



# HORTICULTURE NEWS

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**Notes from my desk:** on your marks, get ready, spring is just around the corner! I saw my first red robin...

**But first,** we just completed two successful programs which were the Urban Fruit Tree Workshop and the Spring Vegetable Seminar. Hopefully you got a chance to attend one or both of these programs. They were both very well attended and the information will be useful for years to come. Establishing or maintaining a landscape can be a daunting task whether vegetables, flowers, trees or a lawn are the main focus. We continue to plan for programs to address these important issues and always appreciate any suggestions or ideas to add to our programming efforts.

**Phone calls** from people with questions have begun in earnest and there is always something new besides the old standbys. Weeds and pest in the lawn, pruning, and best vegetable varieties are just some of the subjects that are recurrent. Answering these questions requires many resources: a few are experience, common sense and research.

**As always,** do not hesitate to contact me with your questions, suggestions or program needs.

**Now** lets get ready for spring...

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## IN THE GARDEN



**C**ontrolling weeds can be one of the most troublesome jobs associated with producing vegetables in a home garden.

New gardeners would do well to consider weed problems when selecting a garden site. Old-time gardeners have found that where certain weeds occur, it's best to forget about planting a garden. Areas that are infested with perennial weeds such as Bermuda grass, Johnson grass, and nutsedge (nut grass) are not suited to vegetable gardening.

There is no herbicide that can be used to selectively control these pests in home gardens, and controlling them by hand, hoe, and plow is very difficult.

In this modern day when someone thinks about weed control, they usually think about chemical weed control. Indeed, chemical weed killers—herbicides—are essential tools in the production of most crops, including certain vegetables. But for the home gardener other “older” methods of control are still important. Herbicides may be used under certain conditions to control some weeds in some vegetables grown in the home garden. But there is no herbicide that can be used on all vegetable crops that will control all weeds. The use of herbicides in a home garden requires special planning and careful application. For most home gardeners who grow a number of vegetables on a small area, the use of herbicides is not practical.

The first step in controlling weeds in the garden is to prepare a good seedbed in which to plant vegetables. All weed growth should be destroyed and the seedbed should be smooth, firm, and free of clods. This allows vegetable seeds to be planted and covered to the correct depth so plants will emerge uniformly and grow rapidly to get ahead of the first crop of weeds.

Most annual weeds can be controlled by cultivation. Annual broad-leaf weeds are easily removed while they are in the seedling stage. Cultivations should be made to control each flush of weeds that emerge, usually within a few days after a rain. At this time weed seedlings are easily uprooted, even with hand-pushed garden plows, hoes, and other hand tools. If the weeds are allowed to get very large before control measures are taken, their root systems will develop to such an extent that removal with a garden plow or hoe will be difficult, if not impossible. The old saying, “nip it in the bud,” certainly applies to weed control in the garden.





The first few weeks after vegetables are planted, is the most important time to control weeds. After the vegetables get well established and start shading the ground, they become competitive and do a good job of preventing new weeds from becoming established.

Mulches of plastic, grass clippings, straw, leaves, and other such materials may also be used to help control weeds. In addition, mulches help conserve soil moisture. Some gardeners have found old newspapers to be good mulching material.

For best results with mulches it is important to remove all weeds by cultivation, hoeing, or hand-pulling before applying mulching materials. A good mulch prevents light from reaching the soil surface and prevents weed seedlings from becoming established. Porous mulches such as hay or straw should be several inches thick to accomplish this purpose.

By following good cultural practices and using mulches along with timely cultivation and hand-hoeing, most annual weeds can be controlled in home gardens without excessive “backbreaking labor”. In fact, if done in time, the exercise required to control weeds in home gardens would be beneficial to most of us. If nothing else, it should stimulate our appetites and make us appreciate those delicious vegetables being produced.

**Source:** Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist

*“What a man needs in gardening is a cast-iron back,  
with a hinge in it.”*

*Charles Dudley Warner*

## HORTICULTURE TIPS

- \* As you complete the harvest season of a crop, go ahead and pull the plants to prepare the soil for the next crop. Adding compost to the soil is important plus if you are planning to replant soon, mix a cup of turf-type fertilizer per 25 feet of bed area. Water the soil to settle it in and start to release the nutrients to be available for the next crop.

When the danger of frost is past, it is time to plant seeds and transplants of warm-season vegetables. Don't delay in getting your tomato plants in the ground. The goal is to get them into production before the heat of summer arrives, shutting down production. Also other crops that don't do good in the heat, such as cucumbers and snap beans, should be planted before the end of April.

