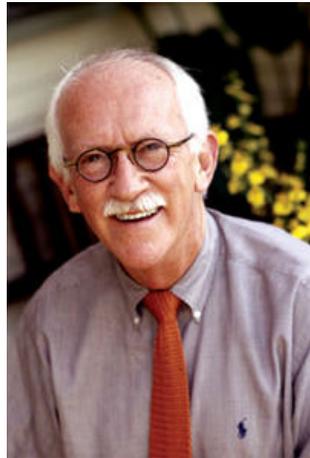


Henderson County Master Gardener

“The Inside Dirt”

Calling All Gardeners!!! 9th Annual Spring Conference Jane Fox

The Henderson County Master Gardeners are excited about their 9th Annual Spring Conference to be held on April 16th, 2009. This year we are happy to have as our guest speaker, renowned gardener and editor at large for "Better Homes and Gardens" magazine, Elvin McDonald. He is the author, editor, photographer, or publisher of hundreds of gardening books, and his work has earned him the nickname, "Dean of American Garden Editors." His most recent book, Texas Public Gardens, was published in 2008, and includes a feature on the East Texas Arboretum and Botanical Garden. He has amassed many awards and designed gardens for celebrities and public agencies across the country. This gifted speaker will address us on "Why I Love to Garden" and promises to be both entertaining and educational.



We are changing our venue this year and are excited to be spending the evening at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Conference Center. The conference will open at 6:00 PM with a plant sale and silent auction. We are excited to have a select group of vendors that will offer you different goodies for your garden and home. An added extra this year is the live auction with tempting surprises. Dinner will be catered by Chef Jackson York from the Edom Bakery & Grill and will be served at 6:30. Our menu choices will include Broccoli Stuffed Chicken Breasts with Parmesan sauce and Pacific Salmon Filet with a lemon butter sauce. The dessert display will include all the wonderful assortment found at the bakery...brownies, biscotti, fudge walnut clusters and cream puffs. Anyone who has visited Edom Bakery knows what a treat we are promised.

The 9th Annual Spring Conference is shaping up to be an enjoyable, educational evening for all. Each Henderson County Master Gardener is working hard to make this a special event. Sherry Bitz and Michael Sambogna are joining their talents to create a country garden on each table. Anyone wanting tickets can call any Master Gardener or purchase them at Athens Organic Supply, Blue Moon Gardens, First State Bank and First National Bank or by calling Texas AgriLife Extension office at 903-675-6130. The cost for the conference is only \$20.00 which includes dinner and all events. Come and join us for a remarkable Thursday evening in April.

A Lily by Any Other Name Dawnvolynn Calahan

A lily by any other name might just be *hemerocallis*, the wonderful daylily. The daylily is known to have been grown in China as early as 2700 B.C. and made its way to Europe in the 1500's. About twenty species have been identified to date. Amazingly, through the dedication of hybridizers in the field and the miracle of gene manipulation in the laboratory, at least 70,000 named cultivars have resulted from breeding the original twenty species. New ones are introduced almost daily.

The old homestead varieties of daylilies are known by many gardeners to be nearly indestructible. While new cultivars are still easy to grow in almost any soil and every climate with very few pests and diseases, they are not quite as hardy as the old reliable "ditch lilies." The trade-off is a whole new aura of benefits such as new flower colors and patterns, new flower sizes that range from thimbles to dinner plates, unusual shapes and forms (like doubles), fragrances, and bloom times that are earlier and later and repeating.

Daylilies are tough little workers that gardeners should consider adding to their landscape to do jobs that many less interesting plants currently perform. Many daylily cultivars are evergreen in our climate and form a durable and attractive clump that cascades in a way that makes it easy to mow around, making them perfect substitutes for monkey grasses and mondo grasses used to edge beds and serve as groundcovers. The height and form of the daylily

foliage is also well suited to transition between shrubs and low growing annuals.

Finally, the varied length of the flower scapes (stems) range from just inches to over four feet, making it possible to plant daylilies among spring blooming bulbs and other perennials to cover less attractive foliage in the off season. One cannot overlook the fact that the daylily can hold its own in both mass plantings and as a highlighted specimen plant in beds or in containers.



The biggest misconception about daylilies is that they bloom for one day and then are done. While it is true that each individual bloom lasts for one day, each plant may produce multiple stems with as many as forty blooms per stem. Many cultivars put on successive blooms again later in the season. My best bloomer last summer, Chorus Line, was in constant bloom for nearly ten weeks. Much effort is put toward breeding plants that have more blooms for a longer period.

I would encourage every gardener to plant a few daylilies as soon as you possibly can. If you aren't happy with the way they look —just eat them! Yes, that's right, the versatile daylily is even edible; a good source of Vitamins C and A.

