

FAQs from Gardeners at Spring Plant Sale



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office

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Dr. William M. Johnson is a horticulturist with the Galveston County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit his website at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston>.

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PHOTO CREDIT: William M. Johnson

Citrus trees are producing a profusion of flowers that are intensely fragrant. Although honeybees are commonly seen on citrus flowers, most citrus do not require insects for pollination.

The Master Gardener volunteers sponsored a spring plant last month at the Rodeo Area at the County Fairgrounds. The Master Gardeners will conduct a clearance sale of citrus trees from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, March 12, at the Horticulture Demonstration Garden in Carbide Park in La

Marque. Included in the clearance sale will be 45 types of citrus trees plus a variety of flowering plants, herbs, peppers and tomatoes.

For directions and additional details, visit the Master Gardeners' website (<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/>

[galveston/index.html](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html)) or contact the County Extension Office by e-mail (galvcountymgs@gmail.com) or by phone (281-309-5065).

Individuals attending the spring's plant sale had a variety of questions. The following is a sampling of the questions asked.





Q: Will citrus trees do well if grown in containers?

A: That would be a definite YES. Many types of citrus trees will do well in containers if adequate care is provided and if you have a sufficient size container. Also, it is very important to purchase citrus trees grafted onto Flying Dragon rootstock. This type of rootstock dwarfs the tree (but still produces full size fruit). Citrus grafted onto Flying Dragon rootstock also have a few extra degrees of cold hardiness.

It is important that a large enough container is used—at least a 15-gallon size container should be used for most dwarf-type trees while up to 30-gallon containers should be used for larger size trees. Many gardeners use half whiskey barrel planters (available at many gardening outlets) to grow citrus plants.

Be aware that fruit and citrus trees grown in containers must be watered often and throughout the year including the winter season.

Q: I have one Meyer Lemon citrus in my wagon ready for check out. Do I need another Meyer Lemon to ensure that pollination takes place?

A: This question was actually asked of me by a customer while I was standing near the citrus plants at the sale. Home fruit growers should know whether the fruit or citrus tree they want to grow is self-

fruitful or if it requires a pollinator. Self-fruitful plants will pollinate themselves, and you only need to plant one. Plants that require a pollinator will not pollinate themselves, and another plant of the same type of fruit, but a different cultivar, must be planted for cross-pollination and reliable production.

A remarkably diverse array of citrus trees are commonly grown in Galveston County. Fortunately, most citrus are self-fruitful and do not need another plant for pollination. I do have to admit the business side of me fleetingly mused that I could have an added sale by answering yes to the gardener's question. However, the Master Gardeners and I are proud to offer only fact-based recommendations and to offer varieties of citrus trees and other plants that are proven producers in our growing area and growing conditions.

Q: What is an heirloom tomato?

A: Many gardeners have heard the term but don't really know what it means. Happily, it's an easy definition: an heirloom tomato variety is one that has been passed down from gardener to gardener. Unlike modern hybrid varieties, heirloom tomatoes come true from seed, making them easy to share.

Most heirloom varieties are prized for having an old-time taste — they are a far cry from tomatoes at the grocery store, or even from many modern hybrids like 'Better

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Boy' or 'Early Girl'.

One disadvantage of heirloom tomatoes is their lack of disease resistance. Even so, I strongly recommend trying one or more heirloom tomato varieties but rely on hybrid varieties to provide the major portion of your harvest.

Q: Will you sell this wagon?

A: The pros and cons of American capitalism have been debated time and time again. I am typically asked this question at each plant sale and this plant sale was no different in this regard. Some customers are ready and very willing to pay a very unfair, cash-on-spot price, based on market demand for wagons, I respectfully declined such offers as wagons were already in short supply.

Customers are welcome (and also encouraged) to bring their own wagon to our plant sales. What really impressed me at this spring's plant sale was variety of wagon types and the sheer size of one wagon in particular. The customer proudly explained that his wagon has a 1,500 pound load capacity. Indeed, when existing the sale, the customer had filled his mega-wagon with plants and one smiling kid in tow.

