

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY William Johnson

Pansies are a favorite choice to provide cool season color. Pansies are available in a wide array of colors ranging from bold yellows, oranges, and reds, to pale pastels.

Fall is definitely in the air. Day length is becoming ever so shorter with each passing day and the crisp cool front over the weekend signal that change is on its way.

As the fall season settles in, take advantage of the cool days and the slower pace of gardening to prepare your plants for winter. So enjoy the beautiful weather and while you're at it, be sure to perform any needed activities in the home garden and landscape and check our upcoming educational programs as follows:

County Citrus Show: This is an early notification that the County Citrus

Show is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 4, at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park. Home citrus growers should make plans to enter their homegrown citrus into the show for display and judging. Pre-registration for this program is not necessary. Additional details will be provided in later columns.

Seminar on How to Successfully Make the Lifestyle Change from Working to Retirement: Seminar announcements in this gardening column are generally limited to those with a focus on

gardening. I made an exception here because the presenter is a Galveston County Master Gardener and because the process of retirement will affect most folks. Jon's presentation is not a financial preparation seminar. He will discuss the retirement lifestyle, three key enablers of a successful retirement, how to engage those closest to you in making this lifestyle change, and provide you with a proven process on how to make and manage a smooth lifestyle change from work to retirement. Jon is the author of a book that is same-titled as his seminar.

The seminar will be conducted from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 6, at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located in Carbide Park (4102-B Main Street) in La Marque. No fee but pre-registration required (contact Irene Berry at 281-309-5059).

Compost Leaves: Oaks, pecans and other trees in the landscape will



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Dr. William M. 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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soon start dropping their leaves. Start collecting leaves for the compost pile. Be sure to have extra soil available so that each 6-inch layer of leaves is covered with a shallow layer of soil (or compost). Always moisten each layer of leaves thoroughly before adding the soil. Shredding the leaves beforehand with a lawn mower will help speed the process of decomposition, but it is not essential.

Inspect landscape trees and shrubs: Make periodic inspections on recently transplanted landscape trees and shrubs for soil moisture level. Their root systems will not become well-established for some time. While rainfall amounts have been good in most areas, be sure to water new transplants regularly to avoid stressing plants in the event extended periods of dry weather conditions occur.

Plant cool season vegetables: Cool season vegetables to plant include English peas, radishes, spinach and turnips throughout November.

Thin seedlings: One of the most difficult tasks for the fall gardener is thinning seedlings. Gardeners tend to over-plant vegetable seeds, especially small-seeded ones like carrots, radishes and most salad greens. Seedlings should be thinned according to the spacing distance recommended on the seed packet before they attain 2-to-3 inches height. If you do not thin them,

you will likely be disappointed by lack of production.

Cool-season annuals: This is an ideal time to plant cool-season annuals to provide color in the landscape. There are many types of annual flowers that bloom only in cooler weather. Pansies are a favorite choice as they are on the list of Texas' top-selling annual flowers.

Pansies are hardy and will bloom over a long season. The old-fashioned face varieties have been steadily improved for better garden performance, and many new varieties with solid or bi-colors without a face are now available.

Pansies are available in a wide array of colors ranging from bold yellows, oranges, and reds, to pale pastels. Miniature pansies are also becoming popular.

Delay pruning woody plants: Don't get in a hurry to prune woody plants. Late December through February is usually the best time to prune them.

Sanitation in the garden: November is a good time to reduce the insect and disease potential in next year's garden. Remove all dead, diseased or pest-infested plants. This will help ensure that insect pests and disease-causing fungi do not have a place to overwinter.

Divide perennials: In order to increase your stock of clumping perennials, divide spring and summer bloomers during the fall and winter. Those which are fall bloomers can be divided in the

spring, or season opposite to bloom time. Most perennials left in the ground in the same place for more than 3 years are likely to become overgrown and overcrowded. Passing favorite plants along to friends or trading for a prized plant is a favorite part of perennial gardening.

