

# Gardening Checklist for August

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



PHOTO CREDIT: Dr. William M. Johnson

**Palm trees are often excessively pruned resulting in stressed and unproductive plants. For most species of palms, the outline of the plant canopy should be maintained at a 9 o'clock to 3 o'clock position. As a rule of thumb, only prune fronds that are fully brown to half-brown in color.**

The Dog Days of August have arrived. Daytime temperatures have already danced around the century mark during the last week of July so there is no need to remind you that August is the peak of the heat season in Galveston County.

I am looking forward to experiencing the upcoming solar eclipse on August 21. It will be a partial solar

eclipse in our viewing area so it will not likely provide any discernable change in temperature when it occurs. So, working outside this month will be more tolerable throughout the month during early morning or late evening hours.

The gardeners' calendar of activities for August includes the following:

## **Annual Fall Plant Sale:**

The 2017 Master Gardener Fall Plant Sale is an "absolute must" for area gardeners. This is an early notification so gardeners can pencil in this popular event on their gardening calendar for Saturday, October 14. A diverse variety of citrus trees, ornamentals, and perennials will be available at this



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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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fall's sale in addition to vegetable transplants for the fall garden. All activities will be conducted at Galveston County Fairgrounds near Hwy. 6 in Hitchcock. More information will be provided in upcoming columns and on the Master Gardeners' website (<http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html>).

**Divide perennials.** It is time to divide spring-flowering perennials, such as iris, shasta daisy, oxeye, gaillardia, cannas, day lilies, violets, liriopse, and ajuga.

**Pruning Palms:** It is common practice to see folks removing all but a few of the upper fronds of palms in hopes of reducing wind damage from severe tropical storms. This practice is very harmful to the tree as most palms produce only a few dozen leaves or less per year. The removal of even a few green fronds can significantly reduce a plant's capacity to produce energy or food needed for proper growth and overall health.

Excessive removal of green fronds over time will often result in a condition known as pencil-pointing. This condition is characterized by a marked reduction in the diameter of the upper trunk and the overall trunk takes on the shape of a sharpened pencil.

Most palms are native to the tropics and have evolved modifications that enable them to successfully weather most storms. The open feather-like structure of their leaves allows wind to pass through them easily and their trunks are strong

but flexible allowing them to bend but not break.

**Rose bushes:** A late-summer pruning of rose bushes can be beneficial. Prune out dead canes and any weak, brushy growth. Cut back tall, vigorous bushes to about 30 inches. After pruning, apply fertilizer, and water thoroughly. If a preventive disease-control program has been maintained, your rose bushes should be ready to provide an excellent crop of flowers this fall.

**Gardening Newsletter:** The August-September edition of the Galveston County Master Gardener Newsletter is now available online. Visit <http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html> to read or download a copy.

**Fall Vegetables:** Despite our warm summer temperatures, August is the time to plant many types of vegetables for a fall garden. Many gardeners miss this opportunity to have a successful fall garden because they wait until temperatures have moderated to plant. Vegetables that perform well in fall gardens include lima beans, snap beans, cantaloupes, southern peas, summer squash, winter squash and a variety of other vegetables.

**Staked Trees:** If a landscape tree was staked after transplanting, be sure to inspect for girdling damage caused by prolonged staking. Staking systems must be periodically checked and adjusted to be certain that they are not causing

tree damage. Staking will not damage trees if installed correctly and properly maintained.

Girdling or strangulation of a tree trunk can be caused when wire fencing, nylon or steel cable has been tied around the tree for anchorage. Whatever tie material is used, it will eventually press or cut into the bark as the tree trunk increases in diameter and thereby restrict the movement of water and nutrients within the tree.

If a tree must be staked, all stakes and support wires should be removed between 12 and 18 months after planting, provided the tree has a well-established root system. The most important point to remember is that the staking system must be removed as soon as it is no longer necessary for the support of the tree.

**STAY COOL:** The sultry, sweaty days of August will soon be at hand. So, carry an extra-large glass of iced tea or water and make sure to wear a hat for protection from the sun.

