

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO CREDIT: William M. Johnson

Camellias are flowering, shade-loving, small trees or shrubs that are available in a remarkable range of colors, forms, and sizes. Depending on the variety, camellias may bloom in late fall, winter and early spring adding cheer to the garden when little else is in flower.

It's a new gardening year, and here's wishing that all your gardening efforts will be fruitful and enjoyable. The pace of things tends to slow down a bit this time of year in the garden. Although we may continue to plant, prepare beds, harvest winter vegetables and enjoy cool-season flowers, most gardeners

find this a more relaxed time of year.

The month of January is an ideal time to carry out many needed activities that will help ensure healthy and vigorous growing plants when the growing season starts this spring.

Review the following checklist for gardening activities to bring in the New Year.

- To start the New Year, Master Gardeners have planned several educational programs that will be of benefit to area gardeners (see inset). Texas Master Gardeners are



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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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volunteers who have completed an intensive training on a variety of horticultural topics and who provide valuable assistance to the County Extension Office.

- Many gardeners have inquired about the status of our annual Spring Plant Sale which will be held in the Rodeo Arena at the Galveston County Fairgrounds in Jack Brooks Park (Hwy. 6) in Hitchcock. It will be conducted on Saturday, February 18. The sale will be held from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Peaches, apples, avocados, citrus and other fruit trees will be offered in addition to a variety of vegetable transplants for the spring garden. Additional information will be provided in later columns.

- Few shrubs or trees are best purchased and planted while they are in bloom, but camellias are one exception. These notable shrubs are in glorious bloom, and right now is the time to plant them into your landscape. Better yet, now also is a great time to purchase and plant camellias in containers. As beautiful as they are in the ground, camellias adapt happily to life in containers and are particularly impressive when grown that way.

- Keep the lawn free of heavy leaf buildup to prevent smothering the grass. A few leaves won't harm the lawn but they should not be allowed to completely cover the lawn, especially if they become

heavily packed and stay wet for long periods.

- Apply dormant oil sprays to control scale and other hard-to-manage insect pests on landscape trees and shrubs. Read and follow all directions provided by the manufacturer.

- Apply a light application of a complete fertilizer to established beds of winter flowering annuals (pansy, calendula, snapdragon, etc.).

- Continue to select and plant ornamental trees and shrubs to fill landscape needs. Always plan ahead before planting. Remember that like little puppies, ornamental trees and shrubs grow up. In the case of some trees, they can get large so be prudent about what you plant below electrical and telephone lines. The tree-and the homeowner-will ultimately lose in such standoffs.

- Select and order gladiolus corms for February and March planting. Planting at two-week intervals will prolong the flowering period. Choose some of the newer varieties for a vivid color display.

- We know that, at some point, it will likely get cold enough this winter that tropical plants in our landscapes will need protection. Plan for it now by deciding what tender plants you will choose to protect and what plants will be left to fend for themselves. Make sure you

GARDENERS' CHECKLIST FOR JANUARY

have enough materials on hand to protect those plants you will cover.

Suitable materials include plastic, fabric sheets, blankets, tarps and cardboard boxes to name a few. Each plant to be protected needs to have a covering large enough to extend to the ground. It also helps to have stakes available to drive into the ground around plants to help support the coverings and bricks to weight down the bottom edges of the covering.

- Last but not least, don't forget to plant those bulbs that you put in your refrigerator for a chill treatment. They won't flower in the fridge!

NOTE: Please print as a shaded inset, if possible. Thanks!

Upcoming Programs

Growing Blueberries. 9:00 - 10:30 a.m., Saturday, January 12
Kitchen Gardening. 1:00 - 3:00 p.m., Saturday, January 19
Wedge Grafting . . . hands-on demonstrations, Saturday, 9:00 - 10:30 a.m., January 26

All programs conducted at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located at 4102-B Main Street (Carbide Park) in La Marque. No fee but pre-registration requested (phone: 281-309-5065; e-mail galvcountrymgs@gmail.com).

