

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO CREDIT: William M. Johnson



January 31, 2018



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 Galveston County Master Gardeners' 2018 Spring Plant Sale will be held on Saturday, February 17, at the Galveston County Fairgrounds located off Hwy. 6 in Hitchcock. Master gardeners will have fruit trees, citrus trees, Texas-Tuff perennials and garden artwork in addition to Master Gardener-grown vegetable transplants.

The winter season has provided something for everyone: days warm enough to turn on the air conditioner then nights cool enough to have to turn on the heating system. We've had ample rains at times, some impressive thunder and even some snow (though technical speaking the snow arrived during the fall season).

Some things are more predictable. I am pleased to look out my office window at the end of the work day this time of year and still see ample daylight when I leave. The shortest day of the year in 2017 was Thursday, December 21 (which is also the official start of the winter season). Sunset will occur at 5:58 p.m.

today almost 30 minutes later than it did on December 21.

Longer days also mean that landscapes that were turned brown by January's freezing temperatures will be blanketed with new leaves in varying shades of green and an array of delightfully colored flowers to lift our spirits.



The new gardening year will be in full swing in February with many activities and options for growing and learning. Galveston County Master Gardeners have planned several programs for February that will be of interest to local gardeners.

Hands-on Rose Pruning Demonstrations: Did you know the time to prune your roses is on Valentine's Day? Are you a bit hesitant on what types of roses to prune and not prune? Then be sure to visit the Discovery Garden in Carbide Park on Thursday, February 22, at 10:00 a.m.

Master Gardener and consulting Rosarian John Jons will provide demonstrations on how to properly prune your roses. Please bring hand pruners and gloves (not required but needed if you wish to practice your pruning skills on-site). The Discovery Garden is located in Carbide Park at 4102 Main Street in La Marque. The program is free of charge.

Spring Plant Sale: The Master Gardeners will sponsor their Annual Spring Plant Sale from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 17, at the Galveston County Fairgrounds located on Hwy. 6 in Hitchcock. Plants to be offered include spring vegetable transplants, fruit trees, a wide variety of citrus trees, Texas-Tuff perennials, garden artwork and more. A pre-sale presentation will also be offered from 8:00 - 8:50 a.m. before the sale yard is opened.

Sweet Corn: Sweet corn can be

planted in mid-February to get an early harvest of tasty corn-on-the-cob. If you're a sweet corn connoisseur, plant at weekly intervals thereafter up to mid-June to extend the harvest season.

Potatoes: Irish potatoes should be set out during mid-February. Red LaSoda is a proven red-skinned potato variety for our growing area and will be offered at the upcoming Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale on February 17. Good soil drainage is a must as Irish potatoes will not tolerate "wet feet."

Vegetables: February marks the beginning of spring vegetable growing season. Transplants of tomatoes, peppers and eggplants can be set out in the latter part of February. Visit my website posted with this column to view the vegetables that will be available at Spring Plant Sale. Beets, carrots, collards, Swiss chard, lettuce, kale, kohlrabi, mustard, English peas, radish, spinach and turnips can be planted throughout the month of February.

Stone Fruits: Fertilize stone fruit trees by late February. The general recommendation for fertilizer for bearing stone fruit trees is to apply two cups of a balanced fertilizer per inch of trunk in February. A second application is recommended in mid-May. A fertilizer such as 15-5-10 (commonly used for lawns) is suitable for use on fruit trees and also for shrubs and landscape trees. Spread fertilizer evenly under the drip line

but keep six inches away from the trunk. Be sure to avoid using a weed-and-feed fertilizer that has a herbicide(s) as an ingredient.

Lawns: Yes, most area St. Augustine lawns are dull brown in color because of our January's freezing weather conditions. However, do not fertilize St. Augustine lawns now in the hope of making it green up faster. St. Augustine lawns should not be fertilized this time of year until after the grass starts to actively grow; otherwise, if you fertilize now you will be benefitting winter weeds and some of the nitrogen will be lost before lawn growth starts.

Upcoming Seminars

WHAT: Simply Succulents
WHEN: 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 3
WHERE: Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located in Carbide Park (4102-B Main St. in La Marque). Pre-registration required (e-mail galvcountymgs@gmail.com or phone 281-309-5065).

WHAT: Growing Backyard Citrus
WHEN: 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 3
WHERE: Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located in Carbide Park (4102-B Main St. in La Marque). Pre-registration required (e-mail galvcountymgs@gmail.com or phone 281-309-5065).

