

**February 13, 2015**

**AGRIVIEW**

**By: Rick Hirsch**  
**County Extension Agent**

**Recent weather conditions have been ideal for getting the spring garden off to a good start. Two major steps are buying the right varieties and planting at the right time.**

**Proper planting time is important if maximum quality and production are expected. Since such warm-season crops as tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, beans, squash, cucumbers, okra, watermelon, sweet potatoes, pumpkins and cantaloupes are sensitive to cold temperatures and can be killed by even the lightest frost, gardeners must be aware of the average date of the last frost for their particular area.**

**According to the National Weather Service, the average date of last frost for Henderson County is March 19<sup>th</sup>. This date is average which only means there is a 50% chance frost may occur at a later date.**

**It is also wise to wait until the soil has warmed before planting seeds of warm season crops. Soil temperature at planting depth should be in the upper 60's or into the 70's to increase seed germination and insure a good stand.**

**Some vegetable crops are cold-hardy and can tolerate light frosts of freezes. These include beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, peas, lettuce, onions, parsley, radishes, spinach, cauliflower, collards, mustard, kale and turnips. These can be planted in late winter or early spring.**

I would suggest planting some warm-season crops in late spring as they will produce more high quality produce. During the summer, such heat-tolerant crops as southern peas, okra, eggplant, sweet potatoes, squash and small fruited tomatoes do best. Plant the best adapted varieties that are available as this can mean the difference between gardening success and failure.

Regardless of the soil in your garden, it can be improved by adding organic matter. If your soil is heavy clay, the addition of organic matter improves both drainage and aeration and also allows better root development. Liberal amounts of organic matter help sandy soil hold water and nutrients.

Where do you get organic matter? This magical stuff which improves soil and serves as a food source for soil fungi and bacteria comes in the form of peat moss, compost, hay, grass clippings, barnyard fertilizer, shredded bark, leaves or even shredded newspapers.

When adding organic matter to soil, supply enough to physically change the soil structure. Ideally, at least one-third of the final soil mix should be some type of organic material. To accomplish this, spread a 2 to 4 inch layer of organic material over the garden surface and till it to a depth of at least 6 to 10 inches. Apply the recommended rate of fertilizer over the garden surface at the same time, and till it in along with the organic material.

#### **HENDERSON COUNTY WILDLIFE COMMITTEE:**

The Henderson County Wildlife Committee started 2015 off with its annual installation and awards banquet this past Monday night. Reid Rhodes of Athens was installed as the 2015 Chairman of the twelve member committee. He will oversee

the activities of the county-wide committee as they work towards developing educational programs designed to bring about solutions to problems common to the land managers and sportsmen.

Other officers installed to help direct the committee were Secretary Marla McNemar of Athens and Treasurer Keith Butler of Malakoff. Dan Sexton and Cole Boyd of Athens, Mandy Johnson of Montalba and Tucker Slack of Tennessee Colony were installed as new members to assist the committee in various programs. Both the officers and new members were officially installed by Henderson County Leadership Advisory Board member Bob Miars of Murchison.

Newly installed Chairman Reid Rhodes stated that the committee has several programs slated for this year including the Spring Rendezvous, a Lake and Pond Field Day, Hunter Education Classes and a Fall Hunters Rendezvous.

**IMPORTANT DATES:**

- February 26<sup>th</sup> - Sandyland Vegetable Conference - Cain Center - Room B, Athens - 6:00 p.m. - \$15.00/person - 2.5 C. E. U.'s
- March 19<sup>th</sup> - Henderson County Master Gardener Association 2015 Spring Conference - First United Methodist Church - Athens - 5:00 p.m. - Tickets \$20.00 available at the Extension Office or any Henderson County Master Gardener

*Rick Hirsch is the Henderson County Extension Agent - Agriculture for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit our web page at <http://henderson.agrilife.org/>.*