

Attend grand opening of new extension office

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY Dr. William M. Johnson



June 22, 2011



We soon will be in the process of moving our office. That's welcome news to our staff and many residents.

I had to chuckle to myself last week when the fortuitous first words from a county resident visiting the office were "You all need a decent building with some space to operate!" It's not every day that you can reply, "Well, we are about to move."

The general public is invited to attend the grand opening of our new facility starting at 2 p.m. Friday. The new facility is located in Carbide Park, 4102 Main St., FM 519, in La Marque.

The extension office has five county extension agents, including Bill Holcombe, who has overall program responsi-

bility for the county 4-H program; Julie K. Massey, who has program responsibility for coastal and marine resources; Marilyn H. Simmons, who has program responsibility for family and consumer sciences; Phoenix Rogers, who has program responsibility for agriculture and natural resources; as well as myself.

We're part of Texas AgriLife Extension Service which forms a Texas-sized partnership between a great educational institution — The Texas A&M University System — and each Texas county commissioners court. In our case, that would be the Galveston County Commissioners Court, which approved funding and construction of our facility.

The AgriLife Extension is the

educational outreach arm of the Texas A&M University System. From state extension specialists with statewide responsibilities, to district extension specialists, to the county extension agents and extension volunteers located within each county, extension personnel have the knowledge and research-based information it takes to successfully nurture things.

Those "things" start with food and fiber products, but also include families, youth, economics, businesses, communities and leaders. Texas AgriLife Extension Service continues to build upon a nearly century-long tradition of excellence in serving adults and youth throughout the 254 counties in Texas, including Galveston County.

I noted the "nearly century-

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>.

News column printed in the Galveston Daily News, The Post, and other Galveston County Newspapers.



long tradition” above as Mr. E.W. Gruss was appointed as the first agriculture agent in this county Feb. 16, 1912. The extension office has operated in the current building since 1949, and the plaque on the building is inscribed with “Galveston County Agents Building.” A total of 73 county extension agents has served the residents of Galveston County during the past 99 years and four months. Much has changed in that period of time (from the Internet to cellphones to a thing called email) but our mission has remained and still remains relevant.

So, be sure to pencil in a notation on your things-to-do list to attend the grand opening and tour the new office.

+++

Gardeners’ Q&A

Q: My St. Augustine lawn is a crisp brown and I cannot afford to irrigate it. Will my entire lawn be wiped out by lack of rain?

A: My usual condolence of “Brown is also a color to be appreciated in the landscape” goes over better during the winter season when most lawns quickly turn brown after the first cold spell occurs. St. Augustine and Bermuda grass lawns also will go into dormancy and turn straw-brown in color during the summer growing season when drought conditions persist.

As I prepare this column, weathermen would appear optimistic that we will receive some relief from the record drought conditions. I expect that if ample rainfall occurs soon and repeats itself soon thereafter, lawns will green up.

However, I also expect many lawns will show patches of brown where the grass does not recover. Otherwise, given the warm weather, dead patches of lawn grass should be filled in by

runners produced by grass that survives the dry weather.

Q: About the time my tomatoes ripen and turn red, I lose at least half my crop to bird damage. What can prevent this?

A: Bird damage is common in all areas. Bird damage will be a greater problem during dry weather as birds seek sources of moisture.

Gardeners have tried many ways to reduce bird damage. Scarecrows, aluminum strips, tin foil plates and noise-makers will work until the local birds become accustomed to seeing or hearing them. Fabric covering materials such as Grow-Web and Reemay also can be used as a barrier mechanism.

I recommend use of bird netting as a convenient solution but it must be installed well as determined and thirsty birds will look for any openings to gain access to ripe fruits.

