm** who has moved to Vernon after being promoted to District Extension Administrator for the Rolling Plains District.

Master Gardener Training

Do you have an interest in gardening and sharing your knowledge? Then the Master Gardener program may be for you. A Master Gardener training course will be offered beginning in June in Waco. Classes, taught by Texas Extension Service specialists and experts, will be held on Wednesday afternoons from 1 to 5 p.m. Participants will be required to attend 60 hours of classroom training followed by 60 hours of community volunteer service during the following year.

To receive additional information contact the McLennan County Extension Office at 757-5180.

Newsletter Option

This quarterly horticulture newsletter is also available by e-mail. To receive it via e-mail, call the McLennan Co. Extension Office at 757-5180 or fill out the form at the bottom of page 3 and return to the Extension Office at 420 N. 6th Street, Waco 76701.

Pot Recycle - Help the Environment

In an effort to recycle and keep gardening pots from the landfill, the Master Gardeners are collecting plastic and/or clay pots. Empty pots may be deposited in the bin at the south back corner of the parking lot at the Extension office at 420 N. 6th or bring them to the Master Gardener plant sale in May.

Horticulture Program at BIG Conference

The 46th Annual Conference of Blackland Income Growth (BIG) will be held January 15-16 at the Waco Convention Center. The Horticulture Session will feature Dr. Dottie Woodson, Extension Program Specialist of Dallas. She will speak from 9 until noon on January 15 on "Vegetable Gardening 101" and "Water Conservation - How to Lower your Water Bill with Drip Irrigation".

The BIG Conference is open to the public. A registration fee of \$15 includes admission to the Horticulture session as well as the noon barbeque luncheon. This year's luncheon speaker will be Gene Stallings.

The BIG Conference is sponsored by Texas Cooperative Extension and the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce.

Insect Pest Management CD

An Insect Pest Management CD which contains over 150 Texas A&M Extension publications on insect pests of lawns, landscapes, gardens, trees and shrubs, fruit trees, pecans, field crops and livestock is available from the Texas Cooperative Extension Bookstore. These illustrated publications provide information on pest identification, biology, damage and details cultural and biological control options, including use of beneficial insects, and lists suggested insecticides for pest control.

The CD can be ordered at <http://tcebookstore.org>. Select "Insects" from the menu and scroll down to item "SP-198 Insect Pest Management CD". The cost is \$8.00 per CD, postage included.

Garden: One of a vast number of free outdoor restaurants operated by charity-minded amateurs in an effort to provide healthful, balanced meals for insects, birds and animals.

- Henry Beard and Roy McKie, *Gardener's Dictionary*

Oak Wilt

Oak Wilt is a major destructive tree disease caused by the fungus, *Ceratocystis fagacearum*. The fungus invades and disables the water-conducting system in susceptible trees. All oaks (*Quercus* spp.) are susceptible to oak wilt, but some are more than others. Red oaks, particularly Spanish oak (*Q. buckleyi*), Texas red oak (*Q. texana*), Shumard oak (*Q. shumardii*), and blackjack oak (*Q. marilandica*) are extremely susceptible. Live oaks (*Q. virginiana* and *Q. fusiformis*) are most seriously affected due to their tendency to grow from root sprouts and form vast interconnected root systems that allow movement or spread of the fungus between adjacent trees. Oak Wilt is also transmitted from tree to tree by the Nitidulid Beetle, commonly known as the "Sap Feeding Beetle".

It has been particularly devastating in Central Texas where thousands of oak trees have been lost over the past 20 years. Infected live oaks usually die in three months to one year. Red oaks typically die very quickly, within two weeks to several months.

Foliar symptoms, patterns of tree mortality, and the presence of fungal mats can be used as indicators of oak wilt. The fungus can be identified in the field by the presence of fungal mats which form cushions under the bark of infected trees. Leaves on diseased live oaks often develop chlorotic (yellow) veins that eventually turn necrotic (brown), a symptom called veinal necrosis. Defoliation may be rapid. Foliar symptoms of oak wilt on red oaks are less distinct. In early spring, young leaves simply wilt, turning pale green and brown. Mature leaves develop dark green water soaking symptoms or turn pale green or bronze, starting at the leaf margins and progressing inward.

