

April Gardening Q&As

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



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PHOTO CREDIT: William M. Johnson

Roadside flowers provide beauty and a sense of calm when traveling along our roadways. The pink evening primrose is a familiar roadside wildflower at this time.

Question: Is it really possible to grow a pineapple from the top portion of a fresh pineapple purchased from the grocery store?

Answer: Pineapples are easy and fun to grow at home. All you need is a warm environment, a sunny window and a fresh pineapple. The first thing you do is enjoy the pleas-

ure of eating the "fruit" end of the pineapple. Then begin the process of growing your own pineapple plant by rooting the green vegetative top by placing it in a container of potting soil that provides good drainage.

Set the potted plant in a location that receives at least 6 hours of bright light each day. A pineapple is a

tropical plant and frost or freezing temperatures will kill it.

By next spring the plant should be well-rooted and actively growing. Active growth can be encouraged with frequent light applications of a liquid houseplant fertilizer.

Pineapple plants are in-





teresting foliage specimens, well worth growing for the leaves alone. But if you'd like to go a step further, you can easily grow your own miniature pineapples.

Once the plant has covered itself with a complete set of robust new leaves, which generally takes 6-9 months, it will be ready to "think" about flowering. Oddly enough, a small slice of apple placed down in the central growing point of the new leaves has the ability to initiate flowering. As the apple decomposes, it produces ethylene gas which brings about this physiological changeover.

Since gasses are involved, you'll obviously need to cover the plant, preferable with an airtight bag of clear polyethylene film, such as a dry cleaner's bag. Tie the bag securely around the pot and be careful to not punch holes through the thin film. Place the covered plant in a well-lighted area that does not receive direct sunlight.

Replace the old apple slice with a freshly cut apple slice every 7-10 days. After a month or six weeks you can remove the plastic. Mother Nature will usually surprise you with a flower and a small fruit. While it's far less work and effort to purchase pineapples from a grocery store, the novelty of growing your own pineapple provides satisfaction in knowing that you grew it yourself plus it's a great project to start with the kids!

Question: What would you suggest

in dealing with suckers or seedlings that emerge under oak trees? My neighbor recommended using a herbicide. Could this be harmful to the tree?

Answer: You will have to tolerate the suckers since the more you cut them, the more they multiply. Some homeowners keep them trimmed at a certain height and interplant Asiatic jasmine as a ground cover to help conceal oak sprouts since the foliage is similar.

Do not apply a herbicide to sprouts since the sprouts are likely connected directly to the mother tree and could cause damage. A herbicide will do little more than defoliate the sprouts and could harm the tree to which they are attached.

ROADSIDE WILDFLOWER OF THE WEEK . . . Pink Evening Primrose

The bluebonnet definitely ranks as the most popular wildflower in Texas. However, Texas is also home to over 1,000 varieties of wildflowers. Whether you view them while driving on a highway or strolling along a walkway, travelers have lots of colorful wildflowers to enjoy throughout the growing season.

This week's featured roadside flower is the pink evening primrose. At least that's one of its common names. Other common names include showy evening primrose, white evening primrose, and pink ladies. While several

different species of evening primroses occur in Texas, the species that occurs in our growing area is *Oenothera speciosa*.

The pink evening primrose is a prolific bloomer from spring to mid-summer and, often, again in the fall. Despite its common name, some pink evening primroses produce near white flowers that display pink or red veins and yellow centers. It is common to see a large patch of pink evening primroses with pink flowers growing next to a large patch with white flowers.

Its flowers are tissue-like, 2-3 inches wide and have prominent yellow stamens and pistils. Flowers often contain a reddish tinge to their veins that resemble a fine network of blood vessels. The bowl-shaped flowers face skyward.

Pink evening primroses are easy to grow from seed. However, pink evening primrose can become invasive in ornamental beds and even lawns. They send their roots far and wide during the winter when no top growth is visible, then pop up everywhere in the spring.

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