



ECHO



Texas AgriLife's Community Horticultural Outreach

The Green Up: Spring 2011

May/June 2011

As usual it has turned out to be another busy gardening season.

We are busy repairing new flower beds and vegetable gardens, installing new plants to bring color to our landscapes, and performing the annual maintenance of our existing landscapes. This spring has brought new educational programs, gardening events, research and demonstration projects for the public and Master Gardeners.



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.

The first annual Garden Show was a major undertaking for our organization, but it turned out to be a hit with the public and our exhibitors. The official number of participants neared 2500, but we are confident there were more there for the two-day event. We had around 70 outstanding exhibitor booths and around 30 educational presentations, and excellent speakers. The educational classes attracted nearly 1,000 participants. The planning committee, especially Jim and Judy Ewoldsen, Joyce and John Paul Cleary, David Spadoni, and others deserve a major thank you from each of our members for job well done! Thank you to the 180 + volunteers that helped to make the event a success.

The Basic Ag Field Day was a successful event, with numerous master gardeners helping and participating in workshops. The horticulture program consisted of constructing a hoop house (non-heated greenhouse) over our newly constructed Earth-Kind Vegetable Research Garden. The participants enjoyed the education and hand-on nature of the program.

The annual Collin County Master Gardener Plant Sale went off without a hitch, raising funds to support our education, research, demonstration, and outreach projects throughout the county. The

(Continued on next page)

In this issue:

- Dr. Greg.....Pg 1, 2*
- Honey's Wilder Side.....Pg 2*
- Book Review.....Pg 3*
- The Garden Show.....Pgs 4, 5, 6*
- CCMGA Plant Sale Recap.....Pg 7*
- Ground Orchids.....Pgs 8, 9, 10*
- Collin County Rose Society Annual Tour.....Pg. 11*
- Blue Moon Gardens Tour.....Pgs 12, 13*
- Youth Education Program.....Pgs 14, 15*
- Gardener's Checklist.....Pgs 16, 17*
- Contributors.....Pg 18*



The Green-Up: Spring 2011

(Continued from previous page)

selection and quality of plants was again second to none, and we sold 6,000 plants during the five hour event.

I'm happy to report that our Earth-Kind Research projects are proceeding as planned this spring. We have installed a majority of the plants in the Phase Two testing of perennials. The Earth-Kind Crape Myrtle and Rose Research Gardens is ready for planting, with irrigation installed and operational. The gardens should be planting by the first week in May. David Spadoni and I could really use your help completing these projects. The best way to help is just get involved. It is too difficult to set a schedule of volunteer activities because we are constantly adjusting our schedule based on progress. Contact either of us if you want to help with plant installation, irrigation, sign making, and much more.
Your Horticulture Agent,



Dr. Greg Church 🌸

' I went out in the Spring
to gather the young herbs.
So many petals were falling,
drifting in confused flight,
that I lost my way.'

Ki no Tsurayuki

WHAT'S THAT ON MY LAMB CHOP?

-Matthew Amster-Burton

Boyle + Gardner for *The Wall Street Journal*

New pairings play up honey's wilder side

HONEY HAS MOVED BEYOND the realm of tea parties. Like chocolate and beer, it's reasserting itself as an artisanal product. Snazzy gourmet varieties are showing up in markets and on entrée plates and cheese carts at restaurants. The honeys on offer come in a variety of textures, and flavors that bear little resemblance to the Golden Blossom of our childhood. As a result, chefs are drizzling honey on everything from grilled eggplant to mackerel. The dark, smoky honeys, such as chestnut and buckwheat, have grownup flavors. "I think of them as the men of honey," says Liz Thorpe of Murray's Cheese in Manhattan, who likes to drizzle musky chestnut honey on her goat cheese.

Peas + wildflower honeycomb Inspired by a childhood rhyme, Gabrielle Hamilton serves peas, horseradish, and honeycomb at Prune in New York. Farm-house Honeycomb, \$14, redbee.com

Fried/grilled eggplant + buckwheat honey At Seattle's Poppy, the addictive eggplant fries are anointed with just a touch of dark, savory buckwheat honey. New York State Buckwheat Honey, \$12, redbee.com

Blue cheese + blueberry honey The astringent quality of blueberry honey cuts through the richness of a good blue. Blueberry Blossom Honey, \$12, redbee.com

Foie gras + lavender honey Two French delicacies that taste great together. Forget the usual sweet, fruit-based pairings for foie gras and try this deeply fragrant honey. Catalanian Wild Lavender Honey from Murray's Cheese, \$7, murrayscheese.com

Aged cheddar + star thistle honey Star thistle honey's mellow sweetness takes the edge off an extra-sharp cheddar. Pennsylvania Star Thistle honey, \$11, redbee.com.

