



PHOTO CREDIT: William M. Johnson

Master Gardeners Linda Garren-McKillip (pictured left) and Cindy Croft (pictured right) do some plant-grooming on plants grown by Master Gardeners for the 2017 Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale held last Saturday at the Galveston County Fairgrounds. Master Gardeners will offer a second opportunity for the public to purchase fruit and citrus trees as well as tomato and pepper transplants at the Horticulture Demonstration Garden in Carbide Park from 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, Feb. 23.

The Master Gardener volunteers sponsored a spring plant seminar and sale last Saturday at the Rodeo Area at the County Fairgrounds. The weather was ideal. However, our bar for ideal weather for the spring plant sale is quite low: no freezing temperatures, no heavy fog, no heavy rain and no hail on the day of the sale.

Even though there was a very heavy rainstorm the day before the sale, several

hundred gardeners came to the sale. Many of them commented on the quality of the fruit trees on hand as well as the quantity. Home tomato growers were able to select from a wide array of tomato varieties (a total of 39) as well as different types of tomatoes (such as heirlooms, hybrids, determinate, indeterminate and bush types).

If you were not able to

attend this year's spring plant sale, you will be afforded a second opportunity to purchase citrus and fruit trees as well as spring vegetables at the Horticulture Demonstration Garden in Carbide Park from 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, Feb. 23. Visit the Master Gardeners' website (<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html>) for additional details or contact the County Extension



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Individuals attending the event had a variety of questions on growing vegetables and citrus/fruit trees as well as a variety of non-fruit tree related questions. The following is a sampling of the questions asked.

Q: How can I get my moth orchid to re-flower?

A: This question was asked when customers were told that the moth orchids (also called Phalaenopsis orchid) on display were grown from plants that had been discarded because they had flowered once and had not flowered again. I think most folks buy moth orchids for their elegant and exotic flowers produced on long, graceful and arching flower spikes that somewhat resemble a flight of pale moths in moonlight (hence the common name of moth orchid).

The Master Gardeners were able to stimulate the discarded moth orchid plants (that were, at the time, not flowering but otherwise healthy) to flower because of the expertise of Clyde Holt, a Master Gardener who excels at growing orchids of all types.

Getting the most from a moth orchid — 4-to-8 weeks of bloom and repeat flowering in a few months — is not impossible but does require a method approach. Clyde's remedy to stimulating moth orchids to repeat flower is straightforward. He notes that moth orchids should be exposed to bright sunlight but not direct sun exposure. He stated that the single biggest reason that

moth orchids crash or "refuses" to repeat-flower is because of improper watering: usually under-watering and sometimes over-watering, or a combination of the two.

Clyde waters his moth orchids at home twice a week and he fertilizes his orchids once a month using a dilute (half-strength) soluble fertilizer. Fertilizing every two weeks with a quarter-strength soluble fertilizer would be an even better approach if a gardener is good at keeping records. The proof is in the pudding in this regard as Master Gardeners practiced Clyde's recommendations and grew the stunning moth orchids with new flower buds that amazed visitors at the plant sale. Needless to say, the moth orchids quickly sold out.

The plant sale is conducted to raise funds for operating the Demonstration Garden in Carbide Park in La Marque. It is also conducted to educate area residents on gardening techniques.

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

A: That would be a definite YES. Many types of citrus trees will do well in containers if adequate care is provided and if you have a sufficient size container. However, do not expect as big a tree as one grown in the ground.

Also, it is very important to purchase citrus trees grafted onto Flying Dragon rootstock. This type of rootstock dwarfs the tree (but still produces full size fruit). Citrus grafted onto Flying Dragon rootstock also have a few extra degrees of

cold hardiness.

It is important that a large enough container is used—at least a 15-gallon size container should be used for most dwarf-type trees while up to 30-gallon containers should be used for larger size trees. Many gardeners use half whiskey barrel planters (available at many gardening outlets) to grow citrus plants.

Be aware that fruit and citrus trees grown in containers must be watered often and throughout the year including the winter season.

Q: Will you sell this wagon?

A: The pros and cons of American capitalism have been debated time and time again. I get this question at each plants sale. Some customers are ready and very willing to pay a very unfair, cash-on-spot price, based on market demand for wagons, after the sale yard was opened but I respectfully declined the offers as wagons were already in short supply.

