

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY Dr. William M. Johnson

To leave or not leave . . . a few leaves won't harm lawn grass but leaves should not be allowed to completely cover the lawn, especially if they become heavily packed and stay wet for long periods.

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 activities that need to be done around the home site.

- Galveston County Master Gardeners have planned several educational programs that will be of benefit to area gardeners. Master Gardeners are volunteers who have completed an intensive training on a variety of horticultural topics and who provide valuable assistance to the County Extension Office. Review the educational program announcements in the shaded inset and make notes on your gardening calendars to attend programs that are of interest to you. All seminars are free-of-charge and most require pre-registration.
- Keep the lawn free of heavy leaf buildup to prevent smothering the grass.

A few leaves won't harm the lawn but leaves should not be allowed to completely cover the lawn, especially if they become heavily packed and stay wet for long periods.

- Continue to select and plant ornamental trees and shrubs to fill landscape needs. Always plan ahead before planting. Remember that like little puppies, plants 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.
- To be on the safe side, always store liquid pesticides in a locked cabinet in



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a location where they will not freeze. Some garden pesticides have a water base and may freeze if stored in an unheated shed during prolonged periods of below freezing temperatures. If the liquid freezes, the container may be damaged, allowing the material to leak out when temperatures warm.

- If you harvested any seeds from your garden to plant next year or have some packets of seeds left over, place them in a plastic or glass container with a tight-fitting lid and store them in your refrigerator to keep them viable. Make sure you label the seeds with the type and when they were harvested or purchased. Try to use seeds within a year of harvesting or purchasing them.

- Should a cold snap occur and your landscape plants suffer freeze injury, don't be in a hurry to prune back dead-looking branches. If at all possible, wait until spring or when buds start to swell to do any pruning. What looks dead now may not actually be dead. In addition, pruning freeze-damaged branches now will stimulate many types of plants to bud out early should we get a warm spell of weather during the winter season.

- Clean and sharpen tools during the winter season. Wipe metal blades with an oily cloth, coating them with a thin layer of protective oil that helps prevent corrosion. Coat wooden handles with a sealer, tung oil or varnish.

At a Glance

Growing Citrus in Your Own Backyard: Tuesday, January 22, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park (4102-B, Main St., La Marque). Master Gardener Herman Auer will present a Power Point presentation on how to successfully grow citrus trees. The presentation will cover such topics as rootstock and variety selection, cultural care of trees, typical disease and insect pest problems, control of birds and critters, and freeze protection. No fee but pre-registration required (281-534-3413,

Ext. 12 or GALV3@wt.net).

Spring Vegetable Gardening: Saturday, January 26, from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office. Master Gardener Luke Stripling is an experienced Gulf Coast vegetable gardener and will present a slide presentation on types of vegetables and vegetable varieties that perform well, soil preparation, insect pest & disease control, and general care. No fee but pre-registration required (281-534-3413, Ext. 12 or GALV3@wt.net).

Anyone Can Grow Roses: Saturday, January 26, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office. Topics include recommended types and varieties, soil preparation, planting, fertilizing, insect pest & disease control, and general care. No fee but pre-registration required (281-534-3413, Ext. 12 or GALV3@wt.net).

Fruit Tree Sale & Seminar: Saturday, February 2, Carbide Park's Wayne Johnson Community Center in Carbide Park in La Marque. Master Gardeners Fruit Tree Sale and Seminar. Seminar at 8:00 a.m. with speaker Heidi Sheesley of TreeSearch Farms. Sale from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. with many varieties of fruit trees and citrus. Open to the public; pre-registration not required.

Master Gardener Training Course: Starts on Thursday, February 11, and each Tuesday and Thursday from 1:00-5:00 p.m. thereafter through April 4. Visit my website address for more details and a downloadable application or contact the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office.

