



HORTICULTURE NEWS

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Notes from my desk: May has been a busy month and I have received many calls about pecan trees with brown leaves in which June Beetles were the primary culprit.

Weed ID and control is another big issue this time of year, remember the earlier the treatment the more effective.

This abnormally colder winter also affected everything from less flowering, decreased budding and fruit production of fruit trees to bringing in new and interesting insects.

Remember, the Horticulture Committee is holding their annual Fruit and Vegetable Show this month at Central Mall in Port Arthur.

Also, this year's Master Gardener Short Course will be held in July with over 25 speakers presenting programs on topics relating to all aspects of gardening and is offered to any one who is interested in attending.

As always I hope you enjoy the contents of this newsletter and feel free to call or email us with any questions!

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In The Garden ~ Earth-Kind

All plants from the nursery or garden center truly have a place in an Earth-Kind landscape. It's not which plant you use, but where you put it. Earth-Kind Landscaping uses research-proven techniques to provide maximum garden and landscape enjoyment while preserving and protecting the environment. The objective of Earth-Kind Landscaping is to combine the best of organic and traditional gardening and landscaping principles to create a horticulture system based on real world effectiveness and environmental responsibility. Individuals using Earth-Kind landscaping principles and practices can create beautiful, easy-care landscapes, while conserving and protecting natural resources. Three different plant zones can be incorporated into an Earth-Kind landscape:

- ⇒ **Regular Water Zone**
- ⇒ **Occasional Water Zone**
- ⇒ **Natural Rainfall Zone**

IN THE GARDEN

Plants in the “Regular Watering Zone” would require watering once every week or more once established, in the absence of rain. Plants in the “Occasional Watering Zone” would require watering once every two or three weeks once established, in the absence of rain. Plants in the “Natural Rainfall Zone” would require only natural rainfall once established.

By zoning the plants in the landscape according to their water requirements, you prevent the situation of having to overwater one plant type to meet the need of another.

Every region of Texas has a pallet of plants to choose from which are adapted to the soil, temperature extremes and pest problems of the area. The challenge for the gardener is to categorize the plants based on expected water requirements. By using the categories of natural rainfall, occasional watering and regular watering, most gardeners can place the plants from their region into these water-use zones.

The following categorization is often used for areas of 30+ inches of rainfall:

- ⇒ **Regular Watering Zone:** turf grass and annual flowers
- ⇒ **Occasional Watering Zone:** perennial flowers, woody shrubs or vines
- ⇒ **Natural Watering Zone:** tough woods shrubs and vines plus all trees

In Texas there are hundreds of plants to choose from for use in home landscapes. Trying to find just the right plant for a specific location can be challenging. Ensuring that your selection is also well adapted to the environment makes this decision even harder.

The Earth-Kind Plant Selector, part of the Texas Urban Landscape Guide can be an extremely useful tool for this difficult task. This searchable database provides users with the opportunity to select plant materials based on factors such as height, width, flower color, sun or shade, bloom period, leaf character, as well as several other matching criteria.

Each plant in the database is rated for heat tolerance, drought tolerance, pest tolerance, soil requirement and fertility requirement based on region. The Earth-Kind Index value (which ranges from 1-10) is a measurement based on all 5 of these resource efficiency categories. The higher the number, the more resource efficient a plant is in that region. Plants with an Earth-Kind Index value of 8 or higher are considered to be extremely resource efficient and are generally heat tolerant, drought tolerant, pest tolerant, with minimal soil or fertility requirements for the selected region.

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/plantselector/>

Water will always be an important issue even now when we aren't that far behind on our rainfall total for the year. A large portion of Texas continues to be in a drought and there are cities north of us that would like to have access to our water. Anything we can do locally to conserve the resources we have will benefit everyone concerned and Earth-Kind practices will go a long way toward that goal.





42nd Annual

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

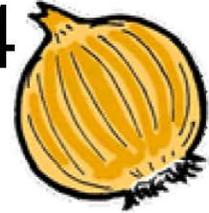
Jefferson County

Fruit and Vegetable Show

Saturday, June 14



Central Mall



(365 & Hwy 69, Port Arthur)



Entries received from 9:00 - Noon

Judging will begin at Noon

Enter your fresh or processed
fruits, vegetables and herbs!



