

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY Dr. William M. Johnson

Caladiums produce delightful color splashes of white, pink, rose, red, burgundy, chartreuse or green, often with several colors combining in wonderful patterns to provide elegant beauty to local landscapes.

April is typically a very busy and pleasant month for the gardener. As is my usual custom when listing a monthly garden checklist, I list things to do for that particular month as well as a few things to not do.

By doing so, the perpetually dedicated gardening enthusiast and the gardener who is a spastic procrastinator can both find something of interest that also justifies their action or inaction, as the case may be. Actually, it

is sometimes just important to not do some things at a given time of year as it is to do certain other things during that time.

CALADIUMS: If you asked me what some of my favorite plants for summer color are, caladiums would absolutely be at the top of my list. Caladiums are ideal for both novice and experienced gardeners because they are so easy to grow. You would be hard-pressed to find a plant that provides such reli-

able color in areas that get shade.

Select caladium tubers while there are ample stocks available but do not plant caladiums too early. They typically should be planted from April into early May. Caladiums need warm soil temperatures (at least 70 degrees) for best growth.

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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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ful patterns to provide elegant beauty to local landscapes. Their bright leaves with bold textures embellish our shady gardens from May until October, when the tubers go dormant. Caladiums are remarkably free from major insect or disease problems.

STORING LEFTOVER SEED: Many flower or vegetable seeds left over after planting the garden can be saved for the next season by closing the packets with tape or paper clips and storing in a tightly sealed glass jar in your refrigerator until needed. Adding 1 or 2 tablespoons of powdered milk in a cloth bag to reduce the humidity within the jar can also be very beneficial to maintaining long-term seed viability.

SUMMER ANNUALS: One tendency shoppers have is to buy transplants of summer annuals only with open flowers. Young transplants that have few or no flowers may be a smarter purchase since these plants will grow larger before flowering. The result will be a more impressive floral display in your home garden.

PERIWINKLES: One warm season annual that many folks set out too early is the periwinkle. These are warm weather plants. Periwinkles planted before mid-April are much more susceptible to a fungal blight disease (known as Phytophthora stem blight and root rot) that can wipe out sections or an entire bed of plants.

Delay planting periwinkles until the weather is consistently warm.

LAWNS: Mid-March to the first week of April is the recommended time to fertilize lawns. A good way to determine when to fertilize is to wait until you have mowed the predominant lawn grass twice. If you fertilize too early, you will be fertilizing the winter weeds! This allows time for the grass to green up naturally without pushing it into growth. This practice results in a turf that is more resistant to summer stress. Use a 3-1-2 ratio fertilizer (such as 15-5-10) and distribute with a broadcast (cyclone) or a drop-type spreader. Uniform distribution is essential to prevent light and dark streaks in the lawn. For better distribution, divide the fertilizer into two equal applications. Spread one application lengthwise and the other crosswise.

PURCHASING TOPSOIL: Use good quality topsoil from a reputable source for raising flowerbeds, filling low spots in the lawn, etc. Nutgrass and other hard-to-kill weeds are sometimes introduced this way.

At a Glance

TOPIC: The Culture and Care of Palms

DATE: Saturday, April 13

TIME: 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Palm tree enthusiast and Galveston County Master Gardener O. J. Miller has over 15 years of growing experience with palms in our area. This program will include

an introduction to palms, an overview of the exotics and commonly found palms at nurseries in our area, palm planting methods, palm fertilization, freeze preparation and proper care. The program will include a discussion on the better varieties of palms for Galveston County and the surrounding area.

TOPIC: The Glorious and Perpetual Daylily

Tuesday, April 16

DATE: 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Nell Shimek will present a program on growing and propagating daylilies in our area. Nell has grown and hybridized daylilies for more than 30 years and is currently growing more than 800 varieties in Alvin.

Both programs will be conducted at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbine Park (4102 Main St., La Marque). Pre-registration is requested by e-mail (GALV3@wt.net) or phone (281-534-3413, ext. 12).

