

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



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PHOTO BY William M. Johnson

Vegetables should be picked at the proper time to ensure the best quality produce including optimum nutritional value. Frequent picking will also encourage continuous production.

June signals the start of the summer season. Even though our summers tend to be on the warm side, productive home gardeners still can gather colorful bouquets from the landscape and fresh vegetables from the garden. The productive landscape and garden will call for early summer care, and important and timely gardening chores. June's gardening calendar includes the following:

MASTER GARDENER

NEWSLETTER ONLINE: The Galveston County Master Gardener newsletter is crammed full of useful information on Gulf Coast gardening ranging from commonly found insect pests in the garden to Master Gardeners listing their favorite landscape and vegetable plants. After reading a hard copy of the Master Gardener newsletter, local gardeners typically inquire if it is available

online. I am now pleased to report that the newsletter is available online and is accessible through the website address provided under my byline at the beginning of this column.

VEGETABLE HARVEST: Harvest vegetables frequently to insure continual production. When not harvested on a frequent enough basis, many vegetables will reduce production of flowers and channel

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their energy into seed production in the maturing fruit already on plants.

ONIONS: Onions will be ready to harvest after their necks soften and the leaves fall over. Stop watering when that happens. Pull the bulbs, and let them dry in a shady, airy location. Once the tops have dried, clip the roots and tops, leaving about 1 inch above the bulb. Onions which put up a flower stalk will have a hollow center and will not keep very long, so eat them first.

TRANSPLANTING LANDSCAPE TREES: Container-grown or balled-and-burlapped plants can be set out to replace dead plants or to renew the landscape. As a general rule, fertilizer should not be added to the planting hole when transplanting trees due to the risk of root injury from excessive salts. However, a light application of fertilizer to the top layer of soil can be beneficial.

BLACKBERRIES: Once blackberry plants have completed their current crop, they should be fertilized. The "stalks" (called fruticanes) that produced this year's crop will soon die back and should be removed to reduced disease problems. A new set of green "stalks" (called primicanes) should be present and these will produce next year's crop of blackberries.

SUMMER ANNUALS: It is not too late to plant colorful summer

annuals during June and early summer, especially if transplants are used. Plant dependable summer annuals such as vinca, impatiens, salvia, and portulaca.

To keep flowering annuals on the grow, remove the faded blooms often, which will induce more branching and more blooms. Seasonal flowering plants will also profit from an occasional feeding with a light application of a balanced fertilizer.

GARDENIAS: Most gardenias have completed their flowering display by mid-June. Next year's flower buds will be formed on this year's new growth. Therefore, if you need to prune gardenia bushes for minor shaping, do so now to avoid reducing next spring's flower display.

HANGING BASKETS: Do you like hanging baskets but are concerned about frequency of watering? Then try growing plants in a soil mix that also contains one of the water-holding polymers that are on the market. You won't have to water as frequently and plants tend to perform better because soil moisture levels tend to be more uniform.

GARDENING IN THE HEAT. Watch out for heat exhaustion and heatstroke! Over-exertion, even mowing the lawn in the middle of the day, can cause heavy sweating which removes fluids from the body. Take frequent breaks, wear a broad-rim

hat and drink plenty of water. Heat exhaustion and heatstroke are serious conditions which require medical treatment. Those most susceptible to extreme heat include infants, the elderly, those with chronic illness, overweight and those on certain drugs.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include dizziness, headache, fatigue, and nausea. The body temperature stays around normal, the skin feels moist and the face is pale. Breathing can be fast and shallow.

Heatstroke occurs suddenly with the body temperature rising to 104 degrees or higher with a rapid, strong pulse. The skin will feel hot and may be dry. Dizziness, headache, nausea, or confusion and irritability can accompany heatstroke. In the worst-case scenario, victims can become unconscious. So, take care of yourself this summer.

FREE ADVICE: June gardening days should also include taking time to just sit back in your favorite lawn chair on a long summer evening to just enjoy the fruits of your labor.