

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO CREDIT: William M. Johnson



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

Pansies dependably provide color in our winter landscapes and did not suffer cold injury from January's cold snaps. Pansies are very cold-tolerant plants and will easily handle temperatures down to the mid-twenties and will continue blooming.

Nighttime temperatures into the lower thirties requiring heating units to operate? Check! Daytime temperatures into the seventies requiring AC units to occasionally operate. Check! Heavy rainfall. Check! Wind gusts to near 45 MPH (in the Discovery Garden located in Carbide

Park). Check! Beautiful sunny days on occasion. Double check!

Overall, the winter season has been a bit weird especially when air conditioning is required on a given winter day and heating is needed during that night. Nevertheless,

I still enjoy our winter (and spring and fall) seasons.

Over the next few weeks, landscapes will be blanketed with new leaves in varying shades of green and an array of colorful 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.

Pansies: Cold snaps have occurred on a weekly basis thus far in January. While some plants in home landscapes sustained damage, landscapes with pansies still displayed glimmers of color. Pansies are very cold-tolerant plants and will easily handle temperatures down to the mid-twenties and continue to bloom.

Pruning: The ideal time period to prune most landscape trees is during the winter season when trees are dormant. Major pruning of landscape trees should be completed by mid-February.

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 are not grown from seed like most other vegetables. Instead, pieces from the potato itself are used to start new plants. Home gardeners should purchase good seed potatoes that are free of disease and chemicals. Do not buy potatoes from a grocery store for planting.

Seed potatoes contain buds or "eyes" which sprout and grow into plants. Seed potatoes will be on sale at the Master Gardener

Spring Plant Sale to be conducted at the County Fairgrounds in Hitchcock on Saturday, February 16. Whether you purchase seed potatoes at the plant sale or elsewhere, this is a reminder to get them in the ground by mid-February. Recommended varieties for our growing area include Red LaSota (which will be available at the Spring Plant Sale) and Kennebec (a white-skinned variety).

Lawns: Yes, most area St. Augustine lawns are dull brown in color because of our on-and-off periods of cool 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.

New Trees and Shrubs: When buying plants, the biggest is not always the best, especially when dealing with bare-root plants. Medium to small size trees (4-to-6 feet) are usually faster to become established and more effective in the landscape than the large sizes. Don't fertilize newly set out trees or shrubs until after they have started to grow, and then only very lightly the first year.

Vegetables: The recommended time period to set out transplants of broccoli and cabbage is February 1 - March 15. Given the mild

winter weather conditions this year, I recommend setting these vegetables out as soon as possible. Beets, carrots, collards, Swiss chard, lettuce, kale, kohlrabi, mustard, English peas, radish, spinach and turnips can be planted throughout the month of February.

Gladiolus: Begin planting gladiolus bulbs from mid-February into March. Space planting dates at 2-week intervals to extend the flower season. Their wide range of vibrant colors, sizes and flower types make gladiolus flowers particularly useful for flower arrangements.

Fruit Trees: Peaches and plums have already started to display their beautiful flowers and the promise of spring can be seen.

Upcoming Program

Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale & Seminar: 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 16, at the Galveston County Fairgrounds in Hitchcock, TX. Visit the Master Gardener website (<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston>) for details and updates.

