

## Hale County

# Master Gardeners



## Falling Leaves



As we get closer to winter, leaves will start falling from deciduous trees. This change is a nice sign of the season, but does create some yard work to do. While we shouldn't let leaves stay piled up in deep drifts that can suffocate plant roots, we certainly don't want to give away this wonderful source of rich organic matter and send it to the landfill! It is also a bad idea to blow

leaves into streets and alleys where storm water runoff will pick them up. If used wisely, leaves can improve soil as well as plant performance.

There are four simple options that will keep fallen leaves from taking up room in landfills, as well as benefit soil and plants. First, light layers of leaves can simply be mowed. If not too deep, just mow over fallen leaves where they lay. The next option to consider is using the leaves as mulch in beds or in the garden. Mulch benefits plants in many ways - it moderates soil temperature, conserves water, protects plants during freezing temperatures, and prevents weeds. A three to four inch deep layer of mulch is very effective at keeping weeds under control.

Another easy thing to try is direct soil improvement. Just till in 6 to 8 inches of leaves directly into flower bed or garden soil. This is very beneficial to heavy soils by improving drainage and aeration. Leaves can be worked into soil during the autumn right after they fall; there will be sufficient time for them to break down and de-compose before spring planting.

The last solution is to compost the leaves. Along with fallen leaves, any other organic matter in the home and yard can be composted - just avoid adding meat, dairy products, fat or grease, noxious weeds, and infested plant materials to the compost.

*Don't be too hasty to cut back ornamental grasses when they go dormant in freezing weather. It's better to wait until spring when they start putting on new growth - plus, they have an attractive form.*



## Gardening Tips:

October through November is an excellent time to purchase bulbs while you still have a good selection in the garden center. They may be planted at any time with the exception of tulips and hyacinth bulbs.

Chill tulip and hyacinth bulbs in the refrigerator until mid or late December before planting. The lower part of the refrigerator is best. Do not leave bulbs in airtight plastic bags during refrigerated storage.

Plant bulbs in well prepared beds so the base of the bulb is at a depth that is three times the diameter of the bulb. In sandy soil, set slightly deeper and in clay soils less deeply.

In addition to bulbs, check your nursery or garden center for started plants of calendulas, pinks, poppies, snapdragons and sweet Williams. Planted later in the month and protected from extreme cold, they will usually provide a riot of spring color. If you prefer, you can wait until late winter or early spring to plant these in our area.

Prepare beds for planting pansies or violas when they become available at the garden centers. They need a well-drained soil and exposure to at least a half-day of sun. It is best to use started plants, as seeds are difficult to handle.

Plant flowering cabbage, kale, pansies and violas after the temperature begins to drop.

There is still time to divide and reset such perennials as daylilies, hollyhocks, irises, phlox, Shasta daisies and violets.

Take cuttings of tender annuals, perennials and tropicals early in the month. This will ensure you have well-rooted plants before frost.

Early this month, sow wildflowers into tilled garden soils but be sure to keep them away from turf grass.

This is still a great time for planting landscape plants (other than ones known to be winter tender).

Remove dead stalks and foliage from your perennials as they go dormant. Applying mulch over the plants' crown will help them through the winter.

Now is a good time to remove dead and damaged limbs from your shade trees. Do so now while they still have some leaves.

# Community Garden at Wayland

By: Lynette Bowen

Welcome to Wayland's Community Garden! Started in 2011, we have really been expanding and beautifying the corner of 8<sup>th</sup> and Utica this year. In April, we were approached by the Garrison Institute on Aging. They had heard of the garden and wanted to contribute to its development. The result? Just drive by the lot and take a look!

With the help of many volunteers, the support of Wayland administrators, and resources from the institute, we put down about 300 square feet of high-quality weed fabric (thanks to Mark Ivey of Ivey Gardens in Lubbock). Danny Murphree and crew ran irrigation lines for the future garden beds (thanks to Wayland). Then, our grantors made arrangement to have A LOT of cinder blocks delivered to the garden. Mark Hilliard found a very nice garden design, so we used the bricks to create raised, easy-on-the-knees beds. Volunteers for this project included Mark Hilliard, Peter Bowen, Lynette Bowen, Kevin Lewis, Calvin Bass, and Richard Porter. The new beds were partly filled with left-over construction dirt but then topped off with Soil Mender's high-quality raised bed mix (thanks to Marlin Andrus at Texas Gardens). Our grant provided for drip timers and tubing. Looking good, but nothing growing in it – yet.

