

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office

Have you ever been to a high-end expensive restaurant where the chefs garnished your duck with an exotic red blood orange or served your salad sprinkled with pomegranate seeds? And when you're pushing your cart through the produce section of a gourmet specialty market, have you ever noticed the price of Meyer lemons and those little kumquats?

Meyer lemons, kumquats, pomegranates and blood oranges are all top gourmet fare but can be easily and inexpensively grown in any backyard in Galveston County.

An enormous assortment of fabulous and rare citrus trees along with new luscious plums, peaches, persimmons, pomegranates, apples and pears will be featured at the upcoming Master Gardener Fruit Tree Sale at the Wayne Johnson Community Center in Carbide Park (4102 FM 519, La Marque) from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Feb. 4.

In past years, this highly anticipated event was a single-day affair — it was a sale and seminar. This year's event will be conducted on two different days.

A pre-sale seminar will be conducted one week earlier, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Saturday in the Wayne Johnson Community Center.

Heidi Sheesley, of TreeSearch Farms, will provide the semi-



PHOTO BY Dr. William M. Johnson

Gardeners can utilize a portion of their landscapes to grow one or two varieties of fruit and citrus trees, including an Anna apple tree grown by a Santa Fe gardener.

nar highlighting fruit and citrus varieties for the Gulf Coast. The seminar is free and preregistration is not required to attend. Each seminar participant will receive a \$5 discount coupon that can be redeemed with a minimum purchase of \$50 on the day of the plant sale.

After Heidi's pre-sale seminar, Master Gardener Herman Auer will provide an overview from 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on how to plant and prune your new fruit trees.

Map directions and other information are available on the website listed at the beginning of this column or by contacting the County Extension Office (281-534-3413, Ext. 1-2). Proceeds from the plant sale are used to develop and maintain the Horticulture Demonstration Garden lo-

cated in Carbide Park.

Gardeners' Q&As

Q: Will fruit trees do well if grown in containers?

A: Yes, many types of fruit and citrus trees will do well in containers if adequate care is provided. It is important that a large enough container is used — at least a 15-gallon container should be used for most dwarf-type trees while up to 30-gallon containers should be used for larger trees.

Be aware that fruit and citrus trees grown in containers must be watered often and throughout the year including the winter season. Another benefit of growing in containers is that plants can be brought inside a garage when needed in the event of cold weather in early spring.



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



Q: What is the difference between bare-rooted and container-grown fruit trees?

A: Container-grown fruit trees are grown in a pot and are well rooted. Bare-rooted trees have been grown in the ground at a nursery and then dug, wrapped and shipped without soil on the roots.

Bare-rooted trees are less expensive than container-grown trees, but they are easy to plant and grow vigorously. Once you have selected the best possible tree, you must transfer that bare-rooted tree into the soil. This one step in fruit production can result in rapid success, lingering existence or sudden death.

Since most fruit trees are sold either bare-rooted, or packaged bare-root, planting techniques will be the same for all varieties. Plant the tree as soon as possible.

If there is any delay, store the tree in a cool, shady location. And most important, keep the roots moist (but not soaked) during this time. Five minutes without moisture can spell disaster.

Q: What does the term “chill hour requirement” mean?

A: In order to set fruit, most trees require exposure to a minimum number of hours of temperatures within the range of 32 to 45 degrees.

This temperature range is called “chill hour requirement” and the amount can vary widely for varieties within a given fruit class. The local growing area has a range of 500 chill hours to less than 200 chill hours during a winter season.

If an advertisement claims a fruit tree is hardy to zero for a zillion hours, then don't expect a lot of fruit if you grow it locally. Look for a variety that says it needs “low chill hours” or 400 chill hours or less.