Lamb chops + greek fir honey Mix this resinous honey with lemon juice and use as a marinade for lamb, suggests author and beekeeper Marina Marchese. Fir of Vytina Honey, \$12, beelimitless.com

Fresh goat cheese + chestnut honey "Like putting milk in your coffee," say Liz Thorpe of Murray's Cheese. The musky honey and light, fresh cheese only seem like an odd couple until you taste them together. Chestnut Honey, \$17, zingermans.com

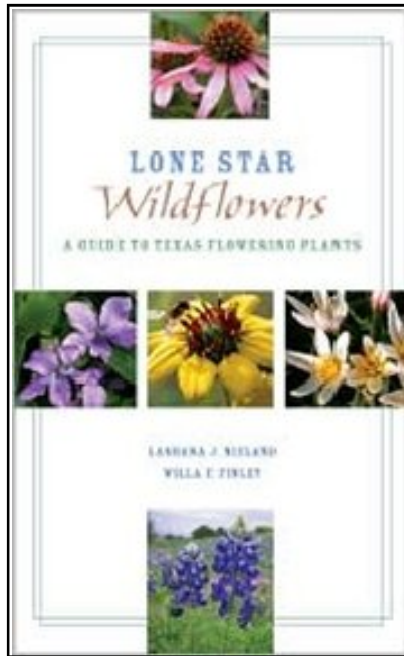


Book Review

Mary Means

Lone Star Wildflowers: A Guide to Texas Flowering Plants

by Lashara J. Nieland and Willa F. Finley



Here is a wildflower book with a west Texas attitude and written by a couple of biology teachers who are passionate about their jobs. Starting out as biology lab projects to help the students learn about wildflowers turned into this book.

Lone Star Wildflowers contains pictures and descriptions of flowers in Texas. A beginning chapter names dozens of plant families and describes the general characteristics of each. Throughout the book, family relationships are mentioned. The rest of the chapters are organized by plant color: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink and white. Within each color chapter, the plants are arranged by plant family. Plant descriptions include their characteristics which are similar throughout their family. At the end of each chapter, there is a section called "Exploring Further". Here there more are

pictures of some of the plants in the chapter. The picture may be a close-up of a plant's fruit, or its leaf structure.

Each plant description begins by explaining origins of botanical and common names for the plant. For example "Monarda" was named for Nicholas Monardes, a Spanish physician. "Malvaviscus" means sticky mallow. A plant's origins are usually discussed. For example, coneflower is a Texas native, but red clover was brought to us by the British. Sometimes, chemicals in a plant are mentioned. For example, field bindweeds contain proteoglycans which can be effective in shrinking tumors. Honeybees feeding on the nectar of Mexican buckeye will be killed. Much of the plant description tells how the plant is used, both historically and in modern times. For example, Pueblo and Apache Indians use feather dalea to make a tea to ease pain. Young women in ancient Athens would wear leaves of the vitex shrub because it suppressed sexual desire. Because of its high starch and oil content, buffalo gourd is presently being considered as a food source.

"Lone Star Wildflowers" was published in 2009 by Texas Tech University Press. There is a nine-page bibliography in the back of the book. Authors cited include Geyata Ajilvsgi, Marshall Enquist, the Loughmiller's, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Benny Simpson, the Wasowski's, and William Welch. This book may be used as a field guide. It is the size and weight of a field guide, but it also includes the science and lore of flowers. Gardeners who enjoy a botanical point of view with their plants will find this book enriching. 🌸



CCMGA's First Annual Garden Show

By Jim Ewoldsen

Mix 2477 residents and 57 vendors together to get the First Annual Garden Show by Collin County Master Gardeners.



chickens" joined the show early Saturday afternoon to enlighten us on the fun and interesting side of local gardening. Mariana stayed around for several hours after her talk to catch



joined Texas AgriLife experts dispensing research based horticulture wisdom to our neighbors. Steve George spoke on EarthKind roses; Dotty Woodson on water conservation; Kim Schofield on IPM; and our own Greg Church spoke on turf grass and also on the Perennial Research Gardens at Myers Park.

