

April garden checklist includes pecan field day

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



April is almost here. The weathermen need to schedule some showers in April as March has been on the dry side thus far (about 3 inches below normal rainfall). Add to that scenario that during the past couple of weeks it has been a few degrees warmer than usual, and gardeners might have to start dragging out the water hose or reprogramming the sprinkler timer.

While we keep hope alive for April showers, review the following checklist for April's gardening chores.

- **Spring Pecan Field Day:** The Spring Pecan Field Day will be conducted from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. April 14. Grafting demonstrations will be provided throughout the time period by members of the Extension Fruit and Pecan Committee.

Graftwood from several varieties of pecans will be available (a donation of \$1 per

stick is requested).

The Field Day will be held in La Marque under the North Pavilion in Carbide Park, FM 519 about one mile west of the intersection of FM 519 and the Interstate 45 Gulf Freeway, Exit 10.

A printable map can be downloaded from the website address at the end of this column (click on "Extension Educational Programs" link) or contact the Galveston County Extension Office, 281-534-3413, Ext. 1-2 or galv3(at)wt.net.

- **Storing leftover seeds:** Many flower or vegetable seeds left over after planting the garden can be saved for the next season by closing the packets with tape or paper clips and storing in a tightly sealed glass jar in your refrigerator until needed.

Adding 1 or 2 tablespoons of powdered milk in a cloth bag

to reduce the humidity within the jar can be very beneficial to maintaining long-term seed viability.

- **Summer annuals:** One tendency shoppers have is to buy transplants of summer annuals only with open flowers.

Young transplants that have few or no flowers might be a smarter purchase since these plants will grow larger before flowering. The result will be a more impressive floral display in your home gardener.

- **Caladiums:** Select caladium tubers while there are ample stocks available but do not plant caladiums too early.

They typically should be planted from April into early May. Caladiums need warm soil temperatures (at least 70 degrees) for best growth.

- **Azaleas:** Wait to fertilize azaleas until after the major bloom season is finished.

Consider using a fertilizer specially formulated for azaleas that provides plant nutrients in the right ratio and also helps to maintain acid soil conditions needed by azaleas. Because azaleas have a shallow root system, many gardeners have found it to be beneficial to apply several light fertilizer applications over time rather than all at one time.

- **Periwinkles:** One warm season annual that many folks set out too early is periwinkle.



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These are warm weather plants.

Periwinkles planted before mid-April are much more susceptible to a fungal blight disease that can wipe out sections or an entire bed of plants. Delay planting periwinkles until the weather is consistently warm.

- Lawn mowers: Periodically check your lawn mower blade for dullness and examine a few blades of freshly mowed grass.

Use of a dull blade will result in the mowed (better descriptions would be torn and “whacked-off”) end of leaf blades and stems being stringy and ragged.

These tips also will develop a brownish discoloration shortly after being mowed. In addition to looking unsightly and causing the mower engine to labor harder, lawn grass cut with a dull blade is more susceptible to certain diseases.

- Weed-and-feed fertilizers: Use caution when applying the popular “weed-and-feed” type lawn fertilizers.

Some weed-and-feed products can be used near shrubs and inside the drip line area of trees, while other types of weed-and-feed products carry a strict warning to not apply the product near such landscape plants.

It depends on the type of weed killer (or combination of weed killers) that is contained in a given product. Be sure to carefully read the label and do not exceed the application rate stated on the label.

- Freeze-damaged plants: One of the most commonly asked questions this spring is “Will my perennials come back after the freeze?”

If you didn’t get too frustrated and left the plants alone, you’ll likely to be

pleasantly rewarded for your patience.

I’ve already seen new shoots appearing on hibiscus, hamelia, Mexican heather, cone ginger, etc. You just have to be patient and be sure to keep affected plants well-watered.

- Purchasing topsoil: Use good quality topsoil from a reputable source for raising flower beds, filling low spots in the lawn, etc.

Nutgrass and other hard-to-kill weeds are sometimes introduced this way.

