



**SOMERVELL
COUNTY
MASTER
GARDENERS
ASSOCIATION**

**SCMGA
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SCMGA Newsletter

THE GREEN PIECE



Volume 5, Issue 7

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July Tips - Plant Your Fall Garden Now *by Bob Lancaster, Somervell County Master Gardener*

Now is the time to plan for your fall garden. Why a garden in the fall? Simple –fall gardening has many advantages in Texas. For example:

- Fall produce ripen in cooler weather producing a more quality product.
- Rainfall is generally more frequent.
- Insect pest populations and diseases are declining.
- The weather is more pleasant for you the gardener.

One important factor to consider in planting that fall garden is the average date of the first killing frost. In this area that date is around November 15th. In planning your fall garden, check the plant variety description to determine how many days are re-



quired from planting to first harvest. Allow an extra 4 to 6 weeks for peak production. For example if you are planting a squash variety that needs 60 days to first harvest you make the fol-

lowing calculation. Figuring backwards from November 15th and allowing 60 days for the first fruit to be harvested and 60 more days for maximum total production, you would need to plant the seed on July 15th.

Cool season crops such as broccoli, cauliflower, collard greens, lettuce, mustard greens and spinach can be delayed a few weeks before planting because they can tolerate a few light frosts and still produce.

SCMGA Community Horticulture Education Program

We will not be having a Community Horticulture Education Series program for July. Please watch our newsletter or website for information on our August CHES program! As always, it will be on the second Monday of the month. If you ever have a request for a particular topic, please contact Bob Lancaster, Education Program Chair or call the Somervell County Extension Office at 254-897-2809 and let us know!

Around My Piece of Ground

By Shirley D. Smith, Somervell County Master Gardener

I hate to even say this for fear of putting a jinx on our weather, but it just has not been as hot this spring/summer as last year! For that I am extremely grateful. And, my plants are, too. I thought I would share with you what is going on – rather growing on – around my garden.



My tri-color lantana never stops blooming during the warm weather. This winter, I cut it back to the ground (almost – did leave a couple of larger

branches) and when it started to come out it did so with a vengeance. It is beautiful, big and healthy. The butterflies love it. I have cut it back once to keep it within my boundaries and need to do so again.

My purple coneflowers (Echinacea) are so pretty. They have begun to spread in the bed in which they were planted. I started out with 2-3 plants and now they are plentiful.

My Earth-Kind Roses® just keep looking prettier and prettier. Such a good decision on my part. Before, I would not even consider planting roses because I did not want to do all the work that was necessary to keep them looking good. But, with Earth-Kind Roses® none



of that pampering is required. If any of you reading this article still think this way about roses, then you need to Google Earth-Kind Roses® or ask one of the Somervell County Master Gardeners and let us give you our personal experience with these easy-to-care-for plants. I water my roses about once a month (if that) even during this hot weather and they still look nice.

My desert willow is blooming and seems to thrive in this hot weather as is my rock rose and the various sages I have growing around in my beds.



Just because the weather is hot and dry does NOT mean you cannot have color in your flowerbeds! No, indeed. If you will just be careful and plant either native and/or adapted plants, then you should have the all the blooms you want.

One other thing before I bring this to a close: I live in a rural part of the county so we have a well, but I do not pull out of that well to water my landscape except for one small bed in front of my house. The remainder of my beds (and they are extensive) are watered with captured rainwater. I have approximately 6,500 gallons of rainwater when all the barrels are full. This is my first summer to have this much rainwater so it is going to be interesting to see how long this water will last.

Happy gardening to all!

Welcome to Our Newest Associate Members!

Somervell County Master Gardeners are excited to welcome three new associate members! Earl Earp, Art Hagar and Linda Heideman have joined our ranks as associate members! They will be taking the Master Gardener training in the Spring of 2013, and in the meantime are getting acquainted with our current members and enjoying the camaraderie we share!

You, too, can be a part of the SCMGA! Attend one of our monthly meeting on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 10am at the Somervell County Extension Office to find out more!

Life with Guineas

by Donna Hagar, Somervell County Master Gardener

In a couple of previous newsletters I have told of my acquisition of 8 guinea keets, along with 6 chicks. I thought I would give you an update.

The guineas are now 10 weeks old (awkward teenagers) and doing great! All the guineas and chickens are now free ranging during the day. I have spent a great deal of time training my dog, Molly to protect rather than eat the fowl and so far, so good! The guineas and chickens all get locked up in the coop and predator proof pen together every night.

Sadly I did lose one guinea to unknown causes, she was found dead in the coop one morning with no obvious trauma. My best guess is we have 3 guinea hens. Only the females make a [two syllable "buckwheat"](#) call, so that is what I use to determine the sex at this stage. They have all just started 'talking' and while they can be rather noisy if they all start squawking at once, it is rare that they all chime in together. That may certainly change in the future, but out here in the

country, I consider it all music anyway!

The two chicks I acquired at the same time as the guineas are both appearing to be roosters. I was hoping for one rooster,

but not 2! Sad, as all of my 'fowl' are my pets (and yes, all named!) and I do hate to give any up. But with only 4 hens (now 14 weeks old) I know it is ill advised to have more than one rooster. Fortunately I have a good friend who I am hoping I can convince to take the extra roo!