Anyone can enter!

Win Ribbons and Prizes



Sponsored by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Jefferson County Horticulture Committee, Jefferson County Master Gardener's Association, Central Mall Merchant's Association and area nurserymen

For more information and a copy of the show rules and regulations Call 835-8461 or 727-2191 Ext. 8461

Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aids or services are requested to contact Cary Erickson, Jefferson County Human Resources Director at (409) 839-2391 five working days prior to the meeting so appropriate arrangements can be made.

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status.

The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the County Commissioners' Courts of Texas cooperating.

HORTICULTURE TIPS

- * Young pests are easier to control in the garden than mature ones and the options are often less toxic. Also, by the time the damage is done, it is too late to benefit from spraying. At that point the best option may be to pull up the plants and start over with another crop.
- * There are a few hot-weather crops that can be planted now. Common summer vegetables include okra, sweet potatoes, southern peas and melons of various types.



- * Mulch all garden areas with at least 3 inches of spent hay, leaves or pine needles to deter weeds and help keep the soil moist.



- * Continue planting warm-season flowers since things that bloomed in the spring may not be blooming as well. Foliage color is a good way to keep the summer landscape colorful. Copper plant, caladiums, sweet potato vine and variegated or colorful types of cannas are among the many great choices for color in the hot season.
- * Watch for aphids, caterpillars, whiteflies, mealy bugs and spider mites on your bedding plants. Leaf diseases (including leaf spot fungi, bacteria blights and powdery mildew) are also common in warm weather. Sprinklers that wet the foliage frequently can make these diseases much worse.
- * Check rose foliage for any pest or disease signs. Insecticidal soap and horticultural oil sprays directed upward to thoroughly cover the lower leaf surfaces will control mites and aphids. To reduce black spot, minimize foliage wetting and provide protective sprays with a labeled product.
- * Maintain berms for watering around new woody ornamentals. Keep the soil in the berm mulched to slow weeds and evaporation losses from the soil surface. Maintaining a wide mulched area around young trees and shrubs will give them the best chance of making fast early growth plus protect them.

HORTICULTURE TIPS

- * Fertilize fruit trees 3 years old or less with a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 product to the area beneath the entire branch-spread of the tree. Established trees with less than a foot of new growth can be fertilized also. Otherwise, skip the fertilizer to avoid excessive vigor. Snip out any shoots emerging from the base of the tree or vigorous upright shoots emerging from scaffold limbs back to where they attach to the tree.
- * If you have bare spots in your lawn, now is a good time to plug some new turf into any areas larger than a foot in diameter. Take a spading fork or other tool to loosen the soil surface a little prior to planting. Then water that area daily for a week or two so the grass is able to establish well. Use the same technique as above if putting in a new lawn.
- * As you are looking over your landscape from different vantage points think about checking catch basins under flower pots and gutters for areas that don't drain well. These are breeding grounds for mosquitoes and should be emptied or, in the case of gutters, repaired to prevent standing water.



“The master of the garden is the one who waters it, trims the branches, plants the seeds, and pulls the weeds. If you merely stroll through the garden, you are but an acolyte.”

— [Vera Nazarian, *The Perpetual Calendar of Inspiration*](#)



Jefferson County Master Gardener Shortcourse

Learn about soils, fertilizers, flowers, herbs, fruit and pecans, vegetables, plant diseases, insects, weeds, pesticide safety and other horticulture-related subjects.

WHEN

- July 14th thru July 25th
- 9am until 4pm
- Cost \$175 - Includes 500 page manual
- For more information call, 835-8461 or 727-2191, Ext 8461
- Pre-Registration Required by June 27th

Information can also be found on our website <http://jefferson.agrilife.org>

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Programs conducted by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.

The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the County Commissioners' Courts of Texas cooperating.



Purple Flash

With its nearly black leaves overlaid with dark purple and white swirls, the ornamental pepper Purple Flash – a new Texas Superstar plant – can be used in landscapes as a backup or a stand-alone bedding plant, according to a Texas A&M AgriLife Research horticulturist.