By now it was mid-July. I had read in several places about planting fall crops, so we decided to give it a try. We seeded green beans, put the drip hoses right on top of the furrow, and set the timer for regular watering. Voila! To date, we have harvested more than six pounds of green beans, all of which has been donated to Faith In Sharing House (FISH). With that success, we planted cool-season veggies: sugar peas, sugar snap peas, carrots, and lettuce.

On Friday, Oct. 4, another work crew got together. One group picked up mulch from the landfill to put on top of the weed fabric. The other group cleaned out an old, rickety shed in order to make room for a new, sturdier shed. Everyone helped to spread the mulch between the raised beds. Volunteers included Mark Hilliard, Peter Bowen, Lynette Bowen, Stacey Ontai, and Charles Lawson.

As an added bonus, the Garrison Institute donated two Chinese pistachios to the garden lot. If you have a chance, stop by and take a look!



## Beautification in Plainview at the Community Garden with Trees and Crepe Myrtles



He plants trees  
to benefit  
another  
generation.



## Lotion Bars

Garden bars are wonderful for rough, raw gardener's hands. So what are garden bars—or lotion bars, as many know them? They look a lot like bars of soap, but they're not. You don't clean with garden bars, but instead moisturize with them. Basically, they're just like lotion, but in solid form. Made from everyday ingredients, they're easy to mix up by the batch in your kitchen.

### What You Need

½ cup herbal-infused olive oil  
½ cup coconut oil, melted  
½ cup beeswax, melted  
Simple molds

### Directions

To give your lotion bars a garden touch, infuse olive oil with herbs and flowers. Use about 2 tablespoons of dried herbs per half cup of oil. Heat and allow to cool.

Leave the herbs in the oil for a few days to a couple of weeks, and then strain.

Once your oil is ready, combine ingredients in a small, heat-safe mixing bowl. Stir well to combine. If the mixture is cloudy, reheat over hot water until it becomes clear.

Fill molds halfway. The bar shown here was made in a single-serve, plastic fruit cup. Muffin tins work, too. Let cool completely, and then pop the bars out of the molds. They should release easily.

### Additional Tips

To use your lotion bar, let the warmth of your hand melt the surface slightly and then rub the lotion into skin.

For added fragrance, use several drops of essential oil (found at craft stores) in the mixture.



## CUCUMBER AND TOMATO SALAD

**2 Cucumbers** Peeled and sliced about ¼ - ½ inches

**2-3 Medium Tomatoes** cut into wedges

¼ **sweet onion** slices and separated into individual pieces

**1 teaspoon salt**

**1 teaspoon pepper**

½ **teaspoon garlic powder**

**2 Tablespoons Olive Oil**

**2-4 Tablespoons Red Wine Vinegar**

**1 teaspoon sugar**

**In a medium bowl place cucumbers, tomatoes, and onion, and toss to mix. In a separate small bowl whisk remaining ingredients together to make the dressing. Pour the dressing over the vegetables and toss. Refrigerate at least an hour for all flavors to mix together. Toss again right before serving.**

**Cindy Kingston**

# Grounds in the Garden

Coffee grounds are a quick, easy way to add nutrients and organic matter to your soil. They are a great source of nitrogen that your plants will love! Add grounds directly to the soil – dig them in a couple inches or just sprinkle on top. Or, put grounds into your compost bin – they'll heat everything up in no time!

## Did you know that:\*

Coffee grounds contain the three major nutrients—nitrogen, phosphorus, & potassium—that flowering and edible plants need to thrive!

Grounds also contribute important micronutrients—magnesium, copper, and calcium— not typically found in synthetic fertilizers.

Coffee grounds won't burn plants, pollute groundwater, or kill soil organisms that are part of a healthy ecosystem.

Adding grounds (*up to 25% the volume of your soil*) will improve soil structure in the short and long term.

Only a small percent of the nitrogen found in coffee grounds can be used by plants immediately. Over time, microorganisms break down the organic matter, converting suspended nitrogen into a useable form. This creates a steady, slow release fertilizer that plants love!

Coffee grounds neutralize odor, discourage visits from mischievous cats, and repel garden pests such as ants, snails, and slugs.

Grounds have a slightly acidic pH (6.2-6.8), which many plants appreciate in Austin's alkaline soil.

With a carbon to nitrogen ratio of 24:1, grounds are compostable without any other additives.

*\*Sunset Magazine: The Starbucks coffee compost test (www.sunset.com/garden/earth-friendly/starbucks-coffee-compost-test-00400000016986/, accessed 07/01/12). Research conducted by Soil and Plant Laboratory Inc., Bellevue, WA.*

*Article from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Central Texas Horticulture blog*

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/travis/>



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***Texas  
Master Gardener*** SM



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