The show opened at 9:00 A.M. on Saturday, March 26th, and there were already over 50 residents in line waiting for the opening presentation on vegetable gardening. There were 23 presentations made with over 1100 people sitting in to learn about green gardening in Collin County.

Mariana Green and her two "city chickens" joined the show early Saturday afternoon to enlighten us on the fun and interesting side of local gardening. Mariana stayed around for several hours after her talk to catch up on the current and future work CCMGA is performing at Myers Park and Event Center. Her ladies hung out in the show office and even laid an egg to the delight of the volunteers who were chick sitting.

Buddy Lee drove over from Southeast Louisiana to tell everyone the processes he uses in hybridizing plants. He even gave away Encore Azaleas to audience members who could correctly answer questions he posed during his presentation. Buddy was followed by Neil Sperry, our local gardening personality. Neil drew a standing room only crowd and thrilled the audience with his talk.

Thirteen Master Gardeners

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**CCMGA's First Annual Garden Show***(Continued from the previous page)*

A favorite site at the show was the Kids Corner. There were multiple tables loaded with activities designed to teach our younger gardeners some of the secrets of good gardening. The Master Gardeners working in the area enjoyed the smiles of wonder on so many bright faces.



Every vendor wants to return for next year's show because each one was treated well and made to feel special by the volunteers working at the show.

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CCMGA's First Annual Garden Show

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The show was special for Collin County residents because it was truly a Garden Show.

The show was special to all of us because we worked together as a team to make a special weekend we will remember for many years. 🌱



We extend a huge Texas thank you to Ag-Power, our title sponsor. We also give thanks to **Shades of Green, Chambersville Tree Farm, Southern Living Plant Collection, Encore Azaleas, Texas Pure, and Forest Grove Nursery** for all your support. You assisted in enabling us to bring together a successful Garden Show.

Our CCMGA Annual Plant Sale: Absolutely The Best Time of the Year

By Renee Ferguson



Our 8th annual plant sale was once again a huge success. This year we had over 6000 plants to share with the public.

Our first customer showed up at 7:06 for the sale that started at 9:00. She drove from Ft. Worth! Her explanation was

that our plants always outperformed any she bought anywhere else.

In addition to the plants, we also had a kids' activity, information booth, and three educational talks for the public to enjoy. The Youth Education committee had a wonderful array of activities for the kiddies. The information Booth and Speakers Bureau again did themselves proud. Also, the Hospitality committee worked hard to keep us hydrated and fed. We had a large cast of volunteers for the setup day as well as the sale day. Many worked both days. Everyone had a smile and was eager to do whatever task was necessary to make the sale a success.



Our volunteers truly make me proud to part of this organization. Thanks to all of you for making our sale successful. Now, to start planning for the 9th annual sale! But I think we'll take a few weeks off first if that's okay. 🌸

Orchids: Make Mine Perennial

-Mary Nell Jackson



She thrust yesterday's newspaper, quickly wrapped in a cone shape, into my hands.

The dirt clods from the hole in the cone were falling onto my feet. It was her usual gesture, a cherished pass-along plant from her garden gifted to me in a non-ceremonial way. I had come to acknowledge these treasured offerings and accepted with anticipation.

I carefully opened the now damp newspaper, and discovered the three unremarkable tubers that were attached to small, palm shaped green pleated leaves. My friend had divided her ground orchids to share. I had never heard of such a plant and my immediate reaction was remorse for the gift of two exotic orchids that had wound up in my compost bin some years ago. Would these meet the same fate?

She could see I was hesitating and quickly explained that these were not what I thought but were plants that would easily grow outdoors in the garden.

This incident happened about six years ago and every spring at their bloom time I think of my friend who shared her pass along orchids with me. I have continued to share them with my gardening friends and have had enough to move around in my garden for delightful spring color. This year alone I received three email photos of these bright beauties from friends who felt their photo was thanks enough. Who could ask for a better gift of lovely plants that multiply and need dividing about every 3 to 4 years?



