

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office*



PHOTO BY Deborah Repasz

**Not satisfied with the occasional, chance appearance of hummingbirds in the home landscape, many gardeners are creating habitat gardens with plants specially chosen to invite these enchanting creatures into the landscape. Master Gardener Deborah Repasz will provide an educational program on hummingbird gardens on Tuesday, March 3, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

The first day of spring will soon be here (on March 20) according to the astronomical definition. From a gardening perspective, the exact timing of "spring" is less precise.

This has been an unusually mild winter. That's not necessarily a hard science meteorological assessment just my horticultural opinion.

Arizona ash trees serve as my harbinger for spring. I've observed over the years that Arizona ash trees will start setting out new leaves around February 20, give or take a few days. I noticed on an evening walk on January 30 that several trees had started new growth.

When I started writing this column last Sunday, day-

time temperatures were nearing eighty degrees. As I get ready to submit this column on early Monday morning, temperatures have dropped into the mid-forties and are expected to continue falling throughout the day. We should remember that the arrival of the spring season along the Texas Gulf Coast tends to have a bumpy



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landing and, on occasion, to even make multiple landings.

Review the following gardening checklist for things to do as the spring season arrives.

**Gulf Coast Herb Festival:** The Friends of Moody Gardens will host the Gulf Coast Herb Festival on Wednesday, March 4, from 9 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the atrium of the Moody Gardens Visitor Center located at One Hope Boulevard in Galveston.

About 20 vendors will be on hand and will offer a wide variety of herb-related items from plants to soaps and even oils. Master Gardeners will also be available to answer visitors' questions on growing and using herbs.

Tickets are available for a luncheon (\$35 each) that will start at 11:30 a.m. Contact Mary Lou Kelso at [mlkelso@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mlkelso@sbcglobal.net) or 409-771-1286.

Proceeds from this event benefit third graders across Galveston schools with an educational experience at the Aquarium Pyramid and fifth graders at Galveston schools with an educational experience at the Rainforest Pyramid.

**ANNUALS:** Copper plants, ageratum and ornamental amaranth and other annuals can be set out.

**FERTILIZE LANDSCAPE TREES AND SHRUBS:** March is an excellent time

to fertilize established landscape trees and shrubs as they come out of their winter dormancy period and put out new growth. It is not necessary to punch holes in the ground to fertilize trees or shrubs or to use fertilizer spikes. Surface application of a granular fertilizer is quite satisfactory and an even better practice.

**VEGETABLES:** Many types of vegetables can usually be established in the garden during mid-March including transplants of tomatoes and peppers as well as direct-seeding of corn, cucumbers, southern peas and many other vegetables.

Be prepared to provide cold weather protection as may be needed. It is still too early to plant okra as okra does not tolerate cool spells. Wait until mid-April before planting okra seeds.

**HANGING BASKETS:** Late March is an ideal time to set out hanging baskets. The variety of plants that can be used is limited only by your imagination. Suitable plants for hanging baskets include portulaca, ivy, geraniums, airplane plant, bougainvillea, English ivy, begonias, and a host of others.

**REPOT HOUSEPLANTS:** It's an excellent time to repot houseplants. Gently knock the plant out of the pot and inspect the root system. If the roots are crowded and matted

on the exterior portion of the root ball, put the plant in a larger pot.

**CAMELLIAS AND AZALEAS:** As camellia and azalea plants finish blooming, fertilize them with an azalea-camellia fertilizer according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

**WEED KILLERS AND TREES:** Many landscape trees and shrubs are damaged or killed each year by the careless application of weed killers to lawns, including those found in mixes of weed killers and fertilizers (commonly called "weed & feed"). Always read and follow all label directions very carefully including application near the drip line of landscape trees and shrubs.

**Upcoming Programs**

**TITLE:** Gardening for Jewels... Hummingbirds

**DATE:** Tuesday, March 3

**TIME:** 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

**SPEAKER:** Master Gardener Deborah Repasz

**TOPIC:** How to create an inviting habitat for hummingbirds

**PLACE:** Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office, 4102-B Main Street (Carbide Park), La Marque

**PRE-REGISTRATION:** Phone 281-534-3413, ext. 12 or e-mail [GALV3@wt.net](mailto:GALV3@wt.net)

