

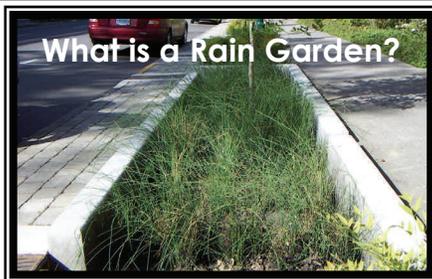
Plant of the Month

Possumhaw Holly

(Ilex decidua)

Possumhaw Holly is a native Texas shrub or small ornamental tree. This deciduous Holly resembles its sibling counterpart, the Yaupon Holly, in the spring and summer. In the fall it drops its leaves and the female plant boastfully covers its branches in brilliantly colored berries in shades of orange and red. The Possumhaw Holly is the most prevalent of the Texas Hollies and most adaptive to most soil conditions. It is also adaptive to both shade and sun, but its berry production increases with more sun. The native growth of the Possumhaw is between 20' tall and 10' wide. However, it tolerates pruning well and can be maintained for control and shape.

The Possumhaw Holly is a great addition to any landscape especially for fall/winter color thanks to its vibrant berries.



What is a Rain Garden?

Gardens are often designed with a specific purpose, for example, a vegetable garden or a butterfly garden. A rain garden is a beautiful landscape feature designed with the purpose of catching rainwater that flows off your roof, driveway, roads or other hard surfaces. Rainwater that falls on any hard surface runs off into your storm drain, and may even cause flooding and erosion due to the force of the flow. A rain garden catches runoff and soaks it up like a sponge, slowly releasing the water into the ground below.

Site Preparation

- Define the borders
- Improve the soil
- Grade the pond area
- Plan for watering during voids of rain
- Break strong water flow

Plant Selection and Rain Garden Care

- Use native plants
- Know your rain garden plant zones

Enjoy your rain garden! If you install a rain garden in Texas, we would like to hear about it. Please let us know! Don't miss the rain garden class January 14th. More information on rain gardens can be found at <http://rainwaterharvesting.tamu.edu/raingardens>

Irrigation Essentials

Rain & Freeze Sensors.

Rain/Freeze sensors prevent your automatic sprinkler system from watering during a rain or freeze and can potentially save more than 500 gallons a day during rainy conditions.

Please consider the following to insure that your equipment is most effective.

- Mount the rain sensor to a gutter or roof eave where it will be exposed to direct, unobstructed rainfall (but away from sprinkler spray).

- Mount as close as possible to the timer. This will cause the wire run to be shorter, which minimizes the possibility of wire breaks.

- Mount in the highest possible position where rain can fall directly upon the rain sensor.

- Refrain from mounting the rain sensor on a very sunny, southeastern end of a building as it may cause the rain sensor to dry out sooner than desired. Similarly, mounting on the northern end of a building with constant shade



may keep the rain sensor from drying soon enough.

Install a rain and freeze sensor today. It will save you money and conserve our precious natural resource.

January 2012

- Mulch your rain garden
- Weed regularly
- Watch for sediment, soil, sand or debris flow

Benefits of a rain garden

- Brings beauty to your landscape
- Conserves water
- Reduces standing water and mosquito breeding sites
- Creates habitats for birds and beneficial insects
- Filters pollutants and cleans the water that runs off the property

Water is a precious resource that needs to be conserved. Rain gardens are a great way to do that. So this new year, make a resolution to build a rain garden.



Rain Gardens can be a beautiful addition to your landscape while helping the local environment.



2013 Upcoming Courses

Rain Garden Design,
Construction and Maintenance

January 14, 2013

8 am—3 pm

Landscape Design Basics

February 5, 2013

6 pm –8 pm

Water Educator/Extension Agent

Irrigation Training

February 26-28, 2013

9 am – 4 pm daily

Register at <http://dallas.tamu.edu/courses/>

New at the Center

Water University

The Urban Water Team is launching their new “Water University” Website. Homeowners and Professionals can find an array of Educational Programs offered by the center.

More information available at

<http://dallas.tamu.edu/>

EPA WaterSense House

Texas A&M AgriLife Research Dallas, Urban Water Team has joined forces with EPA to transform an existing home on our campus to the first EPA Water Sense Home in the DFW Metroplex. Some of the transformations are:

- Installation of a new Instant Hot Water Heater.
- Retrofit of all faucet and fixtures

inside the home.

- Installation of a new Water Efficient Landscape
- Installation of a Rainwater Harvesting System and Rain Garden for conservation and stormwater management.
- In home upgrades using renewable and energy efficient products for the flooring, counter tops lighting and appliances.

Save the Date!!!

**EPA Water Sense House
opens on March 23, 2013**



Resources

EARTHKIND

Encourages:

- Landscape Water conservation
- Reduction of fertilizer and pesticide use
- Landscaping for energy conservation
- Reduction of landscape wastes entering landfills

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

https://agriflifebookstore.org/publications_browse.cfm

Who We Are

The Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Dallas is a gateway to science, researchers and Extension educators across the U.S. The Center serves all of urban Texas, and the Dallas-Arlington-Fort Worth metropolitan area in particular.

We're on the web!!

<http://dallas.tamu.edu/>

Landscape Essentials

Soil Improvements

Almost all garden soils can be improved by amending them with organic matter.

Organic matter:

- Improves the drainage and nutrient availability of clay soil
- Prevents water loss and nutrient leaching in sandy soil
- Makes soil easier to amend and plant
- Adds essential nutrients to all soils

Some common organic matter additives are:

Plant materials:

This includes leaves, straw, and grass clippings. Work material into the soil several months before planting to allow it time to decompose. Most gardeners do this during the winter.

Manure: Use composted manure and incorporate it into the soil well ahead of planting. Do not use fresh manure,

as it can damage plants and introduce diseases. Apply 30 to 40 pounds of composted manure for every 100 square feet.

Compost: Compost consists of decayed plant materials. Work it into the soil before planting. Do not add more than a 4-inch layer of organic material.

Add sand and organic matter to clay soil to make it more workable. Mix 2 inches of clean sand and 3 inches of organic matter, such as leaves, with the soil.

Shade Tree Pruning

The dormant season of winter is the time to do any needed pruning of shade trees to correct major problems. Some examples are:

- Clean out dead wood
- Remove lower limbs and crowded branches (to allow more light to reach the ground)
- Remove hazardous branches which threaten property.