Keep an eye out for pests. If found, blast aphids with an insecticidal-soap solution. A strong blast of water will help to dislodge spider mites. And a spray containing bacillus thuringiensis is the least toxic and effective remedy for caterpillars.

- \* As the last average frost date passes, start planting transplants of warm-season flowers. There are many great flowers to choose from are petunias, pentas, Black-foot daisy, begonias, salvias, and zinnias. You can also direct sow sunflowers, cosmos, marigold and celosia. Hanging baskets and decorative pots are an excellent way to give instant appeal to your landscape.

As the weather continues to warm, some additional transplant options are lantana, periwinkle, plumbago, purslane and yellow bells. Adding a turf-type fertilizer to both cool-season and warm-season flowers beds will maintain vigor and is critical to keep the blooms coming. Periodic use of a water soluble fertilizer for containers will keep them impressive.

- \* It is best to plant woody ornamentals right away since hot weather will arrive shortly. Pruning of woody ornamentals should already be completed but you can still make a few minor cuts. Shear hedges to build density, keeping the tops narrower than the base .

In April, prune spring-blooming woody ornamentals after they have completed their blooming season. These plants such as azalea, quince and Virginia sweetspire don't need a lot of pruning, just some minor shaping. Roses will be in their big spring-blooming cycle so as they need it cut back faded blooms to the first leaf with five leaflets. This may not be practical on shrub roses but you can wait until after the bloom cycle to do a light overall shearing.

Fertilize established shrubs and trees that have not reached their mature size by applying a turf-type fertilizer at a rate of 1-2 cups per inch of trunk diameter, or 2 cups per 100 sq. feet of bed area. Young shrubs and trees can use a double application a month apart using the same calculation as above to continue good vigor.

## HORTICULTURE TIPS

- \* This month many types of fruit trees are blooming and hopefully a late frost won't spoil the crop. If the tree isn't too big, covering the entire plant to the ground with a tarp may be sufficient to protect the crop.

Prime pruning time has passed, but you can still do some minor trimming early in the month of March. This is especially important if you have vigorous unfruitful shoots in the interior of the tree or suckers emerging from the base of the trunk.

Plum curculios start to attack plum and peaches soon after bloom. If that has been a problem in the past then start spraying right after the blooms fall. Spot-treat any areas of scale insects with a summer or horticultural oil spray. Direct the spray to coat any areas of scale you find on the tree.

In the first few years of a young fruit tree, it will benefit from additional fertilizer. Use a turf-type fertilizer applied at a rate of 2 cups of fertilizer per inch of trunk diameter. Rake it into the soil surface and water it in. Mature trees will do fine with half this rate of fertilizer. Then replenish mulch to a depth of about 3-4 inches to deter weeds and hold in soil moisture, keeping it away from the tree trunk.

- \* Cool-season weeds are actively growing and starting to set and mature seeds. Mow the weeds regularly and if they are scattered around the lawn consider some hand pulling. It is too late to spray for these cool-season weeds. Warm-season weeds are already sprouting in parts of the county so it might be too late to for a pre-emergence weed control product. The best weed control is a dense, healthy turf, so make plans to mow, water and fertilize properly this year. This will build a lawn that chokes out most weed species.

Lawn fertilizing will begin the first of April so choose one with a high nitrogen content, such as 3-1-2 or 4-1-2. If you have used fertilizer for several years and returned clipping, your lawn may need a smaller amount of nitrogen. As with all plants, water the lawn well to dissolve the fertilizer and start to move it down into the grass-root zone.

**Source:** Activity Checklist by Skip Richter



TEXAS A&M  
**AGRILIFE**  
EXTENSION



Landscape Design and  
Rainwater Harvesting Seminar

Saturday, March 7, 2015  
8:00 to noon / \$10.00 per person

Beaumont Botanical Garden Center

6088 Babe Zaharias  
Beaumont, Texas

RSVP to **409-835-8461**



**Speakers: Jefferson County Master Gardeners, Tony Lucenti and Toni Clark (Landscape Design Specialist) Jerry White (Rainwater Harvesting Specialist)**



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

## Mayhaw

**M**ayhaws (*Crataegus aestivalis*, *C. rufula*, or *C. opaca*) are a native species of hawthorn that grow from east Texas to Florida. In the wild they are usually found in swampy areas; however they will grow well when planted in a home landscape or orchard. The fruit is small and apple-like and ripens during late April and early May. They are not good for fresh eating, but are prized for making jelly, jams and even wine.