She could see I was hesitating and quickly explained that these were not what I thought but easy to grow plants outdoors in the garden. -Mary Nell Jackson

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Orchids: Make Mine Perennial*(Continued from the previous page)*

I have learned over the years that this plant is also known as Forest Orchid, Hyacinth Orchid, Striped *Bletilla*, Hardy Orchid or Urn Orchid. The plant comes from China, Japan, Taiwan and Vietnam. The Encyclopedia of Herbs author, Deni Bown says it was first described in Chinese medicine as early as c. AD500 and was used as a wound herb.

The plant's botanical name is *Bletilla striata*, pronounced bleh-TEE-ya stree-AH-ta. It was named for the Spanish botanist and pharmacist, Don Luis Blet. The genus has eight species but the three most common ones are the pink, white, and yellow varieties. The pink *Bletilla striata* looks purple to most but it is referred to as pink. In Japan its name is shi-ran meaning purple orchid. This plant is of the family *Orchidaceae*. It has the distinction of being one of the first orchids in cultivation in England dating from around 1794. When you see this plant in bloom you are reminded of the common orchid corsages (Cattleyas) however, the bloom is about 1/3 the size of the large orchid. (approximately 1 1/2 inch blooms)

The growing conditions of this spring beauty are welcomed by gardeners who have lots of shady areas. These plants do well in North Texas but can be grown with winter mulch possibly in Zone 5. The great thing about this little outdoor perennial orchid is it can be grown in ground or a pot.



It can tolerate a wide range of temperatures; my research explained *Bletilla* needs to experience a winter **vernalizing** in order to bloom. This winter the chilling period certainly was a long one for vernalizing these little plants. It will tolerate full sun in the morning and late afternoon.

The bulbs are pseudobulbs resembling spreading corms and sit at ground

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Orchids: Make Mine Perennial*(Continued from the previous page)*

level. A pseudobulb applies to the orchid family and is specific to certain groups of epiphytic orchids. Pseudobulbs are short lived (1-5 years) but continue to produce from the growing tip of the rhizome.

Adequate water is a must during its growing season. A good rich soil makes this orchid happy. A woodland setting is a perfect spot for it to grow. It will naturalize over time if the conditions are good, amend the soil and feed it to accomplish optimum growth. If the conditions are not good this plant will not naturalize; in that case you must move these orchids to a setting with richer soil, less sun and perhaps better drainage.

The plant has no serious insect or disease problems but I have read that slugs and snails can find their way to snack on it. Some interesting



information I found in my research is that it is squirrel resistant and butterflies are attracted to the plant; I would also think moths would be drawn to it as well. It does have a slight fragrance but not a powerful one. Bloom times may vary but I find mine usually are early spring bloomers and began their show in late March to early April. The blooms can last up to a month! The two other varieties are a white variety, *Bletilla striate* 'alba' and the yellow one is *Bletilla* 'orhracea'.

I am certain that I will be searching for the white and yellow varieties as well as a few I've read about that are difficult to obtain. For now I will enjoy my purple orchids in the garden and not struggle with those fancy indoor ones that everyone else seems to grow with little effort.



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Collin County Rose Society Annual Garden Tour

Celebrate Spring and Mothers' Day in four distinctive private gardens that will be open to the public on Saturday and Sunday, May 7 and 8.

Discover a variety of garden styles and interpretations with roses of all types accompanied by blooming spring perennials. Bring your gardening questions and your cameras. We invite you to join us, admire the gardens, learn, linger, smell the roses, and meet new friends. Two of the gardens are in Plano, one is in Richardson and one is in Lucas. You will find maps and detailed directions to each garden at www.collincountyrosesociety.org or call Cindy Graham at 214-912-5656.

The Garden tour is Saturday, May 7, from 10 AM until 4 PM and Sunday, May 8, from noon until 4 PM. Your \$10 ticket will admit you to all four gardens which you may view in any order at your leisure. Purchase tickets in advance at www.collincountyrosesociety.org or at any of the gardens on the days of the Garden Tour.



Blue Moon Gardens Tour

By Mary Means



Collin County Master Gardeners traveled into east Texas to visit to Blue Moon Gardens

in late April. Located about equally between Canton, Tyler, and Athens, the garden center specializes in unique and beautiful plants.

We gathered in the education building in the back of the display area and were treated to re-

freshments of raspberry lavender bars, mint lavender lemonade, and coffee. Co-owner Mary Wilhite greeted us and told us about the history of Blue Moon Gardens. Years ago, she and Sharon Smith started a business together growing herbs in their back yards for the wholesale market. When the farmhouse on this location became available for sale in 1992, they bought the property and began a retail business. Mary finished her talk by telling us about the different kinds of lavender that they offer for sale at Blue Moon Gardens. Afterwards, we browsed through the six acre garden center enjoying the plants, scenery, and making our purchases.