What Is Happening In The Dream Garden

Margaret Dansby

I first read about the “Peggy Martin Rose” in “*Southern Living Magazine*.” The story is that this old rose was one of two plants in Peggy Martin’s garden to survive the destruction of Hurricane Katrina. The garden was located in Plaquemines Parish a few miles across the Mississippi River from New Orleans. (The other plant was a crinum.) When Katrina struck in August 2005 the rose and crinum were inundated in 20 feet of salt water. Extensive research has failed to find a proper name for the rose.

Dr. Bill Welch gathered cuttings and then shared cuttings

of this rose with six growers. Each of these growers has pledged to donate \$1 per plant sold to assist in garden restoration projects in New Orleans.

The Peggy Martin rose, also known as the Hurricane Katrina Rose, is a vigorous climber that can easily reach 15 plus feet. It bears clusters of pink-shaded flowers blooming from spring to fall, and it is promoted as a thornless rose.

When I visited King’s Nursery in Tenaha, looking for special plants for our Master Gardener’s “Dream Garden”, I was again introduced enthusiastically by Aubrey King to this Peggy Martin Rose and its story.

Immediately, I recognized that this rose met two of my goals for our Dream Garden, beauty and fragrance. So a gullible lover of a good story and a beautiful plant, I bought this rose and its story.

We now have a pair of Peggy Martin roses growing on our front arbor to welcome each passing visitor with its flowing green vines, fragrance and the beauty of pink clusters of roses. Enjoy!

Wild Pear Trees

Margaret Dansby

If you travel around Athens in the early spring, especially down Hwy. 175 East and the loop, you have probably enjoyed the display of white flowering trees scattered through the landscape and perhaps wondered what they are. These beautiful trees with dense showy white blossoms resembling a winter wonderland are wild pear trees.

Between 1940-1970 there was a thriving nursery on highway 175 East called Daniel’s Nursery. The gentleman there would use strong healthy wild pear trees as his host plant as he to grafted fruit trees for sale. After many years the wind and birds have scattered seeds from the wild pear trees though out the Athens area.

So for a short time in the spring, we get to enjoy the white display of beauty as we travel around Athens. Then as quickly as they appear the beautiful white tree dissolve in the night and are gone only to reappear again next spring.

A Word From the President

Jane Fox

It's my 6th year in East Texas and finally I am getting the vegetable garden under way. The dirt has been tilled; the rows made; the onions are in. Now I am waiting for the warmer weather to come so the new tender plants can go into the ground. Next year I will start the seedlings inside, but this year I'm just glad to have the garden. I have gardened long enough to know that no matter what the experts tell you, the last frost will come after the vegetables are in the ground. Probably that cold snap will happen around Easter when other activities make it just a little more difficult to go out after dark in the cold wind and cover the new plants. Still, I am excited to have my vegetables growing.

I know that in the past it has seemed just as cost effective to go to the market and purchase the vegetables that you wanted for dinner. Vegetable gardening was more of a hobby, a source of fun, and a reason to brag. Everyone knows that the salad is fresher from the garden to the table, the asparagus taste best on the way back to the kitchen, and the tomatoes are inviting sitting on the counter. However, today in the sputtering economy we may be seeing vegetable gardening more than just a hobby. I've been hearing the term "Victory Garden" over and over. Eleanor Roosevelt planted one on the grounds of the White House in 1943 and millions of Americans followed her example. Michelle Obama has joined the bandwagon. A vegetable garden will again be planted at the White House to encourage others to do the same. All you need is some basic information about soil, and plot size, and patience to watch your efforts grow.

A vegetable garden can start in a container. It can be a flower bed cleared for a new use. It can be a 30 X 30 plot that will feed the family for a year. Mine is not that large. First time growers should probably think about a plot that is 10 or 12 square feet. To begin I would think about what my family likes to eat. My new garden will have many more asparagus plants because the few plants in my last garden never rendered enough to make it to 4 dinner plates. You want to plant what you will use and be able to preserve. Last year I put 6 eggplant in a corner of what I knew would be the future vegetable garden, and I could have fed the county. That mistake will be avoided this time.

After determining size you must think about site. Your garden should be near the house, away from trees and in a sunny location. The trees take the garden's sun and also they may deprive it of some nutrients. Having it closer to the house not only makes it easier to harvest, but also is a deterrent to deer and other visitors in the night. The soil should be well drained since that is a must for vegetables. Once you have chosen a good location make a sketch of your garden. Remember it can be a multiple use garden with vegetables, spices and flowers. Put the tallest plants to the north so they don't steal the sun. Don't plant one row of corn 12 feet long, plant 3 rows 4 feet long. Plan so that your rows run east and west. Keep perennials such as asparagus and strawberries in a row or area that will make it easy to cultivate them in the following years. Plant long-maturing plants such as pumpkins or watermelons on the perimeter. Plan to use space for cool weather crops such as onions, lettuce or broccoli to plant a fall garden.

