

## Spring Plant Sale to Include Fruit Trees, Vegetables, Crafts

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office*



PHOTOS BY **William M. Johnson**

**A wide selection of citrus and other fruit trees will be offered at the Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale on Saturday, Feb. 20, at the Galveston County Fairgrounds in Hitchcock. Shown above is a Tropic Snow peach grown in the Horticulture Demonstration Garden in Carbide Park in La Marque.**

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?

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 back yard in Galveston County.

A wide assortment of fabulous and hard-to-find citrus trees along with plums, peaches, persimmons, pomegranates, figs, apples and

pears will be featured at the upcoming Master Gardeners' Spring Plant Sale.

This year's plant sale will be conducted on Saturday, February 20, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the Rodeo Arena at the Galveston County Fairgrounds along Hwy. 6 in Hitchcock. This is a new location for the sale as we have outgrown the



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space at our old location near the County Extension Office in Carbide Park.

A pre-sale seminar will be presented by Master Gardener John Jons on February 20 at 8:00 a.m. in the Youth Building on the Fairgrounds to discuss the plants and plant varieties that will be offered in the sale yard. The seminar is free and pre-registration is not required to attend.

In last week's column, I discussed the array of vegetables and herbs that will be available at the sale. As you can surmise from my beginning narrative, there will be citrus and other fruit trees. One of the satisfactions that nearly all area homeowners can have is to pick citrus, peaches, figs and other types of fruits from their own trees.

Over the past several years, I have gradually transitioned my home landscape from a traditional one appealing primarily to the visual senses to one that now includes appealing to the palette. My gardening friends know well that peaches are my favorite fruit tree to grow.

Just about any variety of peach that is homegrown will likely far exceed any peach purchased from a grocery store in taste, texture and juiciness. When folks ask what my favorite variety of peach is, I have to first admit I have a bias. There are three peach varieties that I recommend—there is Tropic Snow,

and then Tropic Snow and, as you might guess, Tropic Snow. This white-fleshed peach that is delightfully sweet when picked fresh from a tree.

Figs have been a part of Texas homesteads since the early development of the state. Figs grow extremely well along the Texas Gulf Coast. I look forward to harvesting a bountiful crop of Celeste figs in my home landscape around mid-June. Celeste figs have an excellent fresh desert quality with a rich sweet flavor.

Kumquats are small sized evergreen citrus trees native to the southeastern areas of mountainous China. Today, they are grown for their delicious fruits and as an ornamental tree in many parts of the world, including here in the USA.

A mature kumquat tree bears several hundred olive-sized, brilliant orange color fruits in the winter. The interior of the fruit resembles miniature juicy orange-like segments firmly adhering to each other and with the peel. Kumquats are distinguished from other types of citrus in that they can be eaten whole including the peel.

I am nearing the end of the harvest season for the Meiwa kumquat in my home landscape and I harvested and consumed a handful Meiwa kumquats while writing this column.

There will also be a Master Gardener Grown / Master Gardener

Made booth at this year's event which will include a variety of gardening crafts and greenhouse grown vegetables and herbs.

At last fall's Plant Sale, there was one antique tractor on display. It garnered such interest that the members of the Bluebonnet Antique Tractor Club in Santa Fe will have an array of vintage tractors on display at this Saturday's event.

Today's home vegetable gardeners primarily utilize hand trowels, rakes, shovels and hoes to cultivate their gardens. Visitors to our 2016 Plant Sale will have an opportunity to view antique tractors to help acquaint urban garden gardeners with rural lifestyles and family traditions of past generations.

Be sure to put a notation on your to-do gardening calendar to attend the Master Gardeners' Spring Plant Seminar and Sale at the County Fairgrounds in Hitchcock on Saturday, February 20.

Map directions to the plant sale and a listing of the citrus trees, fruit trees, vegetables and herbs that will be available at the plant sale can be downloaded at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.htm>.

Master Gardeners will be available to advise gardeners about plants and to answer questions. Proceeds from the plant sale are used to help maintain the Horticulture Demonstration Garden located in Carbide Park.

