

Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office

February 12, 2020



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News column printed in the Galveston Daily News, The Post, and other Galveston County Newspapers.

PHOTO CREDIT: Alice Rodgers

The Galveston County Master Gardeners' Spring Plant Sale will be held on Saturday, February 15, at the Galveston County Fairgrounds located off Hwy. 6 in Hitchcock. More than 100 Master Gardeners will be on-hand to assist customers with questions and purchases.

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 or those little kumquats? Meyer lemons, kumquats, pomegranates and blood oranges are all top gourmet fare, but can be easily and inexpensively grown in any back yard 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



be conducted on Saturday, February 15, 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 15 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 at the Spring Plant Sale. 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 a landscape that also appeals to the palette. My home landscape includes a fig tree, a loquat tree and blackberries in addition to three citrus trees. 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 purchased from a grocery store in taste, texture and juiciness. 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. This white-fleshed peach is delightfully sweet when picked fresh from a 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 has already started putting on new leaves and I am looking forward to harvesting a bumper 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 6-year-old Meiwa kumquat tree in the backyard that is full of brightly colored, golf-ball size fruits.

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.

Six varieties of avocado trees will

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be offered at the plant sale. Avocados are adapted to most soil types found in our growing region, provided the soil has good drainage. Avocado trees 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.

There will also be an impressive range of vegetable transplants for the spring garden including tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, lettuce, squash, zucchini, artichoke and more. Several types of herbs will be available at the sale. Master Gardeners have been growing many of the herbs and tomatoes in their greenhouse at the Discovery Garden.

Be sure to put a notation on your to-do gardening calendar to attend the Master Gardeners' Spring Plant Sale at the County Fairgrounds in Hitchcock on Saturday, February 15.

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 are available online (visit <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/>).