Both the chickens and guinea hens should begin laying eggs around the same time, I suspect late August. Having a rooster and male guineas, I suppose it wouldn't be inconceivable to have chicks or keets running around before too long. I wonder what I've gotten myself into!



Favorite Plants Of Master Gardeners Gregg's Blue Mist Flower

By Julie Conner, Somervell County Master Gardener

The Eupatorium Greggii or Gregg's Blue Mist Flower

has been in my yard for three years now. When I was give the starter I was told it could be invasive and to be sure and plant in a contained area. The Blue Mist is perennial & spreads through rhizomes, which is an underground root system, and should be divided every few years to keep them from taking over or getting out of control.

Blue Mist is a must in a butterfly garden, they can grow to 3 ft high and are an excellent source of nectar. Even when the flower has turned brown I

see butterflies surrounding the flower head. It is drought tolerant and should be planted with like needs plants in a grouping. The flower head is present from March to November and attracts the Queen butterfly in the fall and migrating Monarchs.

Early spring I clip it back to the ground to encourage new growth. Then in May I will control its height by pruning. The Blue Mist enjoys full sun and is easily transplanted and I am sure someone will be willing to give you a start. One last tip, if you are looking to go Xeriscaping in your yard the Blue Mist would be an excellent choice and an easy way to put the 'blue' in your groupings.

Wade's WallyWorm Word - "Prepare"

Submitted by Wade Moore, Somervell County Master Gardener

Wallyworm, observing Wade adding compost and mulch to a sunny area nearby, inquires of Wade's plans "Making me a nice new place to do my things?" asks WallyWorm

Wade answers the question with a question "Where were you when I was having to get rid of the grass and weeds?"

"Oh, I've been on vacation. Had to get ready for your needing me in your fall garden. I am ready to eat some dirt and help turn it into productive soil." replies Wallyworm

"Sorry I got in your face, such as it is, but to PREPARE for a fall garden can be a daunting task. Taking a soil sample to determine fertility needs, as well as the pH, can be done prior clearing the garden plot of unwanted vegetation. Treating the soil with compost and well decomposed animal manures needs to be done prior to planting seeds." explains Wade

"When are you planning on planting your fall garden?" asks Wallyworm

Well, tomatoes and peppers need to be planted by the first of August. Transplants can be nurtured in a large container and trans-

planted in order that a crop can be harvested prior to frost. The heat tolerant/cold sensitive crops such as eggplant, cantaloupe, sweet corn, squash and watermelon need to be planted from mid July to the first of August. Cool season/heat sensitive crops such as Swiss chard, lettuce, turnips, and spinach can be put off until mid October if needed." continues Wade

"Oh, by the way, if I am direct seeding planting, I will make a furrow down the row and water soak the soil furrow, plant the seeds and cover them with dry soil; avoiding overhead watering to prevent crusting over the seedlings. Wallyworm, you can really help me out by calling in your friends and spending time in my fall garden. You will help my bottom line, pun intended, by being sure I have plenty of home grown vegetables. Just think how delicious the spring vegetables were and to know that the flavor of the fall harvest will be a step up from there." concludes Wade

These succulent sprouts were picked with great care from: aggie-horticulture/tamu.edu

Somervell County 4-H Horticulture Club Vegetable Show

The Somervell County Horticulture Club will host a Summer Vegetable show on Friday **July 13, 2012** at the Somervell County Citizens Center. Check-in will be from **8:30 – 9:00 am** and judging will begin at **9:15 am**. This show is open to **all** Somervell County residents. During the judging, there will be an educational program on gardening!

Bring your fruit, veggies, flower arrangements, and your best recipe.

\$5 Entry Fee

\$1 Additional Fee per Division

All proceeds will go to the Glen Rose 4-H Horticulture Club

Adult & Youth Divisions

- Melons
- Squash
- Okra
- Peppers
- Apples
- Plums
- Tomatoes
- Cucumbers
- Peaches
- Best cooked or uncooked Vegetable Dish



For questions please contact the Texas AgriLife Extension Office at 254-897-2809

[More information](#)



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<http://www.somervellmastergardeners.org>

The Somervell County Master Gardeners are volunteers who work with the AgriLIFE Extension to improve gardening skills throughout the community. Program objectives are implemented through the training of local volunteers known as Master Gardeners. We collaborate with Extension to conduct youth and community education; establish and maintain demonstration gardens; and provide a speakers bureau. We work with special audiences in the community for youth and community outreach of a horticultural nature. We recruit and educate new Master Gardener candidates for effective volunteering.

The training for Somervell County is held in combination with Hood and Johnson Counties and is currently held only every other odd year. The next training for our area will be held in the spring of 2013. If you are interested in the SCMGA, we would like to invite and encourage you to visit one of our monthly meetings, so that you might learn more about our various projects and activities. Our regular monthly business meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 10:00 a.m. in the Somervell County Extension Office. For more information, please contact Cody Gfeller, Somervell County Extension agent at 254-897-2809 or crgfeller@ag.tamu.edu or you may email the SCMGA at somervellmg@gmail.com.



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