### ◇ Varieties

'Super Spur' and 'Super Berry' seem to have the best yield and tree form. Mild winters can be a chilling problem for 'Super Spur' in our area. 'Big Red', 'T.O. Warren Superberry', and 'Reliable' are late bloomers. 'Mason' and 'Georgia Gem' have attractive fruit and are good trees.

### ◇ Soil Requirements

Since Mayhaws are found in swampy areas they are tolerant of wet soils, but grow best in moist, well-drained soils. Soil should have a pH 6.0 to 6.5 prior to planting.

### ◇ Propagation

Mayhaws can be propagated by the seed of ripe fruit, by rooted cuttings, or by grafting the mayhaw onto a rootstock. Seed viability varies greatly between mayhaw trees. Many of the seedlings will be true to type. This is very unusual when propagating by seed. Cutting may be rooted under mist systems or in a humidity chamber in the summer. A root-promoting hormone dip may help rooting. Of course, cuttings will produce fruit exactly like the fruit of the mother tree. Mayhaws appear to be initially graft-compatible with any hawthorne. The parsley hawthorne has been considered an excellent rootstock. Mayhaw seedlings are probably the best choice as a rootstock, especially in damp soils.

### ◇ Fertilizer Requirements

Established trees should receive one pound of 5-10-10 slow release fertilizer per inch of trunk diameter in February or early March. Repeat the application in late August or early September if the trees are not vigorous and if adequate water is available to prevent scorching. One year-old trees should receive 1/2 pound of 5-10-10 in February and 1/4 pound in March and May. Broadcast the fertilizer evenly under the tree to avoid burning the roots. Do not apply fertilizer within eight inches of the trunk. Mayhaw trees are long-lived and may have a 30-foot diameter canopy after 17 years and grow to 30 feet tall.

## FEATURED PLANT

### ◇ **Training**

Train mayhaws to a single trunk at the base. The first branches should start at 18 inches or more if equipment will be operated under the tree. Mayhaws have a tendency to produce an open canopy at maturity. Occasional pruning is necessary to open the tree up for greater light penetration. The trees will adapt to a modified central leader training system when one main trunk is promoted by pruning. This is a common method of training apple trees. Mayhaws will also adapt to a multiple leader training system utilized by southern pear and apple growers to combat fire blight infections and weather damage. Fire blight occurs on mayhaws, but is usually not devastating to the crop.

### ◇ **Harvesting**

Since mayhaws are grown in the wet floodplains along rivers the traditional harvesting procedure takes advantage of the water as a mode of transportation. Fruit ripens in early May, falls into the nearby water, and moves downstream. It can also be harvested by someone shaking the tree so that the fruit falls into a tarp or canvas under the tree.

### ◇ **Insects, Pests and Disease**

The plum curculio, aphids, flat-headed apple borers, white flies, and foliage feeders are known to attack mayhaws. Plum curculio has caused extensive damage to fruit in some locations and requires a spray program as part of an integrated pest management program in most areas. Deer and rabbits can destroy a containerized plot of nursery grown mayhaws or an orchard in a short period of time. Quince rust is the most common disease of mayhaws, and was severe in East Texas in 1990. Cedar-apple rust and juniper rust also attack mayhaws. The best way to control rust is to make selections from rust-free plants in a heavy rust year. Several fungicides are used to control rust diseases in apple orchards.

**Source:** Marty Baker and George Ray McEachern, Extension Horticulturists

*“One is wise to cultivate the tree  
that bears fruit in our soul”  
Henry David Thoreau*



TEXAS A&M  
**AGRI LIFE**  
EXTENSION

## Jefferson County Master Gardener



# Spring Plant Sale And Market Day

**Saturday, March 28 8am—2pm**

**Jack Brooks Regional Airport, Hangar 4**

**Flowers, Vegetables, Citrus Trees!**



**Something for Everyone!**

**Free Admission!  
Free Parking!**

**Food  
Booth**



**Kid's Corner**

**Bring Your  
Own Wagon  
or Cart**

**Vendor Space Available**

For more information,  
Call Ann Bares (409) 892-  
7351 or the Texas A&M  
AgriLife Extension Office  
(409) 835-8461



**PLEASE – Service Animals only**

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

### Possible Impact of Emerald Ash Borer in Texas



Last summer the Arkansas Agriculture Department and USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) announced that [emerald ash borer](#) (EAB) had been discovered in five counties in southwest Arkansas, bringing this pest only one county away from Texas. Despite the fact that it feeds only on ash (trees in the genus *Fraxinus*), the EAB is considered to be the most destructive forest pest ever seen in north America.