The very best garden investment is a healthy, fertile soil. I was lucky enough to be spoiled and have a load of Neches River bottom compost delivered to my site so my soil has been ready to go. Your soil should be the consistency of crumbly chocolate cake. It should be alive with worms, plant-nourishing bacteria and other tiny microbes that help plants grow. You can create soil like that by adding plenty of organic matter; the best and cheapest source is your own compost pile of dried leaves, grass clippings, and vegetable scraps from the kitchen. Letting it all break down into nature's "black gold" does take time. To get your garden started, you'll probably need to buy organic fertilizer or fertilizer formulated especially for vegetables.

Now that you have your plot ready to go it is finally time to select the seeds or plants for your garden. Sometime seeds are just as easily started directly in the garden. I always plant more seeds than I will need, remove the weakest ones and thin as necessary. For broccoli, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and cabbage, I use transplants. By the end of March my garden will be planted for spring. Remember to check with our County Extension office for information on planting guides for this area. We also have some real experts around who use raise beds and cold frames and harvest their vegetables all year. Don't be afraid to ask questions. I choose not to do this because I don't want to be in the kitchen ALL year putting up the extras from my garden but I have been inspired to give it more thought.

No matter if you are thinking of this as your own personal "Victory Garden" or just looking at vegetables as a new source of enjoyment and exercise, I hope that you will enjoy the experience. Don't forget to involve a child in your "food" gardening. Give someone the warm memory that I had of watching my grandfather hoeing his crop, my grandmother sitting in her kitchen rocker snapping her beans, and my Great Aunt Annie's wonderful fig preserves. Be the first to let a child pluck his own carrot from the ground, wash it in the garden hose (the blue one) and eat it right then and there. The look of amazement is a joy to see and a chance to make another life long gardener out of three feet of energy. Grow a gardener along with the tomatoes!

Indian Blankets or Firewheel

Stevi Roubian

If you are looking for that one flower that puts that spark in your landscape it would be the wonderful Indian Blanket or as some people know it as the Firewheel. It doesn't need much care. It takes full sun light and little water. The wild colors of golden-yellow, red, and brown would look beautiful in all gardens and the wonderful thing about this flowers is that you can take them indoors also.

If you are looking to plant this flowers the best time to seed them would be late summer/early fall and transplants are best set out in early spring after all danger of frost is past. The best place to grow them in your garden or your lawn would be where you have a lot of perennial grasses such as Bermuda grass under control. The Indian Blanket requires at least 8 hours of full- sun to perform its best. These plants do best in a prepared bed. Make sure that you have soil that is well drained. Standard soil preparation for any landscape bed will be more than adequate for Indian Blankets.

This plant has no serious diseases or insects. Remove spent flowers to encourage more blooms and a longer blooming season. Water as necessary to prevent soil dryness. Fertilization is usually not necessary for overall care of Indian Blanket. There are several variations of *G. pulchella*. When selecting seeds, choose carefully so that you get the type you want. *G. arisata* is a perennial that is extremely drought hardy.

Thank you and hope you enjoy your new beautiful garden or landscape. The colors will liven up your yard.

Flowerbed Gardening

Lois Mallette

For years I had a small vegetable garden in the back corner of my yard. Over time my neighbor's trees grew large and my garden area became too shady to produce any crops. The only areas with adequate sun were the flower bed located along the back patio and a narrow bed across the front of the house.

Two years ago I put in four fan-shaped trellises in the back bed and trained tomatoes to climb on them. I planted peppers and bush beans along with the zinnias and marigolds. With a few basil plants, dill and eggplants tucked in with bachelor buttons, it grew to be a very productive vegetable garden that looked like a flowerbed. From a distance the tomatoes looked like roses growing on the trellises. In the front bed, I planted zucchini and yellow squash with coleus. Italian parsley and cilantro were planted to form a border for the bed.

In the fall, cabbage and broccoli with sweet alyssum, chrysanthemum and snapdragons were planted which extended my growing season for vegetables into the winter.

This was a very different strategy for a vegetable garden. You not only get a vegetable garden but also an ecstatically beautiful flowerbed where all the plants seem to complement each other.

If you have small space and want fresh vegetables, plant a few in your flowerbeds.

