

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



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PHOTO BY **Herman Auer**

Even though it's still winter, now is the time to starting planning for the 2016 gardening growing season. Galveston County Master Gardeners will provide several gardening seminars during January, including "Growing Avocado and Papaya" on Saturday, January 9.

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It's a new gardening year and hopefully all your gardening efforts will be fruitful and enjoyable. Temperatures over the 2015 winter season thus far have varied remarkably. It was amazing to have to turn on the air conditioner and then turn on the heating unit on the same day.

Even my single (and prized) Tropic Snow peach tree growing in the back yard is confused. It should be bare at this time yet there are almost a dozen blooms on the tree. The crape myrtle

tree in the back yard is confused as well since dozens of green leaves still remain on the tree, i.e., the tree should be bare of leaves at this time of year.

This is a sure sign that winter conditions have been exceptionally mild. Normally, I would be concerned about the peach tree producing flowers that may be damaged by cold weather. Now I have to be just as concerned that it gets sufficient chill hours for it to produce any flowers.

This year's mild winter allows gardeners to continue harvesting winter vegetables and enjoying cool-season flowers, and most gardeners find this a more relaxed time of year. Review the following checklist on activities for the month of January.

- To start the New Year out, Master Gardeners have planned several educational programs that will be of benefit to area gardeners (see shaded inset). Texas Master Gardeners are volunteers who have



completed an intensive training on a variety of horticultural topics and who provide valuable assistance to the County Extension Office.

- Many gardeners have inquired about the status of our annual Fruit Tree Sale which will be held at a new location. This year's Fruit Tree & Spring Vegetable Sale will be held in the Rodeo Arena at the Galveston County Fairgrounds in Jack Brooks Park (Hwy. 6) in Hitchcock. It will be conducted on Saturday, February 20. The sale will be held from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Peaches, apples, avocados, citrus and other fruit trees will be offered in addition to a variety of vegetable transplants for the spring garden. Additional information will be provided in later columns.

- Few shrubs or trees are best purchased and planted while they are in bloom, but camellias are one exception. These notable shrubs are in glorious bloom, and right now is the time to plant them into your landscape. Better yet, now also is a great time to purchase and plant camellias in containers. As beautiful as they are in the ground, camellias adapt happily to life in containers and are particularly impressive when grown that way.

- Keep the lawn free of heavy leaf buildup to prevent smothering the grass. A few leaves won't harm the lawn but they should not be allowed to completely cover the lawn, especially if they become heavily packed and stay wet for long periods.

- Continue to select and plant ornamental trees and shrubs to fill landscape needs. Always plan ahead before planting. Remember that like little puppies, ornamental trees

and shrubs grow up. In the case of some trees, they can get large so be prudent about what you plant below electrical and telephone lines. The tree—and the homeowner—will ultimately lose in such standoffs.

- Select and order gladiolus corms for February and March planting. Planting at two-week intervals will prolong the flowering period. Choose some of the newer varieties for a vivid color display.

- We know, at some point, it will like get cold enough this winter that tropical plants in our landscapes will need protection. Plan for it now by deciding what tender plants you will choose to protect and what plants will be left to fend for themselves. Make sure you have enough materials on hand to protect those plants you will cover. Suitable materials include plastic, fabric sheets, blankets, tarps and cardboard boxes to name a few. Each plant to be protected needs to have a covering large enough to extend to the ground. It also helps to have stakes available to drive into the ground around plants to help support the coverings and bricks to weight down the bottom edges of the covering.

- Last but not least, don't forget to plant those bulbs that you put in your refrigerator to provide for a chill treatment. They won't flower in the fridge!

Upcoming Programs

Growing Avocado and Papaya. 9:00 - 11:30 a.m., Saturday, January 9.

Growing Peaches in Galveston County. 1:00 - 3:00 p.m., Saturday, January 9.

Wedge Grafting Fruit Trees or Or-

namental Plants. 9:00 - 11:00 a.m., Saturday, January 16.

Kitchen Gardening. 1:00 - 3:00 p.m., Saturday, January, 16.

Gardening by the Square Foot. 6:30 - 8:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 19.

Successful Spring Vegetable Gardening. 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. Saturday, January 23.

Growing Blueberries. 1:00 - 2:30 p.m., Saturday, January 23.

Anyone Can Grow Roses. 6:30 - 8:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 26.

All programs conducted at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located at 4102-B Main Street (Carbide Park) in La Marque. No fee but pre-registration requested (phone: 281-534-3413, ext. 1-2; e-mail GALV3@wt.net).

