

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO CREDIT: Dr. William M. Johnson

Plumerias easily withstand the heat of Texas Gulf Coast summers and are in full bloom in many landscapes. They will bloom and grow vigorously if provided adequate soil moisture and fertility. Pictured is a plumeria cultivar known as "Texas Aggie."

The Dog Days of August have arrived. July was rather warm with day time temperatures dancing around the century mark on too many days. August is typically our warmest month even though it's only by 1-2 degrees on July's average.

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 2018 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 20. A diverse variety of citrus trees, ornamentals, and perennials will be available at this 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



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on the Master Gardeners' website (<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html>).

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

Plumeria. Plumerias are in full bloom across the county. Most plumeria flowers are very fragrant and some are downright intoxicating.

Each flower can last for several days, whether on the plant or brought indoors and placed in water. To perform at their best, plumerias require ample soil moisture. However, they do not tolerate "wet feet," so their root system must be provided with good soil drainage whether they are grown in containers aboveground, in containers sunk in the ground, or directly in the ground.

Plumerias are heavy feeders and will bloom and grow vigorously if provided the proper amount of soil nutrients. Plumeria enthusiasts recommend fertilizers that are low in nitrogen (the first number) and high in phosphorous (the middle number), such as "Super Bloom" or "Carl Pool's BR-61" or Peters "Super Blossom Booster 10-50-10."

Other specialty plumeria fertilizers can be used as well. Plumeria growers typically fertilize at least every two weeks during the growing season.

Plumerias are tropical plants and sensitive to cold temperatures. My "Texas Aggie" plumeria was the first plant that I brought indoors last winter before the arrival of the first of several cold snaps. It reliably leafed out this spring and rewarded me a flush of maroon-colored flowers this summer.

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.

Gardening Newsletter: The July-

August edition of the Galveston County Master Gardener Newsletter is now available online. Visit <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/> to read or download a copy.

Staked Trees: If a landscape tree were 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.

Since the sultry, sweaty days of August have arrived, be sure to carry an extra-large glass of iced tea or water and make sure to wear a hat for protection from the sun.

