

Spring Plant Sale to Include Fruit Trees, Vegetables, Crafts

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO CREDIT: Herman Auer

A wide selection of avocado, citrus, peach and other fruit trees will be offered at the Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale on Saturday, Feb. 17, at the Galveston County Fairgrounds in Hitchcock. Pictured above is an avocado tree grown in La Marque.

Have you ever been to a high-end expensive restaurant where the chefs garnished your duck with an exotic red blood orange or served your salad sprinkled with pomegranate seeds?

When you're pushing your cart through the produce section of a gourmet spe-

cialty market, have you ever noticed the price of Meyer lemons and those little kumquats? Meyer lemons, kumquats, pomegranates and blood oranges are all top gourmet fare, but can be easily and inexpensively grown in any backyard in Galveston County.

A wide assortment of fabulous and hard-to-find citrus trees along with plums, peaches, persimmons, pomegranates, figs, apples and pears will be featured at the upcoming Master Gardeners' Spring Plant Sale.

This year's plant sale will



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be conducted on Saturday, February 17, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the Rodeo Arena at the Galveston County Fairgrounds along Hwy. 6 in Hitchcock.

A pre-sale seminar will also be presented by Master Gardener Carolyn Gephart on February 17 at 8:00 a.m. in the Ed Pickett Hall (located near the Rodeo Arena) to discuss the plants and plant varieties that will be offered in the sale yard. The seminar is free and pre-registration is not required to attend.

As you can surmise, there will be citrus and other fruit trees. One of the satisfactions that nearly all area homeowners can have is to be able to harvest citrus, peaches, figs and other types of fruits from their own trees.

Over the past several years, I have gradually transitioned my home landscape from a traditional one appealing primarily to the visual senses to one that now includes appealing to the palette as well. My gardening friends know well that peaches are my favorite fruit tree to grow.

Just about any variety of peach that is homegrown will likely far exceed any peach in taste, texture and juiciness that is purchased from the grocery store. When folks ask what my favorite variety of peach is, I have to first admit I have a bias. There are three peach varieties that I recommend—there

is Tropic Snow, and then Tropic Snow and, as you might guess, Tropic Snow. I have had a Tropic Snow peach tree in my home landscape and this variety dependably produces white-fleshed peaches that are delightfully sweet when picked fresh from the tree.

Figs have been a part of Texas homesteads since the early development of the state. Figs grow extremely well along the Texas Gulf Coast. My Celeste fig in the landscape produced a very good first crop last year and I am looking forward to harvesting a bumper second-year crop of fresh figs in my home landscape around mid-June. Celeste figs have an excellent fresh dessert quality with a rich sweet flavor.

Kumquats are small sized evergreen citrus trees native to the southeastern areas of mountainous China. Today, they are grown for their delicious fruits and as an ornamental tree in many parts of the world, including here in the USA. I have a 5-year-old Meiwa kumquat tree in the backyard that still has a few dozens of brightly colored, golf-ball size fruits to be harvested over the next couple of weeks.

A mature kumquat tree bears several hundred brilliant orange colored fruits in the winter. The interior of the fruit resembles miniature juicy orange-like segments firmly adhering to each

other and with the peel. Kumquats are distinguished from other types of citrus in that they can be eaten whole including the peel.

Four varieties of avocado trees will be offered at the plant sale. Avocados are adapted to most soil types found in our growing region, provided the soil has good drainage. Avocados generally grow to a height of 20-25 feet in our area, and no training is required. Avocados should be harvested before they're too soft, and allowed to further soften indoors.

Avocado trees will produce a few fruits two years after establishment. Mature trees can produce two to three or more bushels of avocados with good management, depending upon variety.

Be sure to put a notation on your to-do gardening calendar to attend the Master Gardeners' Spring Plant Seminar and Sale at the County Fairgrounds in Hitchcock on Saturday, February 17.

Map directions to the plant sale and a listing of the citrus trees, fruit trees, vegetables and herbs that will be available at the plant sale can be downloaded at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.htm>.

