

The Real Dirt on Garden Soil

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY William Johnson



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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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Experienced gardeners know that in just a few weeks the spring gardening season will be underway. The Galveston County Master Gardeners are offering educational programs on spring vegetable gardening, growing roses and improving gumbo clay soil.

The sun had been on Absence Without Leave (AOL) status until a few days ago. It took me awhile to find my sunglasses since I had not used them for so long. Nighttime temperatures can be chilly but we are just one month into the winter season. Yet daytime temperatures can be quite pleasant and with the return of sunny days, gardeners are certainly ready for a good case of spring fever. Experienced gardeners know that in just a few weeks the spring gardening season will be under-

way.

Now is the time to make preparations for a successful spring gardening season. The Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office and Master Gardener volunteers are sponsoring three seminars that will be of value to gardeners

Spring Vegetable Gardening

Experienced gardeners also know that as summer approaches, some heat sensitive plants such as tomatoes and beans will stop blooming and/or

setting blossoms when temperatures go above 90 degrees. An important key to successful spring gardening is getting maximum production before the summer heat sets in. So you're aware of the health benefits of eating fresh vegetables, you have the space for a garden, but just don't know where to start? Look no further. Plan now to attend a program on "Successful Spring Vegetable Gardening" to be held at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension

Office located at 4102 Main Street (Carbide Park) in La Marque.

This program will be conducted on Saturday, January 24, from 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. Pre-registration is requested (e-mail GALV3@wt.net; phone 281-534-3413, ext. 1-2) to ensure availability of handouts.

Luke Stripling is a certified Texas Master Gardener and will serve as the program speaker. He has accumulated a wealth of knowledge and hands-on experience on home vegetable gardening.

Whether you're an experienced or a novice gardener, be sure to make a notation on your gardening calendar to attend this program to learn what you need to know to put fresh, tasty vegetables on your dinner table this spring.

The Real Dirt on Garden Soil

If your garden has heavy gumbo clay soil, you know what a challenge it can pose to plants, not to mention gardeners. We all know the problem "Our gumbo clay is a wonderful soil . . . it is just hard to work with!" That statement was made by Master Gardener Bob McPherson who will share his recipe for turning gumbo clays into a more manageable soil.

Most gardeners, including myself, would naturally prefer to deal with an easy-to-work sandy loam soil that is deep and drains well. A few gardeners have the good fortune to work with sandy loam soils but the rest of us must deal with gumbo clays.

The good news is that with proper soil management even our gumbo clay soil can become manageable. And the good—and perhaps surprising—news is that gumbo clay soils are quite fertile.

If you have gumbo clay soil and want some guidance on how to improve it, be sure to register for The Real Dirt on Garden Soil to be conducted on Saturday, January 24, from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located at 4102 Main Street (Carbide Park) in La Marque.

Pre-registration is requested (e-mail GALV3@wt.net; phone 281-534-3413, ext. 1-2) to ensure availability of handouts.

Bob McPherson will conduct the seminar. Bob has worked with gumbo clays for many years and through good soil management, his gumbo clay is now more "gardener friendly." Bob will share his learning experiences on turning tough gumbo clays into a manageable soil.

Anyone Can Grow Roses

Just as "A rose by any other name is just as sweet" then "A beautiful rose from your very own garden is always a marvel to behold." Roses definitely rank as a favorite landscape plant for many gardeners. Whether you already grow roses or you are interested in growing roses but think all roses require a lot of care, then make plans to attend an upcoming presentation on Anyone Can Grow Roses. The presentation will be conducted on Tuesday, January 27, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located at 4102 Main Street (Carbide Park) in La Marque. 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, they may spend a tidy sum of money buying fertilizers, insecti-

cides, and fungicides to sustain their roses. Homeowners will spend more time pruning, deadheading, and watering them to keep their roses blooming. Much to their exasperation, many roses still expire, no matter what.

If roses aren't already a part of your landscape or you want to enhance your rose growing skills, make plans now to register for the Anyone Can Grow Roses seminar to learn how to establish the "queen of flowers" in your landscape that will reward you with color and beauty from early spring to late fall. Master Gardener John Jons is widely recognized by local rose growers for his expertise. He will discuss the basics for growing large, beautiful, sweet smelling and healthy roses in Galveston County. Topics will include rose selection, bed preparation and maintenance, planting, pruning, disease and insect management and any questions that you may have on growing roses.