

Time to Prepare for Spring Vegetable Gardening

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office

It's mid-January and nighttime temperatures have dipped into the very chilly zone. Yet daytime temperatures have been quite pleasant and such days tend to fuel gardening fever. Experienced gardeners know that in just a few weeks the spring gardening season will be underway.

Now is the time to make preparations for a successful home vegetable season. We try to get plants in the ground as quickly as possible after the last expected frost.

Experienced gardeners also know that as summer approaches, some heat sensitive plants such as tomatoes and beans will stop blooming or setting blossoms at temperatures above 90 degrees.

An important key to successful spring gardening is getting maximum production before the summer heat sets in.

So you're aware of the health benefits of eating fresh vegetables, you have the space for a small garden, but just don't know where to start?

Look no further. Plan now to attend a program on "Successful Spring Vegetable Gardening" to be held at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located at 4102 Main Street (Carbide Park) in La Marque.

This program will be conducted from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Saturday. Preregistration



PHOTO BY Dr. William M. Johnson

Experienced gardeners know that in just a few weeks the spring gardening season will be under way. The Galveston County Master Gardeners are sponsoring a seminar on spring vegetable gardening.

is requested; email GALV3 (at)wt.net or phone 281-534-3413, ext. 1-2.

Luke Stripling is a certified Texas Master Gardener and will serve as the program speaker. He has accumulated a wealth of knowledge and hands-on experience on home vegetable gardening. He will provide information on a variety of topics including soil preparation, types of vegetables that do well here, variety selection, fertilization, and pest control.

Learn from a gardening expert, start with the right information now, dedicate some sweat equity and you will enjoy the experience of eating fresh, crisp vegetables you grew yourself.

Whether you're an experienced or a novice gardener, be sure to make a notation on your gardening calendar to

attend this program to learn what you need to know to put fresh, tasty vegetables on your dinner table this spring.

Gardeners' Q&A

Q: What is causing all the tiny holes in the leaves of my beets?

A: This is probably the feeding damage from flea beetles. Unless you plan to use the leaves for greens, treatment is seldom necessary. Carbaryl (Sevin) is labeled for control of this insect pest, but there is typically no need for treatment unless plant leaves have been heavily damaged.

Q: I am canning beets and have some roots with poor color. What caused this?

A: The appeal of your final product will be enhanced by a deep, red color. Of course, zones of darker color and



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Dr. William Johnson is a horticulturist with the Galveston County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit his website at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston>.

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lighter color are natural in beets, but a light color is undesirable. Cooler temperatures (50 degrees to 60 degrees) produce darker colored beets than warmer temperatures (70 degrees and warmer as we are having this week). In general, fall and winter grown beets are darker than those grown in the spring. Small roots also usually have better color than larger roots.

Q: I have harvested the first large heads of broccoli from my garden. The secondary sprouts are now producing heads, but they are not as large as the first head harvested. Is this normal or should we fertilize?

A: The center head produced by broccoli is always the largest. The secondary sprouts produce heads about the size of a silver dollar. Side-dressing with fertilizer can increase yields and size of these sprout shoots. More of these are required to make a meal, but they will be as tasty as the large center head.

Q: This is the first year I have grown broccoli and I cannot determine when it is ready to harvest. How will I know?

A: Generally, when individual buds of broccoli are match-head size and distinct (loose) in appearance, the head is as large as it is going to get.

After growing a certain variety for several seasons you will soon know the potential size for heads of that variety. The size of the head produced depends on variety, season and fertilization.

