



PHOTOS BY **O. J. Miller**

There are few plants that offer the beauty and charisma of palms. Whether you are new and starting your first garden or an experienced collector just adding one more species, plan on attending a seminar on “The Culture and Care of Palms” provided by Master Gardener O. J. Miller on Saturday, April 9, at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park located in La Marque.

April is a wonderful time to enjoy the outdoor garden. Many citrus trees are in full bloom and azaleas are nearing the end of their spring bloom season. Trees are putting out their new foliage that is such a delicate green. Add the pleasant temperatures and you have a strong invitation to get out in the garden.

Hopefully, you have already planted the trees and shrubs that you want to plant for the year and are ready to concentrate on annuals, perennials, vegetables, and lawns. Here's a checklist for keeping up with the chores while enjoying the pleasures of April.

PERIWINKLES: One

warm season annual that many folks set out too early is the periwinkle. These are warm weather plants. Periwinkles planted before mid-April are much more susceptible to a fungal blight disease (known as Phytophthora stem blight and root rot) that can wipe out sections or an entire bed of plants.



**April 6, 2016**



Dr. William Johnson is a horticulturist with the Galveston County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit his website at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston>.

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Delay planting periwinkles until the weather is consistently warm.

**AZALEAS:** As flowering finishes, evaluate your azaleas for needed pruning. April and May are good months to trim your bushes, but only do so if necessary. Generally, a little shaping is all that is required. Controlling size is a common reason for pruning, especially if large-growing cultivars were planted where smaller ones should have been used.

You should begin to manage the size of your azaleas when they reach the maximum desirable size. Unless you are trying to create a formal clipped hedge, avoid shearing azaleas with hedge clippers because this destroys their attractive natural shape. It is better to use hand pruners to selectively remove or shorten branches to achieve the desired shape and size.

First, identify the tallest or widest shoots or branches on a bush that are too large then prune the branch back a few inches inside the interior of shrub growth. When the shortened branch sprouts, the new growth will be inside the shrub creating a thicker, fuller plant. And the new growth will not immediately stick out above the rest of the bush — something that commonly happens if pruning cuts are made just back to the edge of the bush or when azaleas are sheared.

Keep pruning back the tallest

and widest shoots until the shrub is the proper size. You may continue to prune occasionally, as needed, using this technique into the summer up until late June (early July at the very latest). After that, the chances increase that you will remove flower buds when you prune.

Alternate-season-blooming azaleas, such as the Encores, have a shorter window or opportunity, and pruning on them should be done as soon as the major spring blooming period is over.

**STORING LEFTOVER SEED:** 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 also be very beneficial to maintaining long-term seed viability.

**SUMMER ANNUALS:** One tendency shoppers have is to buy transplants of summer annuals with only open flowers. Young transplants that have few or no flowers may be a smarter purchase since these plants will grow larger before flowering. The result will be a more impressive floral display in your home garden.

At a Glance

**WHAT:** The Culture and Care of Palms

**WHEN:** 9:00 - 11:30 a.m., Saturday, April 9

**INFO:** Galveston County Master Gardener O. J. Miller will provide a general introduction to palms, an overview of the exotics and commonly found palms at nurseries in our area, planting methods, fertilization, freeze preparation and general care. Recommended varieties of palms for Galveston County and the surrounding area will be discussed.

**WHAT:** A Passion for Plumeria

**WHEN:** 1:00 - 3:00 p.m., Saturday, April 9

**INFO:** Galveston County Master Gardener Loretta Osteen will provide a presentation covering information about the history of the Plumeria and tips for growing and caring for them in our area including methods of propagation and proper winter storage and care. Additionally, information about the different flower shapes, fragrances and colors of the different varieties of Plumeria successfully grown in our area will be provided.

**LOCATION:** Both programs conducted at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located in Carbide Park (4102-B Main Street, La Marque). Pre-registration required (phone: 218-309-5065; e-mail GAV3@wt.net) .

