

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office*



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**December 04, 2013**



Area residents interested in learning about the Galveston County Master Gardener program or in submitting an application for next spring's Training Course are invited to attend an educational program entitled *What Is a Galveston County Master Gardener?...It takes a village!* A forum of certified Master Gardeners will present the program on Thursday, Dec. 5, at 1:30 p.m. at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbine Park.

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

Most gardeners enjoy December's weather in our growing region. Weather conditions over the last month of the year will likely provide something for everyone to like—be it pleasantly warm days or crisply cool days. Although the winter season starts on Saturday, December 21, at 10:11 a.m., some home gardeners are already harvesting broccoli and a variety

of greens. The month of December ushers in a state of dormancy for many landscape trees and shrubs. What is good for plants is oftentimes good for the gardener. December can also be a quasi-dormant state for gardeners also. Therefore, I will avoid most high-energy consumption chores. There should be something for every gardener to

do and even enjoy among the following activities:  
**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5:** Garden with the Masters tour of the Horticulture Demonstration Garden and Orchard located in Carbine Park. Master Gardeners will start a guided tour at 9:00 a.m.; visitors are also welcome to casually tour the garden and orchard thereafter until

11:00 a.m. Our more northern gardening friends are entering the drab season of December but our gardens are still growing strong with vigorous stands of cool season crops including broccoli, kale, cabbages, turnips, cauliflower, asparagus and more.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5:** *What Is a Galveston County Master Gardener?...It takes a village!* 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park (4102-B Main St., La Marque). The 2014 Galveston County Master Gardener Training Course will start in February. Interested in learning more about the Master Gardener Program? Interested in becoming a Master Gardener? Interested in the various programs offered by the Galveston County Master Gardeners? Then this program is for you. A panel of Master Gardeners and I will provide a forum-style presentation discussing the many facets of this volunteer program. No fee but pre-registration required (phone 281-534-3413, ext. 21; e-mail [GALV3@wt.net](mailto:GALV3@wt.net)).

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7:** *Growing Tomatoes from Seed.* 9:00-11:00 a.m. at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park (4102-B Main St., La Marque). Many serious tomato growers grow their own transplants from seeds since they have a wider selection of varieties to choose

from and they can have transplants ready earlier than those available at nurseries. Learn about the secrets of growing tomatoes from seeds by Master Gardener Ira Gervais.

Topics include how to pick the best varieties including heirlooms, where to obtain seeds, planting and growing techniques, and insect and disease control. A limited selection of seeds from several heirloom tomato varieties will be available free-of-charge. No fee but pre-registration required (phone 281-534-3413, ext. 21; e-mail [GALV3@wt.net](mailto:GALV3@wt.net)).

**POINSETTIAS:** Christmas poinsettias are widely available now. Poinsettias like to stay evenly moist, never completely dry or sitting in standing water, though they are often displayed sitting in decorative foil coverings or ornamental containers that do not have drainage holes in the bottom.

Be sure to take your poinsettia out of these types of decorative pots before watering. Water your poinsettia whenever the surface of the soil appears dry and the plant feels light when you lift it.

The best way to water a poinsettia is to place it in a sink and add water until it begins to drip out of the bottom of the pot. Allow the plant to remain in the sink until all extra water has drained out of the pot and then place it back into its ornamental container.

If your poinsettia is sitting in a

container with a saucer underneath, pour out any extra water the saucer captures after watering.

**PRUNING:** Don't be in a hurry to prune woody plants. Very late December through early February is usually the best time to perform most winter pruning.

**CARE OF CHRISTMAS TREES:** Keep the water reservoir in your Christmas tree stand filled with water at all times. A Christmas tree requires lots of water, especially when the home heating system is in operation.

The tree will take up a larger quantity of water at first (as much as a gallon or more a day), but water uptake will slack off later. Tests show that a 6-foot Christmas tree will take up between 1 and 2 pints of water per day over the holiday season.

**CONTROL OF COOL SEASON WEEDS:** Yes, weeds do continue to grow during the winter season. Do not let these unwanted bullies take over your flower beds. A 3-to-4 inch layer of mulch will prevent most cool season weed seeds from sprouting. It is more effective to keep weeds under control with regular efforts than to try to correct a situation that has gotten out of control due to inattention.