“Though it has bright colors, the overall effect is dark, so it’s more often used as a foliage plant,” said Dr. Brent Pemberton, Agrilife Research ornamental horticulturist and chair of the Texas Superstar executive board, Overton. “The red peppers come later in the season, and they’re showy in themselves, but Purple Flash is still used in flower borders or mass plantings.”

Purple Flash, *Capsicum annuum*, is fast growing, Pemberton noted, but it rarely gets taller than 12 to 15 inches and can also be used “very effectively” in mixed containers. “It’s a nice, semi-compact plant,” he said.

All Texas Superstar plants undergo extensive tests throughout the state by Agrilife Research and Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service horticulturists, Pemberton said. To be designated a Texas Superstar, a plant must perform well for consumers and commercial growers throughout Texas, Pemberton said. Superstars must also be easy to propagate, which ensures the plants are not only widely available throughout Texas but are also reasonably priced.

In addition to disease resistance, summer plants like Purple Flash must tolerate Texas heat well, and Purple Flash has proven itself exceptional in this regard too, Pemberton said. In fact, Purple Flash doesn’t simply tolerate heat well; it thrives in it, said Wayne Pianta, PanAmerican Seeds representative, Fort Worth. PanAmerican released Purple Flash along with a number of other ornamental peppers in 2008.

“It’s like a lot of the ornamental peppers,” Pianta said. “It seems to actually do better in the heat. It loves the sun and heat Of Texas landscapes.”

With its variegations of color, Purple Flash looks great with some of the other PanAmerican flowering plants that have done well in Texas trials, such as the East Texas bedding plant trials, which are conducted by Pemberton, Pianta said.

FEATURED PLANT

“Because Purple Flash provides its landscape color from its foliage, you don’t have to wait for it to bloom,” Pianta said. “This feature also makes it the perfect companion to flowering plants that have been previous Texas Superstar winners like Angelonia Serena.”

Though it likes sun and heat, Purple Flash will also tolerate partial shade. It won’t develop as deep variegations of black and white with purple flashes in partial shade, but it’s still a beautiful plant, Pianta said.

In Texas, Purple Flash can be planted in the spring, late spring - or even into the summer – as long as it is watered regularly during establishment, Pemberton said. It prefers full sun but can tolerate partial shade. It is also tolerant of a wide variety of soils and potting mixes as long as they are well drained. With a little care, it should last through Texas hot summers and into the fall.

Texas Superstar is a registered trademark owned by AgriLife Research, a state agency that is part of the Texas A&M University System. More information about the Texas Superstar program can be found at <http://texassuperstar.com/>.

Did You Know?

Although ornamental peppers can be grown as perennials in U.S. Department of Agriculture zones 9b through 11, they are usually grown as annuals. They can also be grown indoors and make attractive houseplants.

Ornamental peppers are safe to eat, but they are normally grown for their attractive color and ornamental qualities rather than their flavor, which you may find disappointing. Most people consider them too hot to enjoy anyway. Peppers bred for culinary use produce better fruit for eating.

Growing ornamental peppers in containers lets you enjoy the colorful fruit up close. Keep the potting soil evenly moist and use a liquid houseplant fertilizer or a slow-release houseplant fertilizer as directed.

Gardening Know How

by Jackie Carrol



Line Trimmer Damage

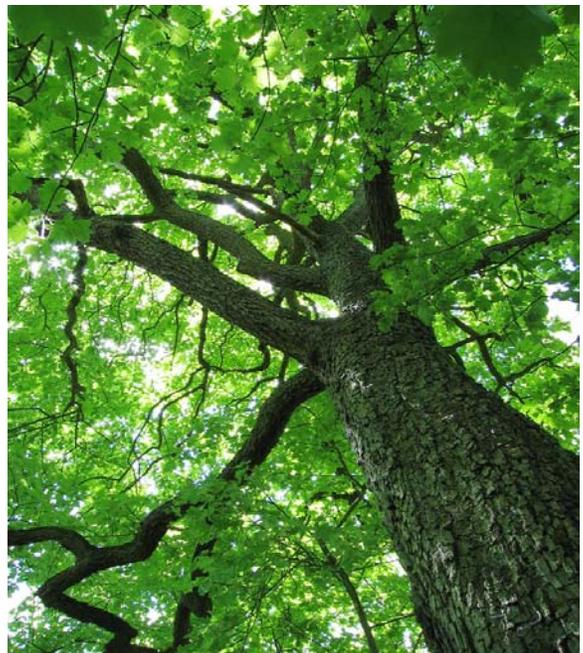


I was recently called out to a residence with a Southern Magnolia that did not look healthy...I didn't see any apparent insect or disease activity that could be the cause of its decline. What I did see was a wound at the base of the trunk and after talking with the owners, it had to be line trimmer damage. Tools make our jobs easier, and the ability to make and use tools can distinguish us from other animals. But what if we use a tool the wrong way and actually harm something we are trying to help? That is just what happens when we use string trimmers aggressively near the bases of our trees and shrubs.