Oak Wilt management depends upon early detection and prompt action by:

1. Prevention of new oak wilt infection centers
 - a. Eliminate diseased red oaks
 - b. Handle firewood properly
 - c. Paint wounds on healthy trees
2. Disruption of root connections by trenching or other measures
3. Injections of approved fungicide
4. Plant resistant trees

Avoid wounding oak trees, including pruning, from February through June, and paint all wounds and fresh stumps regardless of season.

For additional information, visit www.texasoakwilt.org or www.txforests.tamu.edu. For questions about oak wilt, contact Renee Burks, Texas Forest Service Project Forester at 817/435-2622 or rburks@tfs.tamu.edu.



Free Mulch

Free native mulch is available for use in your garden and landscape at the McLennan County Landfill. Native mulch is much better for use in our environment than pine bark, cypress or artificial mulches. In addition to breaking down and improving the viability of your soil, it is a local natural resource and reduces the landfill usage. You need a pickup or trailer or a friend who will lend you one.

1. From Waco, take Highway 84 through Woodway toward McGregor.
2. Exit at Wickson Road, turning left across Hwy. 84.
3. Immediately bear right onto Hannah Hill Road. This will take you to the landfill.
4. Stop at the scale/guard house and tell them you would like to pick up a load of mulch. They will direct you to the mulch location and call the front-end loader operator to load your pickup and/or trailer. If you have a pickup and trailer, you can get twice as much.
5. Cover your load with a tarp. All mulch must be covered before departing the landfill.
6. You do not have to stop at the scale on the way out.

Mulch can be picked up Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00-11:00 a.m. and 1:00-4:00 p.m. For any questions or additional information, call 299-2621.

Organic Products

Food trends of today demonstrate that it's more important to determine whether the chicken and the egg carry an organic label than to find out which came first. More and more supermarket floor space goes to items

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Trees are the best monuments that a man can erect to his

marked with the "o" word. And for the first time in 2005, all 50 states boasted some certified organic farmland.

Consumers have sought foods produced using ecologically sound principles for decades, but the market for organically produced foodstuffs increased once the U.S. Department of Agriculture issued a set of standards for organic certification in October 2002.

While complicated for the grower, these 5-year-old standards make shopping for organics easier. The rules are these:

- **Rule 1.** Growers cannot use irradiation, sewage sludge, or genetically modified organisms in organic production. While "sewage sludge" is self-explanatory, irradiation and modification may need more explanation. Radiation is a practice that growers have used to decrease or eliminate bacteria, insects and parasites and delay ripening. Genetic modification means improving plants by altering their genetic makeup.
- **Rule 2.** Organic items reflect the recommendations of the National Organic Standards Board concerning allowed synthetic and prohibited natural substances. The NOSA, a non-governmental board, was created in the 1990s to advise the Secretary of Agriculture in setting organic standards. The board includes businesspeople, farmers, scientists, consumer advocates and environmentalists. It receives input from the food industry before making a recommendation, and its ideas become standards only if approved by the Secretary of Agriculture.
- **Rule 3.** The standards prohibit antibiotics in organic meat and poultry.
- **Rule 4.** The standards require 100 percent organic feed for organic livestock.

that organically produced food is safer or more nutritious than conventionally produced food – only that it differs from conventionally produced food in the way it is grown, handled, and processed.



If a product bears the USDA organic seal, it is at least 95 percent organic. This seal may appear on individual vegetables or pieces of fruit or on a sign above the display. You can also see the word "organic" and the seal on packages of meat, cartons of milk or eggs, cheese, and other

single-ingredient foods.

