

Prepare now for Spring Vegetable Gardening Season

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY William M. Johnson



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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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Experienced gardeners know that in just a few weeks the spring gardening season will be underway. The Galveston County Master Gardeners are offering a seminar on "Successful Spring Vegetable Gardening" on Saturday, January 23.

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 possi-

ble 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 and/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 on Saturday, Janu-



ary 23, from 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. Pre-registration is required (e-mail GALV3@wt.net; phone 281-309-5065).

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, dedicate some sweat equity in your spring vegetable garden 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.

"Fresh Blueberries from Your Home Garden" Seminar

We have been asked many times how one can grow their own blueberries in the garden to enjoy this sweet treat during the summer months! And, it has not gone unnoticed by most people asking about growing blueberries that one does not see them being commonly grown in our growing area.

Yes, blueberries can be successfully grown in the Upper Gulf Coast area but they do have special growing requirements. If you have an interest in growing blueberries, then be sure to pre-register to attend this Saturday's program on "Fresh Blueberries from your Home Garden" on Saturday, January 23, from 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. It will be held at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located at 4102 Main Street (Carbide Park) in La Marque. Pre-registration is required (e-mail GALV3@wt.net; phone 281-309-5065).

The program will be presented by Dr. David Cohen, an accomplished home grower of blueberries by avocation and a practicing physician by trade. Dr. Cohen has an impressive "blueberry patch" as part of his home landscape and has gained considerable hand-on experience with successfully growing blueberries under our growing conditions.

Dr. Cohen will share his experiences and help guide gardeners who are interested in home-grown blueberries. Topics to be discussed include site selection and preparation, variety recommendations, planting, spacing, fertilizing, pruning, and harvesting.

Just about everyone loves blueberries! Blueberries are a very popular fruit in the United States because of their unique flavor, small edible seeds, and ease of

preparation. Blueberries can be eaten fresh or used for jelly, jam, pastries, or juice. They are excellent in pies, muffins, pancakes, and hot oatmeal.

Blueberry fruit is also low in calories and sodium, contains no cholesterol, and is a source of fiber. A major constituent of the fiber is pectin, known for its ability to help lower blood cholesterol.

Blueberries contain measurable quantities of ellagic acid, which has been shown to provide inhibiting effects on chemically induced cancer in laboratory studies. Blueberry juice also contains a compound that helps to prevent bacteria from anchoring themselves to the bladder, thereby helping to prevent urinary tract infections.

Blueberries bring a unique combination of delicious fruit and striking ornamental beauty to the garden and landscape. Be sure to reserve a seat for the upcoming "Fresh Blueberries from your Home Garden" to learn what is needed for a successful harvest.