String trimmers, sometimes called weed-whackers, are powerful little engines that propel a single or dual plastic string at high enough speeds to chop down whatever is in its path. This tool can be very helpful in cutting grass in places your larger mower just can't reach, like around trees or next to the house.

The problem with the string trimmer is that it can damage tree trunks if it gets too close. It doesn't matter who wields the string trimmer, — you, your significant other or the guy who cuts your lawn — we all fall into the trap of trying to get that last blade of grass. Then WHAP, WHAP, WHAP, and your tree has a gash in it where bark used to be.

You might think, "So what? The tree's trunk is tough, so I don't need to worry about any small cuts or nicks." The fact is that the area getting damaged, the bark or phloem, is responsible for protecting the tree and for transporting energy made by leaves down to the roots. On the outside of the tree things go down, and on the inside, in the xylem, things go up. If you damage the bark, you damage its ability to transport vital energy to other parts of the plant, which can result in weak, disease-prone trees and even death. Many homeowners cause more damage to their trees through use of line trimmers than insects, disease or poisons.





Description and symptoms of line trimmer damage to look for:

- ◆ Peeling bark around the base of trees
 - ◆ Exposed inner tissue layers at the injury site
 - ◆ Die-back of branches
 - ◆ Weak, sparse leaves on the tree compared to others in close proximity
 - ◆ Yellowing leaves and general appearance of sickness
- ◆ Damage causes a disruption of the flow of water and nutrients up and down tree trunk
 - ◆ The more damage incurred, the more susceptible tree is to insects and diseases
 - ◆ Trees can be completely girdled from microbial attack following injury
 - ◆ Decay fungi become active on the wood surface and structural deterioration of wood tissues beneath the wound will often occur
 - ◆ If damage is severe, extending completely around the entire circumference of the trunk, the tree could die in the near future

How do we turn the string trimmer away from its reckless path of destruction? First, keep it far from the trunks of any plants, big or small.

Have a conversation with the person who cuts your lawn about avoiding trunks. Then put rings of mulch around each tree in the middle of your grass. The mulch will not only create a physical barrier between grass and trunk, it will also decompose and create nutrients for your tree, as well as help to suppress weeds.

Use mulch at a depth of about eight inches in the shape of a doughnut with the middle of the mulch ring much less in height so it doesn't touch the trunk. Piling mulch up against the trunk of a tree can cause rot.

If you are not sure if your plants are being damaged by string trimmers, walk your yard and look at the bases of your trees. If you see any cuts or nicks, you know what the cause is and how damaging it can be. String trimmers can be great tools if used correctly and if your plants are properly protected by mulch beds or rings. So be careful and protect those plants!



TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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We're on the Web!

<http://jefferson.agrilife.org>

The Jefferson County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service educates Texans in all areas of agriculture including horticulture, marine sciences, environmental stewardship, youth and adult life skills, human capital and leadership, and community economic development. We offer the knowledge resources of Texas A&M and Prairie View A&M Universities to educate Texans for self-improvement, individual action and community problem solving. We, the Jefferson County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, are part of a statewide educational network and a member of the Texas A&M University System linked in a unique partnership with the nationwide Cooperative Extension System and Jefferson County Commissioners Court.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Managing Bee Hives

Thursday, June 12th, 10:00 am to noon

Orange County Extension Office

Open to the public, bring protection gear!

Small Acreage Horticultural Crops Seminar Series

Grafting Vegetable Crops: Principles and Practices (Webinar)

Thursday, June 19th, 9:00 am to noon

Hosted by Orange County Extension Office

Open to the public

Call to register: 409-882-7010