Because it is getting so close to Texas, I thought I would speculate a little about what impact EAB might have on our state.

The good news is that almost certainly the economic impact of this pest in Texas will be less than its impact in other states like Michigan and Ohio. That's because ash is less frequently planted here, and it makes up less of the native forest canopy compared to the Midwest. In east Texas, where most ash is located, less than 2% of the forest canopy consists of ash. Fewer trees generally means less economic damage, and lower visual impact to city streets.

According to Missouri Forest Entomologist, Rob Lawrence, that state's average ash percentage on urban streets is 14% with a few parks reaching 30-40%; but in its native forest ash constitutes only 3% of trees. According to entomologist Eric Rebek in Oklahoma, in his state's two biggest cities, Oklahoma City and Tulsa, ash trees make up 10% of planted trees; but only 2% of the hardwood harvest in natural forests.

Compare these numbers with ash numbers in Iowa (average of 16.5% of urban trees, some communities up to 87% ash), Pennsylvania (14% of all trees). Even Colorado reports ash composition of city trees at between 15 and 25% of all shade trees. In the Chicago area, where EAB has hit hard, 12% of city trees are estimated to be ash, and about 15% in Minneapolis.

The other thing in Texas' favor is that there has now been over ten years of research on control of EAB; and some effective treatments are available for at-risk trees. The [most effective treatments are systemic insecticides](#) which can be applied to the base of the trunk, or injected, or sprayed on the bark. These insecticides include emamectin benzoate, imidacloprid, and dinotefuran. There is even a naturally-derived treatment, azadirachtin, that can protect trees for up to a year.

David Smitley, Michigan State University entomologist, reports that in 2010, the city of Midland injected all ash trees felt to be worth protecting (about 50% of the ash in the city) with emamectin

benzoate. Results exceeded expectations when all treated (and most untreated!) trees survived. This contrasted with four other surrounding communities that treated lower percentages of their trees. Although treated trees were well protected, nearly all the untreated (control) ash trees in these other communities died within four years. Smitley attributes the high survival rate of the untreated control trees in Midland to beetle populations crashing from exposure to the high number of treated trees (adult beetles feeding on leaves of a treated tree will die). Once a city stops an EAB outbreak with mass tree treatment, and enters a maintenance phase, experience shows that ash trees should not need to be treated more than once every 2-3 years.

The point of all this is that there are good management strategies for communities who decide to protect their street trees. Texas Forest Service urban forester, Courtney Blevins, doubts whether most Texas cities will opt to treat because ashes are not widely planted as shade trees here. Most of the ash in the Dallas area is Arizona ash, was planted 30-40 years ago, and is no longer in favor as a city tree. The greater impact will likely occur in the native Texas forest, where stately ash trees add to the diversity and beauty of the east Texas woods.

This may be of little consolation to you if you have a valued ash tree in your yard. If this is the case, there are good treatments (mentioned above), should you decide to protect your tree. By the way, there is no need to worry about treating your tree(s) until emerald ash borer is confirmed within 10-15 miles of your home.

We will [continue to monitor for emerald ash borer](#) throughout east Texas in 2015 as part of an APHIS-funded survey. For more information about emerald ash borer from a multistate collaboration, see <http://www.emeraldashborer.info>.



**Source:** Insects in the City, Article by Mike Merchant,  
Texas A&M Entomology Specialist

*“No great discovery was ever made  
without a bold guess.”*

*Isaac Newton*

# Vegetable Gardening Workshop

Monday, March 23, 2015

6:30p.m.-8:30 p.m.

Hardin County Extension office  
440 W Monroe | Kountze, TX 77625

Phone: 409-246-5128

Registration: \$20.00 at the door

Pre-Registration is requested.

To Pre-Register Call 409-246-5128

**Special Speakers:**

**Joseph Singletary**

Hardin County Extension Agent

**Paul Eyre**

Master Gardener | Vegetable Specialist

Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this event and who may need auxiliary aids or services are requested to contact Tammy Goodman, at 409-246-5128 ten working days prior to the meeting so appropriate arrangements can be made.

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# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

## Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

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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

### **Jefferson County Horticulture Committee**

### **T-Budding and Grafting Seminar**

**Saturday, April 18th, 8:30 – noon**

**\$10 per person, RSVP by April 10th**

**Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Auditorium**