Foods such as cereals that feature organic ingredients can carry seals that show they contain 100 percent organic ingredients; 95 to 100 percent, 70 percent, or less than 70 percent organic ingredients. Food products containing less than 70 percent organic ingredients may include the ingredients on the side panel of the package, but may not make organic claims on the front. These packages should also show the name and address of the government-approved certifier. A stiff fine of \$11,000 per violation deters people from selling or label a product "organic" when they know it does not meet USDA standards.

Consumers of organic products should be aware that the organic seal is voluntary. A grower may be 100 percent organic or mostly organic and not put the seal on his products. In 2005, all 50 states had some certified organic farmland with more than 1,900 operations in California and 192 in Texas.

 Mail to: **McLennan Co. Extension Office**
420 N. 6th St.
Waco, Tx. 76701

I would like to receive the quarterly horticulture newsletter via e-mail rather than by postal mail.

My e-mail address is: _____@_____

Before approval ensure certification are companies that handle or process the food before it gets to the local store or restaurant.

Signed: _____
 Address: _____

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Although consumers of organic products may believe they are eating healthier foods, the USDA does not claim

In many communities, 30 to 50 percent of the total water is used for landscape irrigation. Capturing rainwater for use in the landscape makes efficient use of a valuable resource, reducing water bills and reducing demand on

water supply. Rainwater is good for plants because it is free of salts and other minerals that harm root growth. As rainwater percolates into the soil, it forces salts down and away from root zones, allowing roots to grow better and making plants more drought tolerant.

Rainwater harvesting can be used in both large-scale landscapes and in small residential landscapes by capturing, diverting, and storing rainwater for later use. A rainwater harvesting system consists of the supply (rainfall), the demand (water needed by plants or wildlife, livestock or people), and a system for collecting water and moving it.



A simple collection system for a homeowner can be made from a 20-50 gallon trash can or barrel with a lid. Information on rainwater harvesting and making rain collection barrels may

be found on <http://rainwaterharvesting.tamu.edu> and www.plantanswers.com/water_barrels.htm.

Checklist For Winter:

- Late December through February is usually the best time to prune woody plants.
- Now is the time to plant trees and shrubs.
- Cool-season bedding plants such as pansies, violas, stock, snapdragons and dianthus can still be planted.
- Protect the lawn from excessive winter damage by providing irrigation during dry periods.
- If you need to transplant trees or shrubs, do it now while they are dormant and will have time to re-establish a root system before the spring growth begins. Prune the tops of bare-rooted woody plants back at least one-third to compensate for the loss of roots when digging the plant.
- Drain gasoline from power tools and run the engine until fuel in the carburetor is used up.
- Prune deciduous trees (DO NOT TOP) while you can see damaged or rubbing limbs and misshaped parts.
- Prune hybrid tea and ever-blooming roses in mid-February. Do not prune climbing roses until after they have bloomed.
- Take advantage of good weather days to prepare the garden beds for spring planting. Work in any needed organic matter.
- Cool weather vegetables can be planted in January (collards, asparagus crowns, lettuce, spinach, onion transplants)
- Carrots, radishes, beets, mustard, turnips can

be planted in February along with other cool weather vegetables. Stagger the planting times so that all won't be ready for harvest at the same time.

- Treat loopers on cabbage, kale and lettuce with a product containing Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*)
- Divide fall-blooming plants (chrysanthemums, asters, obedient plant). Summer-blooming bulbs can be divided and reset now. Share excess with your neighbors and gardening friends.
- Feed houseplants every three or four times that you water them.
- Apply dormant oil to scale-prone plants. Follow directions on the label.

Ways to contact us...

Mail: **Texas Cooperative Extension
420 North 6th St.
Waco, TX 76701**

Phone: **254-757-5180**
Fax: **254-757-5097**
E-mail: **mclennan@ag.tamu.edu**
Website: **mclennan-tx.tamu.edu**

Sincerely,

**Shane McLellan
County Extension Agent-AG
McLennan County**