

Kitchen gardens have practical value

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY Dr. William M. Johnson



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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>.

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

The history of kitchen garden designs dates back to medieval times. They were the cloister or courtyard gardens of monasteries or castles.

During colonial times, European settlers brought the kitchen garden concept to America.

In earlier times, the kitchen garden was located by the back door as it would be handy for everyday use and care in addition to providing some protection from two- and four-legged intruders.

In colonial times, these gardens would have contained plants for medicinal proper-

ties as well as culinary herbs, fruit trees and berried shrubs.

Modern-day kitchen gardens contain a variety of plants that serve the needs of the palate (i.e., provides food for the dinner table or raw consumption) and the needs of the soul (i.e., provides beauty in the home landscape and cut flowers for the interiorscape).

In essence, vegetables can be used in imaginative ways to add beauty, interest and utility to our landscapes.

Taking the concept of a kitchen garden from fantasy to reality can be a daunting task for the beginner.

Help is at hand. A seminar, "Kitchen Gardening ... From Conception to Reality," is from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Saturday at the Galveston County Extension Office, in Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St., (FM 519) in La Marque.

Preregistration is required. Call 281-534-3413, Ext. 12, or email [galv3\(at\)w.net](mailto:galv3(at)w.net).

Mary Demeny, a Galveston County Master Gardener, will discuss vegetable gardening as an integral component of the home landscape.

Gardening on a smaller scale and making use of vegetables interplanted in your flower



beds and in pots will be emphasized.

Demeny has grown a kitchen garden for many years. Vegetables for discussion include onions, carrots, tomatoes, lettuce, peppers, okra, beets, broccoli, cabbage, kohlrabi, kale, leeks and more.

September is a great time to get started on a fall vegetable garden, and this seminar can help you get started with your own kitchen garden.

Question and answer

Q: Will English ivy kill or harm my tree if allowed to grow up the trunk?

A: I receive many calls on this subject. The short answer is yes, eventually — or at least most likely.

Read on if a longer response would be appreciated as the reason for the likely harm to the tree might surprise you.

Evergreen English ivy is not parasitic as many people think.

Unlike the vining weed, known as dodder, English ivy does not derive any nourishment from the tree, but the ivy can create an unhealthy situation for the tree.

The ivy attaches itself by aerial roots that anchor it to the trunk and branches.

When ivy is well-established on a tree, its leaves and vines can spread into the tree's canopy.

This can prevent adequate sunlight from reaching the surface of leaves in addition to reducing air movement within the canopy of the tree.

This tangle also collects soil particles that are carried to the trunk surface by wind and rain.

Together, these factors create a situation in which various fungi can become established.

Wood rots and other fungal diseases can result. The best solution is prevention.

Many homeowners allow ivy to form a living mulch around their trees.

While this is one way to protect tree trunks from mower and string trimmer damage, homeowners must vigilantly monitor ivy encroachment.

Ivy can quickly attach itself to the trunk of a tree.

Pulling it off the trunk once the ivy is well established can cause significant damage to the bark

If this is the situation on your property, the best course of action is to cut the ivy vines at the ground level.

The leaves gradually will die. The vines eventually will fall from the tree without damaging the bark.

This is a slow process but once they have fallen off, most of the moisture problem will be alleviated.

If all this is not enough to make you apprehensive, be aware that English ivy vines will weigh down tree branches and can cause them to break.

There also is the increased risk to the tree being blown down by high winds.

Dr. William Johnson is a horticulturist with the Galveston County Office of Texas AgriLife Extension Service, The Texas A&M System. Visit his Website at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston>.

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At A Glance

WHAT: Fall Pecan Field Day

WHERE: Jim Hall's Pecan Orchard, 11813 28th St., in Santa Fe

WHEN: 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Sept. 29

CALL: 218-534-3413, Ext. 1-2

WHAT: Master Gardeners' Ornamental and Perennial Plant Sale Preview Seminar

WHERE: Wayne Johnson Community Center, in Carbide Park, 4102 FM 519, in La Marque

WHEN: 9 a.m. Oct. 1

DETAILS: Heidi Sheesley, of TreeSearch Farms, will provide a PowerPoint presentation featuring plants that will be available at the Oct. 15 plant sale.

CALL: 218-534-3413, Ext. 1-2

