

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY **William M. Johnson**

Air potato vine is a non-native, introduced vine that can quickly grow 60-to-70 feet in length. It is covered with large, glossy, heart-shaped leaves and produces large numbers of potato-like, aerial tubers along its stems.

The Master Gardeners' Annual Fall Plant Sale was held last Saturday. Even though it is a plant sale, visitors are welcome to bring samples of plants for problem diagnosis or identification. They took me and Master Gardener volunteers up on the invitation. Following is a sampling of questions asked:

**Q: I have a vine growing in my landscape that produced a crop of weird, Irish potato-like fruit with warts! One vine has grown to the top of a tall cypress tree. What is this**

**vine called and is the fruit edible?**

A: Your vine is known as air potato vine but it's also known as Tater Vine in other parts of the South. Air potato vine is believed to have been introduced in Florida during the early 1900's as an ornamental. The vines grow vigorously (up to 60-to-70 feet in length) up tree trunks or over wood fences but the plant is difficult to control.

Air potato vine produces

large numbers of potato-like, aerial tubers along its stems. These air potatoes are grayish, somewhat irregular in shape with distinctive bands of wart-like growths. The tubers drop from vines and grow into new plants over the next growing season.

Now to the question of "Are the tubers edible?" Some reports indicate that the tubers are edible while others report that tubers are poisonous. One gardener noted that even the possums



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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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just sniffed and passed on the tubers produced in his rural acreage! I always err on the side of caution when it comes to the consumption of novel foods but if possums past up on a food item, I will certainly past it up as well.

**Q: Should I cut back my Miscanthus and other ornamental grasses after they have dried?**

A: The Master Gardeners offered several types of ornamental grasses at the Fall Plant Sale. More than ever before, gardeners are realizing the fine accent and architectural effect ornamental grasses can contribute to just about any landscape.

I recommend cutting back ornamental grasses in the spring before new growth emerges. This ensures that their attractiveness in the landscape is utilized throughout all four growing seasons. I recommend cutting the clumps back to 7-to-8 inches from the ground. In case we have a late cold snap, leaving some dried vegetation will help insulate the live vegetation below and avoid die-back of the clump. The old growth will quickly be hidden by the new growth.

another opportunity. Master Gardeners will conduct a sequel to the Fall Plant Sale on Thursday, October 15, from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. at the Horticulture Demonstration Garden in Carbide Park (4102 Main Street) in La Marque.

Citrus trees not sold at the Saturday Plant Sale will not be returned to the grower until next week; this affords home citrus enthusiasts another opportunity to purchase them. There are about 60 citrus trees remaining and all are in excellent condition.

A limited selection of blueberries will also be available. Amaryllis bulbs sold out quickly but there is still a selection of other bulbs including daffodils and snowflakes. Fall vegetable transplants will be available for immediate planting in the fall vegetable garden.

A variety of other perennials and ornamental plants for the home landscape will be available as well. For more information and updates visit the Master Gardeners' website (<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html>).

**At a Glance**

WHAT: Bulbs & Other Hardy Perennials for Gulf Coast Landscapes  
WHEN: Saturday, October

17, 9:00 - 12:00 Noon  
TOPICS: What are bulbs, corms, and rhizomes? When do these plants bloom? Do they return year after year? What are the best varieties for gardens on the Upper Gulf Coast of Texas? Galveston County Master Gardener Anna Wygrys will provide this presentation. Anna has many years of hands-on experience with growing a diverse variety of flowering bulbs in Galveston County.

WHAT: the Joy of Daylilies  
WHEN: Tuesday, October 20, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

TOPICS: 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.

LOCATION: Both programs conducted at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located in Carbide Park (4102-B Main St. in La Marque). Pre-register by email ([GALV3@wt.net](mailto:GALV3@wt.net)) or phone (281-534-3413, ext. 5065).

**Fall Plant Sale, *The Sequel***

If you missed the 2015 Fall Plant Sale last Saturday, you will have