The original farmhouse is now a gift shop offering candles, soaps, lotions, decorative home/garden accents, wind chimes, and other items. A farmhouse kitchen of the past is now the dwelling for fairy garden accessories. Miniature fountains, trellises, pots, pebbles, and dozens of other items can be purchased.



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Blue Moon Gardens Tour*(Continued from previous page)*

Down a hill to the west is the shade garden. Hundreds of plants including Japanese maples and hostas are available for sale. It might be noted that the garden center offers dozens of Japanese maples in one and two gallon pots, making them available for purchase at reasonable prices.

Galvanized steel tubs are filled with soil, plants and accessories to create fairy villages. These

miniature gardens are scattered throughout the garden center. Sherry and Connie design the fairy gardens. Classes are offered on fairy gardens. Thirteen greenhouses are located in the back of the property where many of the plants are grown for the garden center. Other plants are purchased from local growers. Some plants are brought in from the west coast.



After our garden visit, we drove to nearby Edom for lunch at the historic Shed Café. Of the 27 Master Gardeners who attended the field trip, 20 had never visited Blue Moon Gardens before this visit. All enjoyed the experience equally.

Thank you to Joanne and Becky for another fabulous field trip.



Growing More than Plants: Youth Education Program

By Katherine Ponder

You may be like me: I've heard about Junior Master Gardeners for years, seen some announcements about them, listened to appeals for help, and thought how nice it all is. Then I attended some events where our Youth Education team was up and running. I realized it's not just nice. It's amazing!

Kathleen Brooks and Kathy Ward have pulled together a team of enthusiastic volunteers who go forth into the community and educate children throughout the area. They recently showed off their methods at our CCMGA Garden Show and Plant Sale. Some 24 Master Gardeners volunteered in the Kid's Corner at the Garden Show. They had centers where children could make egg-crate caterpillars, plant grass and sunflower seeds, create cute



coffee-filter butterflies, smell herbs, see bugs, and much more. Watching the kids' faces showed me just how intrigued they are by nature. All of the activities and displays at both shows were inspired by JMG projects and lessons.

In between sessions of helping to glue on googly eyes, I chatted with Kathleen and Kathy about what they've been doing with the program. They have worked with many Girl Scout troops, even leading an entire workshop to

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Growing More than Plants: Youth Education Program

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help Junior Girl Scouts earn the "Outdoor Creativity" badge. They will trek to individual troop meetings with supplies in hand to spread the gospel of horticulture. (Just ask them how excited and messy kindergarten girls get when faced with potting soil!) The JMG program has also been well-represented at area schools, with Kathleen and Kathy providing references to the online JMG resources. And community events also bring out the Youth Education volunteers. Both ladies say their garages are packed with supplies such as pinecones, potting soil, seed, and displays – much to husbands' chagrin.

As the activity resumed at the plant sale and the Garden Show, I was quite impressed by the adults' level of interest as well. We had home-school parents, Boy and Girl Scout leaders, church youth group ministry members, a running group leader (who entertains children while parents run), teachers, and daycare workers stop by to get ideas. They were all very excited and enthusiastic about what they saw. The only downside I saw to all of this was that it was the first time they'd heard of JMG. That in and of itself surprised and saddened me. So please take this as a call to action:

1. Tell your friends about the Youth Education program.

They may have children, grandchildren, neighbors, or friends who would be interested. There are lots of resources available at www.jmgkids.us/ and on our website at <http://ccmgatx.org/Association/Youth.asp>

2. Get involved yourself.

The Youth Education team can always use volunteers. And keep it in mind that it is so much fun! When else do you get to play with pipe cleaners and glue without feeling silly? And, I've always said that gardeners are the nicest people. Based on my recent experience, I'd also say that kids who are interested in gardening are shaping up to be *more* of the nicest people. All the little ones I saw were sweet, well-behaved (albeit excited!), respectful and polite. Contact Kathleen Brooks if you're interested in helping out!



Garden Checklist for May/June

By Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX. The following information was compiled from the 2010 updates available at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/newsletters/hortupdate/>.

