

## Fruit Orchard and Garden Tour Offered on Saturday, May 11

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



PHOTO BY Dr. William M. Johnson



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**The 2013 Fruit Orchard and Garden Tour will be open to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 Noon on Saturday, May 11. Three sites are on this year's tour route .**

The Extension Fruit & Pecan Committee, Master Gardener volunteers and Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office will co-sponsor a Fruit Orchard and Garden Tour on Saturday, May 11, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The program is open to the public and free-of-charge.

Three fruit orchards are on this year's tour route. Each location will be open during the

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 Noon time period. You will have the option of touring all three or any single site.

This year's tour sites contain a wide variety of fruit trees ranging from an impressive peach orchard (Fruits 'n Such Orchard located at 6309 Avenue U - Bowerman Drive in Dickinson) and the Master Gardener Demonstration Orchard (located in Carbide

Park in La Marque). Citrus, figs, apples and other fruit trees can be seen also.

All sites contain a wide variety of vegetables also. Vegetables are grown in dozens of raised beds at Carbide Park whereas vegetables are grown in the ground at Fruits 'n Such Orchard. Visitors may also tour an impressive herb garden next to the Fruits 'n Such Orchard. If you're

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looking for the freshest produce to purchase, you can pick it yourself at the Fruits 'n Such Orchard.

If you are interested in seeing the amazing diversity of fruit trees that can be grown in a backyard, be sure to include a tour of Master Gardener Bill Verm's home orchard in Santa Fe.

If you have an interest in roses, be sure to visit the display beds of Earth-Kind roses located at the Carbide Park site. Roses have had a centuries-long reputation of being the most neurotic members of the plant world. Homeowners love their magnificent blooms and fragrance.

Consequently, gardeners spend considerable cash buying fertilizers, pesticides, and fungicides to sustain their roses, and much time pruning, deadheading, and watering them to keep them blooming. Roses that qualify for the Earth-Kind designation are low-maintenance and perform very well under a variety of growing conditions.

To obtain a map with directions to the tour sites, visit the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located at 4102 Main in La Marque (281-534-3413, Ext. 2-1). A printable copy of the tour map and additional details are available on my website provided with this column (click on the "Extension Educational Programs" link).

Area homeowners who grow—or plan to grow—fruit or vegeta-

bles for home use will find the tour sites to be of considerable benefit.

#### Gardeners Q&A

**Q: I've had no luck with growing snap beans this spring. I had poor germination with my planting and my second planting germinated well then grew poorly. What's the problem?**

A: The 2013 spring season has been tough on vegetables. Heck it's also been tough on gardeners since on too many occasions, you could start a morning out just needing a short-sleeve shirt only to have to grab a light jacket later in the day—if you had one handy because you believed the weather predictions that yet another cool front would be coming though.

Snap beans include tall-growing pole-type beans, half-runners or the low-growing bush-type varieties. Snap beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) are primarily warm-season crops and are sensitive to cool temperatures. They grow best when soil temperatures average between 60° and 75° Fahrenheit. They are rapid growers that can produce large yields while requiring little attention.

Seeds planted in cool soils germinate slowly and are susceptible to rotting. Also, seedling growth may be slow to stunted when temperatures are cool. For most beans, soil temperature must be at least 65° F for 5 days in order for the beans to germinate well.

All garden beans are sensitive to

cool soil and cool air temperatures. If soil temperatures are cool when they do sprout, germination will likely be spotty and seedlings will grow slowly. Slow-growing seedlings are more vulnerable to damage from insects, slugs, and snails.

Gardeners who have tried to grow okra over the past few weeks have experienced similar growing issues as okra is another vegetable that does not tolerate cool weather conditions.

**Q. Can I grow soybeans in my home vegetable garden?**

A. Yes and we have grown soybeans in our test plots at the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden in Carbide Park. Certain varieties, commonly called vegetable soybeans, are milder in flavor than those grown in fields. Soybeans are highly nutritious and are normally eaten in the green shell stage. The pods should be thick when fully mature but still green and tender. Seed them in rows 30 to 60 inches apart with plants 2 to 3 inches apart in the row.

