

Citrus show to display locally grown harvest

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY Dr. William M. Johnson



November 28, 2012

California and Florida step aside — 'Tis the season for citrus in Texas, and at least some of it will be tagged with rosettes and blue ribbons at this year's Upper Gulf Coast Citrus show sponsored by the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office.

When you think of citrus, images of grapefruits, lemons, limes, oranges are most likely to come to mind. It's unfortunate that the citrus you see in the supermarket represents a very small portion of the variety of citrus that can be grown locally.

A greater diversity of citrus types can be grown here than is available on the commercial market. Not surprisingly, homegrown citrus is of superior quality to supermarket fruits.

Area gardeners grow a remarkably wide variety of citrus ranging from grapefruits to kumquats to lemons to oranges. The other good news is that this year's citrus crop has been very productive despite last summer's record drought and temperatures.

Many types of citrus are easier to grow than many "traditional" fruit trees such as peaches. Many residents grow citrus not only for the fruit but also for the ornamental value that trees provide to the landscape.

Now visualize one of several types of citrus trees that you can grow in your yard to produce homegrown fruit to give as a distinctive and personal gift to family, neighbors and other friends. Sound too good to be true? Are you interested in viewing an array of locally

grown citrus fruit? Are you interested in learning about the basics of growing your own citrus?

Whether you are an enthusiastic citrus grower or just interested in viewing an array of locally grown citrus fruit, plan to attend the 2012 Upper Gulf Coast Citrus Show at 7 p.m. on Thursday. The Citrus Show will be conducted at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park at 4102-B Main Street (FM 519) in La Marque.

Area residents may enter any type of citrus fruit in the show for judging. Each entry must be grown by the exhibitor and must consist of three fruits that are as uniform as possible. Each entry must be bagged and clearly tagged with your name, address and telephone number.



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.



Also, indicate the type of fruit and variety. If the variety is not known, it may be entered and will be identified.

Entries will be accepted today at the Galveston County Agrilife Extension Office from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Rosettes and ribbons will be awarded to the best quality entries.

A PowerPoint presentation titled "Growing Citrus on the Gulf Coast" will be provided by Monte Nesbitt, Texas A&M Extension Specialist in the Department of Horticultural Sciences at College Station. The Citrus Show is open to the general public.

For information, contact the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office, 281-309-5065, or visit my website provided with this column.

Gardeners Q&A

Question: What is your opinion on using pine needles as a mulch?

Answer: Dried pine needles, also known as pine straw, are perfectly suited to use as mulch.

Like any other organic mulch (such as shredded pine bark and hardwood mulch), pine needle mulch provides an insulating layer on the top of soil, keeping it cooler during the heat of summer weather. Pine needle mulch also helps keeps weeds down.

Pine needles are lightweight, pack loosely and easy to spread, allowing air, water and nutrients to easily penetrate the layer of mulch. Since pine needles do not tightly compact (like shredded pine bark), you may apply it at a 3- to 4-inch depth.

Another advantage pine needles have over some other organic mulch materials is that they decompose much more slowly. This is because of the resins that they contain. The resins resist the absorption of water necessary for decomposi-

tion, so they remain undecomposed longer. A disadvantage is that pine needle mulch is not widely available in this area. Nurseries on the north side of Houston and areas further north are more likely to stock pine needle mulch.

Pine needles also provide a pleasant fragrance in the garden and many gardeners find areas mulched with pine needles to be rather attractive.