May:

- Consider white rain lilies (*Zephyranthes candida*) as a natural border in the flower bed. They are almost indestructible in zone 8 conditions.
- Now is a good time to create summer containers exhibiting succulents such as echeverias, sedums or house leeks (sempervivums). The larger rosettes of the echeverias and sempervivums may be situated in the container with edgings of smaller-leaved sedums.
- Cut off old blossoms on spring flowering annuals, such as pansies, snapdragons, stock and calendulas, to prolong the flowering season.
- Continue to fertilize roses every four to six weeks with small amounts of a balanced fertilizer.
- Allow foliage of spring flowering bulbs to mature and yellow before removing.
- Set out plants of hybrid portulaca (purslane) in sunny areas. Make rooted cuttings of your favorite colors by placing 3 to 4 inch stems in moist, sandy soils.
- It is not too late to sow directly into the soil seeds of sunflower, zinnia, morning glory, portulaca, marigold, cosmos, periwinkles and gourds. Achimenes, cannas, dahlias and other summer flowering bulbs can also be planted in May.
- Pinch back the terminal growth on newly planted annual and perennial plants. This will result in shorter, more compact, better branched plants with more flowers.
- Plant caladium tubers, petunias, impatiens, begonias and torenias in well prepared shady areas.
- Make cuttings of your favorite chrysanthemums and root them in a mixture of sand and peat moss. Cover cutting box with plastic and place in shaded area for 5 to 6 days to prevent wilting.
- Replace or replenish mulch materials in flower beds and shrub borders to conserve moisture and reduce weed growth.
- Remove or cut back frost-damaged crape myrtle and other ornamentals as soon as the extent of the injury can be determined.



June:

Take a critical look at your landscape at the height of summer development. Make notes of any plants that need replacement, overgrown plants that need to be removed, better arrangements for your landscape, and possible activity areas that can be enjoyed by family members. These are good projects for next winter.

Perennial Echinaceas

- Check for insects and diseases. Spider mites can be especially troublesome at this time. Insecticidal soaps or labelled miticides can be helpful in their control.

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Garden Checklist for May/June*(Continued from last page)*

- The best way to conserve garden moisture is mulching. A good mulch not only retains valuable moisture needed for plant growth, but also improves overall gardening success.
- Hand pull or hoe weeds before they mature and produce seed.
- Mulches are usually applied 2- to 6-inches deep, depending on the material used. In general, the coarser the material, the deeper the mulch. For example, a 2-inch layer of cotton seed hulls will have about the same mulching effect as 6 inches of oat straw or 4 inches of coastal bermuda hay.
- Removing faded flowers from the plant before it sets seed will keep plants growing and producing more flowers. A light application of fertilizer every four to six weeks will also be helpful.
- Houseplants can be moved outside this month. Sink the pots in a cool, shaded garden bed to prevent them from drying out too quickly. Water pots, container plants and hanging baskets often. Monthly feeding with a household fertilizer encourages continued growth.
- Now is the time to plan for next spring. Consider digging and dividing any crowded spring bulbs. Once bulbs have matured and the foliage has turned brown, it is time to spade them up and thin out the stand. Crowded bulbs produce fewer and smaller blooms. They usually need thinning every three to four years. Replant immediately in prepared soils.
- June is the month to select day lily varieties as they reach their peak bloom.
- Fertilize rose beds every four to six weeks. Apply small amounts of fertilizer high in nitrogen immediately after a flush of bloom or every four to six weeks.
- There is still time to plant some of the heat-tolerant summer annuals. You can direct-seed zinnias and portulaca, and purchase periwinkle, salvia, marigold and purslane plants for transplanting. Be sure to water transplants adequately until roots become established.
- Pinch back chrysanthemums, Mexican marigold mint, autumn asters and other late summer and fall blooming annuals to prevent the necessity for staking.
- Reblooming salvias such as *Salvia greggii* and *S. farinacea* should be pruned back periodically during the summer. To make the job easier use hedging shears and remove only the spent flowers and a few inches of stem below. Fall blooming perennials such as Mexican marigold mint (*Tagetes lucida*), chrysanthemums, physostegia, and *Salvia leucantha* (Mexican bush sage) should be pruned in the same manner during the summer to keep them compact, reducing the need for staking. This type of pruning should be completed prior to September 1st, since flower buds begin forming about that time.



Thanks to ECHO Newsletter contributors:

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The submission deadline for the July/
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