

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



PHOTO BY William M. Johnson

**A Home Fruit Growers' Tour will be conducted from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon on Saturday, May 17. Three fruit orchards are on this year's tour route, including a pick-your-own peach orchard in the Texas City-Dickinson area.**

The month of May is close at hand. Temperature-wise, April was a yo-yo month—one day it's in the upper-eighties and the next day it's in the mid-sixties.

But we had some absolutely beautiful weather at times nevertheless. The days of May will bring warming nights and longer, sunnier days — a change of season. Busy days of gardening are in store for the May gardener in completing spring chores and in preparing for summer. The following gar-

dening guides may be helpful for May gardening activities:

**CHALLENGING YEAR FOR VEGETABLES:** Even tomatoes have had an unusually tough time this spring. Some tomatoes sustained cold temperature injury at the Horticulture Demonstration Garden in Carbide Park. Most were left to grow out again and appear to be recovering well.

Normally I recommend that okra be planted during the month of April but

this year it would have been better to have waited until May given the occurrences of cool temperatures over the past few weeks. This cousin of cotton especially needs to be planted in a warm soil. Proven varieties include Emerald, Clemson Spineless or Jade. After planting, plan to thin plants to 24 inches apart in the row, with rows 36 to 42 inches apart.

Sweet corn can tolerate moderately cool spells of



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weather once germinated and mine has been growing fairly well. Even during this the spring season that has not been kind to vegetable production, we should be able to produce a decent vegetable crop despite Mother Nature periodically throwing a few curve balls.

CARE OF NEW PLANTINGS: Spring- and winter-planted trees and shrubs will be establishing their root system this year and thus are very susceptible to transplant shock during the summer if not given proper care.

The first summer of growth is a critical period for all new plantings. We are still behind a few inches below our normal rainfall level and gardeners should be diligent in providing supplemental irrigation to ensure adequate soil moisture level. To reduce transplant shock, be sure to water thoroughly and deeply as needed during dry weather rather than giving more frequent, light sprinklings.

Plants should also be mulched with shredded pine bark, pine needles, compost, dried lawn clippings, etc. A 4-to-6-inch layer of mulch will also help control weeds, maintain more uniform soil moisture, and keep the soil cooler. As a result, the degree of transplant shock will be significantly minimized. Also, add to the list of benefits the fact that mulched trees and shrubs will grow much better than non-mulched transplants.

LAWNS: Lawns have been a bit slow to green-up and put on vigorous growth due rather cool weather at times. When temperatures consistently warm up, St. Augustine and bermudagrass lawns will start growing well and lawnmowers will

be getting full use provided rainfall is adequate.

**At A Glance**

**Rainwater Harvesting:** Saturday, May 10, from 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park (4102 -B, Main St. in La Marque). Pre-register by phone (281-534-3413, ext. 12) or e-mail ([GALV3@wt.net](mailto:GALV3@wt.net)). Master Gardener Tim Jahnke will give a PowerPoint presentation on rainwater harvesting. Rainwater harvesting is the accumulation and storage of rainwater for later use. It can be as simple as catching rainwater in five gallon buckets to more elaborate systems that collect thousands of gallons of water for reuse. Collecting rainwater can provide high quality water for watering plants, pets and wildlife. Tim will discuss and show ways humans have collected the precious resource of rainwater for more than 5000 years with information on current applications for today's gardener.

**HOME FRUIT GROWERS' TOUR:** Saturday, May 17, from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 Noon at three local fruit orchards. Each location will be open from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Pre-registration not required and open to the general public This year's tour sites contain a wide variety of fruit trees ranging from a peach orchard (Fruit 'n Such Orchard located at 6309 Avenue U in Texas City), the Master Gardener Demonstration Orchard (located in Carbide Park in La Marque) and a sizeable home orchard in Santa Fe. Tour maps and additional details may be downloaded from my website address provided with this column (click on the "Extension Educa-

tional Programs" link). Additional information will also be provided in a later column.

**Preserving the Harvest....Pressure & Water-bath Canning:** Friday, May 23, at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park (4102-B, Main St. in La Marque). Two sessions available (9:00 a.m. - 12 Noon and repeat session from 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.). Two popular methods of preserving will be demonstrated. Seminar and hands-on demonstration will occur in both sessions, covering the best method to use for various foods. We will be canning so come prepared to participate. Fee of \$25 prepaid is required to reserve a place in this class. Each session is limited to 15 participants.