Herbed Garden Couscous

Linda Benton

1 cup couscous
2 cups cherry tomatoes, halved
1 medium cucumber, coarsely chopped
1 medium sweet green pepper, coarsely chopped
½ cup snipped fresh chives
¼ cup snipped fresh flat parsley
¼ cup snipped fresh mint
¼ cup snipped fresh oregano

1/3 cup balsamic vinegar
1/3 cup olive oil
2 teaspoons sugar
½ cup crumbled feta cheese
½ cup coarsely chopped walnuts, toasted

1. Cook couscous according to the package directions. Fluff with a fork.
2. In a large bowl combine tomatoes, cucumber, sweet pepper, chives, parsley, mint, and oregano. Fold into the couscous.
3. In a small bowl whisk together the balsamic vinegar, olive oil, sugar, ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Pour the dressing over the couscous mixture and toss to combine. Cover and chill up to 24 hours. To serve, top with feta cheese and walnuts.

Caladiums

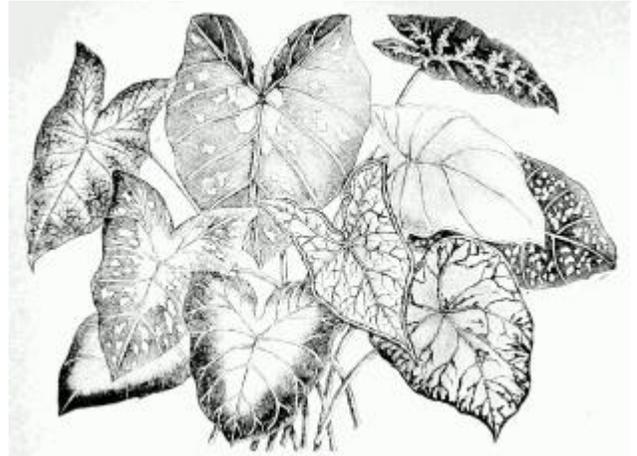
Sally Keenan

Spring is here with it's warm pleasant days, but summer is looming not far away. It's time to think of getting in those plants that promise summer color without a lot of care. Caladiums fit that bill especially for the shady areas of our Texas gardens. They are native to the Amazon rainforests of Brazil and like warm moist areas. Their lovely red, white or pink foliage provide splendid color. Caladium can be planted along borders or in large mass plantings to take advantage of the tropical looking leaves. There are two main types of caladiums distinguished by their leaf type. Fancy-leaf caladium has heart shaped leaves and grow from 12 to 30 inches tall. They tend to be used primarily in shady gardens. The strap-leaf variety has narrow-elongated leaves. These plants are more compact and sun tolerant.

Caladiums are arums, plants that belong to the family Araceae, also known as the lilies. Plants of the arum family are monocotyledons, more closely related to orchids and grasses than to many other garden plants. Plants in this family are characterized by elongated leaves shaped like hearts or arrows. They have a fragile looking papery texture. The flower is a spadix, a finger-like projection surrounded by a tough white or yellow brach. The flowers are not particularly attractive and are best removed promptly to encourage leaf development.

The botanist Dr. Henry Nehrling was instrumental in introducing caladium to this country in the late 18th and

early 19th centuries. He had more than 50 varieties at his Palm Cottage Gardens in Florida. Today Florida is a major producer of the caladium tubers that are distributed throughout the United States. In August the town of Lake Placid, Florida (the caladium Capital of the World) hosts an annual caladium festival.



Although people talk about caladium bulbs, correctly speaking they grow from a tuberous root. The tuber has buds scattered over its surface; shoots and roots develop from these buds. Caladiums need warm moist soil in which to grow. The largest showiest plants will develop from the largest tubers. Rather than setting out plants started in a greenhouse I prefer to purchase the largest tubers I can afford and set them out in May when the soil temperature is 70 degrees. I have a bed outside my sunroom window that has a pansy border in the winter. I find that by the time the pansies have completed their season it is the right time to replace them with caladiums. After that a little fertilizer over the summer keeps the caladiums going beautifully until fall.

Caladium tubers are not hardy in our growing zone. In this area they are often treated as annuals. If you wish to save the tubers for next year let the caladium leaves die back and dig the tubers up before the first frost. Allow them to dry for several days in a protected area before removing the remaining foliage. Excess soil should be removed and the tubers sprinkled with a fungicide. Tubers should be stored in peat or mesh bags in an area that does not get below 55 degrees.

Caladiums are definitely worth the trouble to plant. Their vivid colors provide a visual delight when many other plants are wilting in the Texas heat.

Henderson County Master Gardener

<http://agfacts.tamu.edu/D5/Henderso/hc-mg.htm>

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The Henderson County Master Gardener Association is sponsored by the Henderson County Cooperative Extension Service which is a part of the Texas A&M University System. Its objectives are to increase knowledge of gardening to its members and the general public, and to provide the community with information on good gardening practices.

If you have received this newsletter in error, or to provide us with a change of address, please contact the Henderson County Extension Office at (903)-675-6130.