

Spring Plant Sale to include Fruit Trees and Vegetables

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



Master Gardener Jim Edwards eyes the first peach to ripen in 2005 at the Horticulture Demonstration Garden located in Carbide Park.



February 04, 2015

PHOTO BY William M. Johnson

Experienced gardeners know that the spring gardening season gets under way in February. The Master Gardeners will conduct a Fruit Trees & Spring Vegetables Plant Sale at the Wayne Johnson Community Center in Carbide Park on Saturday.



PHOTO BY William M. Johnson



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>.

Have you ever been to a high-end expensive restaurant where the chefs garnished your duck with an exotic red blood orange or served your salad sprinkled with pomegranate seeds?

When you're pushing your cart through the produce section of a gourmet specialty market, have you ever noticed the price of

Meyer lemons and those little kumquats? Meyer lemons, kumquats, pomegranates and blood oranges are all top gourmet fare, but can be easily and inexpensively grown in any back yard in Galveston County.

An enormous assortment of fabulous and rare citrus trees along with new luscious plums, peaches,

persimmons, pomegranates, apples, and pears will be featured at the upcoming Master Gardeners' Fruit Trees & Spring Vegetables Plant Sale at the Wayne Johnson Community Center in Carbide Park (4102 FM 519, La Marque) on Saturday, February 7, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00

News column printed in the Galveston Daily News, The Post, and other Galveston County Newspapers.

p.m.

A pre-sale seminar will be conducted by Master Gardener John Jons on February 7 from 8:00 to 8:55 a.m. in the Wayne Johnson Community Center. The seminar is free and pre-registration is not required to attend.

In last week's column, I discussed the concept of edible landscapes. I practice what I preach including making room for a few edible plants in the home landscape. My gardening friends know well that peaches are my favorite fruit tree to grow.

Just about any variety of peach that is homegrown will likely far exceed any peach purchased from a grocery store in taste, texture and juiciness. When folks ask what my favorite variety of peach is, I have to first admit I have a bias. There are three peach varieties that I recommend—there is Tropic Snow and Tropic Snow and, as you might guess, Tropic Snow. This a white-fleshed peach that is delightfully sweet when picked fresh from a tree.

Of course, if you have difficulty in making a choice, I recommend trying a cocktail peach tree which has three or four different varieties grafted onto a single trunk. A cocktail peach tree will produce fruits that mature from early-, mid-, and late-season and thus extend the harvest season.

Cocktail peach trees are also an excellent option for gardeners who have limited space. The one drawback to cocktail peach trees

is that they have to be properly pruned to keep the growth of each variety in balance.

This will also be the first plant sale to offer spring vegetable transplants. There will a wide range of vegetables available including tomatoes. Experienced vegetable growers know that it's important to get tomatoes in the ground early in the growing season to provide for maximum yield even if you have to provide protection from cold weather temperatures.

Hybrid tomato varieties such as Celebrity will be available in addition to several heirloom tomato varieties. Patio tomatoes will be available. This aptly named tomato variety was developed for growing in containers.

There will be a wide selection of pepper transplants including many varieties of mild-flavored bell peppers. Bell peppers are green, red, yellow or orange (depending on when they are harvested) and are considered sweet peppers since these types have no heat.

Do you want to add a little kick to your meal? Hot peppers are a terrific way to spice up any dish. They come in all shapes, sizes and colors but many people don't know how hot each type of pepper is. Most folks are familiar with Jalapeño peppers but if want a pepper with more heat there is the Habanero pepper. If you savor even more heat, you will be able to purchase Ghost peppers which until recently held the record for being the hottest pepper.

The sweat-inducing, tear-generating, mouth-on-fire, need-a-hydrant-in-the-mouth Trinidad Scorpion will be available. With a name like that, it's not surprising that months of research by the experts at New Mexico State University's Chile Pepper Institute have identified the variety as the new hottest pepper on the planet and perhaps the solar system and a bit beyond.

If you are getting the idea that this spring's plant sale will have something to satisfy every taste you would be right.

Be sure to put a notation on your to-do gardening calendar to attend the Master Gardeners' Fruit Trees & Spring Vegetables Plant Sale at the Wayne Johnson Community Center in Carbide Park this weekend.

Map directions to the plant sale and a listing of fruit trees and vegetable transplants that will be available at the plant sale can be downloaded at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.htm>.

Master Gardeners will be available to advise gardeners about plants and to answer questions. Proceeds from the plant sale are used to help maintain the Horticulture Demonstration Garden located in Carbide Park.

Area residents are invited to tour the Horticulture Demonstration Garden on Thursdays from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. Master Gardeners offer guided tours on the first Thursday of each month; self-guided tours can be taken on any Thursday from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.