

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

Fall Plant Sale to Include Variety of Plants

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO CREDIT: Dr William M. Johnson



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The Master Gardeners' Annual Fall Plant Sale on Saturday, Oct. 14, will feature a wide variety of plants for the home landscape and garden ranging from citrus, vegetable transplants, perennials and bulbs in addition to Master Gardener-made garden crafts and a display of vintage tractors.

The arrival of autumn tends to be a bumpy landing along the Texas Upper Gulf Coast region. While autumn technically commenced on September 22 at 8:54 p.m., we have had some pleasantly cool weather followed by bouts of warm weather.

I typically measure the arrival of autumn by four milestones: 1) when I need to

turn the heater on in my car (almost happened on Monday and still waiting), 2) when my home air conditioner gets to "rest" in the early afternoon hours of a day (the AC unit has been getting more rest lately), and 3) when the coconut oil in the kitchen pantry stays solid (coconut oil melts at 76° F.).

Yes, I stipulated four milestones. The fourth milestone indicating that pleasant autumn weather is at hand is the kick-off of the annual Fall Plant Sale conducted by Master Gardener volunteers.

The offerings at this year's Master Gardener Fall Plant Sale will not only include perennials for the home landscape

but also citrus trees, fruit trees, vegetables, herbs and bulbs. The Fall Plant Sale will be conducted on Saturday, October 14, at the Galveston County Fairgrounds Rodeo Arena in Hitchcock along Hwy. 6. A preview seminar will be offered at 8:00 a.m. and the plant sale yard will be open from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

A limited number of wagons will be available and gardeners are encouraged to bring their own wagons! Come early for best selections. Visit our website (<http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/>) to download directions to the Galveston County Fairgrounds and a listing of all plants to be available as well as plant descriptions.

Let me start with perennials. Fall is an ideal time to plant perennials in home landscapes. The Upper Gulf Coast has several months of cooler temperatures and dependable moisture from October through April.

Perennials planted during fall will have time to establish a good root system during these more moderate conditions. This head start supports strong growth, long-term health and overall plant vigor.

The fall and winter seasons present fewer pest problems as well. All in all, there are fewer sources of stress (such as heat, fluctuations in soil moisture levels, and insect pressure) on specimens planted in the fall.

As one of my gardening friends commented: "Gardening with perennials is like painting with a full

palette of colors, textures, forms and fragrances." Think of your home landscape as a canvas-then create your perennial garden of color that pumps out beautiful foliage and flowers for years to come.

The selection of perennials that will be offered at this year's event will augment local landscapes with an amazing variety of color, texture, size, shape and versatility. Many of the selections are suitable for habitat gardens to attract birds, butterflies and hummingbirds.

Weather forecasts for this week predict day time highs will remain below 90 degrees and night time temperatures to be rather pleasant. Cooler days over the next several weeks will make it a joy to get out and work in the home vegetable garden, and better yet, plant an array of delicious and nutritious vegetables that will thrive in the fall planted garden.

Indeed, some of our favorite vegetables can be grown here with the arrival of cooler weather conditions.

Now, for some of the cool-season vegetables that will be available at the Fall Plant Sale. My gardening friends know that broccoli is at the top of my list for vegetables to grow in the fall garden. I recommend that gardeners try growing broccoli as this vegetable is remarkably easy to grow in our area. When planted in October, gardeners can expect to be harvesting broccoli by early Decem-

ber.

I include broccoli in my fall garden at home and it has never failed to produce. I even plant broccoli among some perennials in the front lawn. I have yet to get a letter from the homeowners' association landscape committee for doing so since broccoli provides a very attractive addition to the drab winter landscape with its board green leaves. That might change after this column is printed.

In addition to broccoli, many other types of cool season vegetables will be on sale including cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, lettuce, mustard greens, pak choi, spinach and Swiss chard. All of these can also be transplanted now through mid-November.

Other plants that will be available include blubs, avocados, blackberries, blueberries, figs, gingers, plums and a diverse selection of citrus.

As you can surmise, the upcoming 2017 Fall Plant Sale will have something of interest to all gardeners. Proceeds from plant sales are used toward development and maintenance of the Horticulture Demonstration & Research Garden located in Carbide Park.

