

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY Herman Aeur

Ample rainfall helps to create ideal breeding conditions for summer's greatest pest: the mosquito. Some of the most effective ways to reduce mosquito populations involve taking simple actions that prevent mosquitoes from reproducing. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water so homeowners should be vigilant in eliminating places where water can collect in their yards and gardens including birdbaths.

Last week's bountiful rainfall was a welcome occurrence — at least that was my opinion. However, a local broadcast station meteorologist summed it up as being a dreary week. Excuse me but we are still working our way out of a drought and the temperatures were quite at times. My gardening notes reminded me that daytime temps had passed the triple digit mark during time last

year. The arrival of July means the heat and humidity are settling in as the summer season gets underway. A little care now will not only help your plants withstand the rigors of summer weather, it will also reward you with a flush of color later on during the late summer and fall seasons. Critical gardening activities for July include the following:

WEED CONTROL SEMINAR: Do you have a bumper crop of plants growing in landscape beds that you did not plant? Is your lawn more weeds than grass? What can you do about problem weeds that are taking over your yard? Master Gardener AnnaWygrys will provide a seminar on Saturday, July 19, 2013, from 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. at the Galveston County



July 02 2014



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

AgriLife Extension Office located at 4102 Main in La Marque (Carbide Park). No fee but pre-registration is required by e-mail (GALV3@wt.net) or telephone (281-534-3413, ext. 12) to ensure availability of handout material.

Discussion topics will include the most common weed problems in local landscapes and gardens, chemical and cultural management options, and understanding how weeds gain a foothold in the home landscape.

GARDENING HEALTH AND SAFETY TIPS: Gardening is a great way to enjoy the outdoors, get physical activity, beautify the community, and grow nutritious fruits and vegetables. Whether you are a beginner or expert gardener, health and safety are always important. Daytime temperatures are gradually increasing. The following are some guidelines to follow when trying to beat the heat.

- Gardeners need to make an effort to stay hydrated by drinking water often — even if you're not thirsty. Don't drink caffeinated beverages or alcohol.
- Avoid outdoor activities during the hottest part of the day (and yes, this includes gardening).
- Avoid overexertion. Take frequent rests — preferably in the shade — while you work outside.
- Wear light-colored clothing to

reflect the heat. Be sure to apply a sun screen to exposed skin.

- Pay attention to signs of heat-related illness, including high body temperature, headache, rapid pulse, dizziness, nausea, confusion, or unconsciousness.
- Where possible, garden with a friend. The Master Gardeners practice a buddy system when gardening at the Horticulture Demonstration Garden in Carbide Park. Everyone should keep an eye on everyone else for signs heat-related problems and to encouraged frequent water and rest breaks. When it comes to heat-related illness while working in the garden, prevention is the best medicine.

TALLER LAWNS: Given last week's ample rainfall and warming temperatures, lawn growth is entering overdrive. Check the cutting height of your lawn mower. Consider raising the lawn mower blade to a higher setting. The higher the cutting height, the less lawn grass is stressed resulting in a healthier lawn.

LOW SPOTS IN THE LAWN: Low areas in the lawn may be gradually filled with shallow applications of good top soil where needed. However, avoid temptation to apply a layer of sand to fill in low spots.

CRAPE MYRTLES: Crape myrtles are putting on a spectacular flower display this year. The flowering period of crape myrtles can be extended by

pruning flower heads as soon as possible after they finish flowering.

MOSQUITOES: Ample rainfall helps to create ideal breeding conditions for summer's greatest pest: the mosquito. Some of the most effective ways to reduce mosquito populations involve taking simple actions that prevent mosquitoes from reproducing.

Mosquito larvae can develop in as little as a tablespoon of standing water that remains for as little as one week. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water so homeowners should be vigilant in eliminating places where water can collect in their yards and gardens.

To help reduce mosquito populations, drain water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, flower pots or any other containers where water has collected. Remove and discard old tires, drums, bottles, cans, pots and pans, broken appliances and other items left outdoors that can collect water. Empty and clean birdbaths and pet water bowls at least once or twice a week. Protect boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that don't accumulate water.