

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO CREDIT: Billy Jenke

Herbs are grown as ornamentals for their beauty and appearance and are used to add flavor to a variety of dishes (pictured above is one of many types of basil). The AgriLife Extension Office will sponsor a seminar at Carbine Park on Growing and Using Herbs from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, January 27.

For growing purposes in our Texas Upper Gulf Coast growing area, herbs can be loosely grouped into cool season-annuals, warm-season annuals (which live for one season and then die) and perennials (which live for several years). Some gardeners grow herbs as ornamentals for their beauty and appearance. Even so, it's also important to remember that, above all,

herbs are plants that should be used to flavor many dishes.

The variety of shapes, sizes, textures and colors of different herbs lend them to the creation of unique and pleasing garden compositions. Rather than rows, plant your herbs in small informal beds. A space as small as five square feet will allow you

to plant several types. You can also mix herbs among landscape plants (as I do), or use them to create borders, ground covers or low hedges.

Whether you are an experienced herb grower or looking for more information before taking the first step, be sure to attend an upcoming seminar on Growing and Using



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Herbs presented by Tricia Bradbury, a Fort Bend County Master Gardener and Coastal Prairie Texas Master Naturalist. I attended one of her presentations a while ago and was very impressed with the range of information she presented on what herbs grow well in this area. She also shared her wisdom on preserving herbs and using herbs to flavor oils or vinegar. Additionally, she shared tips on cooking with fresh, as well as dried herbs.

The seminar will be conducted from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, January 27, at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located in Carbide Park (4102-B, Main Street) in La Marque. Pre-registration required (e-mail: galvcountymgs@gmail.com or phone 281-309-5065).

Moving Forward After the Winter Freeze

Brown is also a color in home landscapes. I have made this statement on occasion such as after Hurricane Ike made landfall in 2008 and many coastal landscapes were changed from lush hues of green and other delightful colors to basic brown. Fast forward ten years to 2018 after the arrival of cold temperatures last week (even if it is still winter time).

Most non-tropical plants in the landscape can be expected to withstand cold temperatures. Even though the foliage of some cold-sensitive plants (cannas, blue plumbago, hibiscus, etc.) was burned back to ground level, affected plants may produce buds near ground level on the trunk or new sprouts from below ground organs such as tubers and bulbs.

The leaves of my amaryllis plants have laid down and appeared to have been boiled. Yet I fully expect the bulbs to out a new flush of growth in the coming weeks. The leaves on my society garlic have also laid down flat and appear to have been boiled in addition to displaying a striking off-white color. Again, I expect the society garlic to quickly recoup from the assault.

No need to provide a commentary about the condition of my banana plants for I have too many already and I take this circumstance as Mother Nature's way of telling me that I need to thin out my "herd" of bananas. However, Mother Nature is not going to help with the job of removing the banana plants. Mother Nature's approach is a bit laid back—she would allow the plant parts to decay. My Homeowner Association (HOA) would not likely find that to be a suitable approach and will likely require more immediate action. Here again, I expect the underground bulb (botanically known as a corm) will produce suckers in a few weeks as the weather warms. If you have never dug up a mature banana corm (not an easy task) you will not likely understand my loathing this step.

All this begs the question: why do home gardeners in the coastal regions of Texas take chances with growing cold-sensitive plants such as tropicals? The answer is simple: we (and most other folks) enjoy the beauty that tropical plants provide to local landscapes and our resolve to defy Mother Nature

generally pays off. We are fortunate to generally have mild winters, but we know to expect an occasional freeze that is significant.

One more report to make: In a previous column, I reported the results of my experiment using Solo cups filled with water and placed in various locations in my home landscape. I did a follow-up experiment last week given that temperatures would dive into the low twenties. I set out four 16-ounce Solo cups filled with water but this time I poured a half-teaspoon of salt into one cup of water, a level teaspoon of salt in another and two level teaspoons of salt in the third cup. No salt was added to the fourth cup. All cups were placed together on my back patio.

I checked the condition of the water in each cup the next morning. The cup of water with no added salt had developed a 1.5-inch layer of solid ice. The cup of water with a one teaspoon of salted added had developed a thin layer of ice on top. The cup with two teaspoons of salt was still totally liquid in state.

While none of this information is germane to matters of horticulture it does pertain to the underlying principle for adding salt solutions and salt mixes to roadways, bridges and overpasses that helped me and other travelers safely arrive to our destinations. I do not expect to get a call from the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (who awards the Nobel Prize in Physics) but my scientific curiosity is satisfied.

