

Gardening Checklist for August

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



August 5, 2020



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>.

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

PHOTO CREDIT: William M. Johnson

Plumeria 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.

The Dog Days of August have arrived. Daytime temperatures have danced around the mid-nineties mark during the last week of July so there is no need to remind you that August is the peak of the heat season in Galveston County.

Working outside this month tends to be more tolerable during early

morning or late evening hours. Plants in the landscape and garden will require attention if they are to remain vigorous and provide us with many desirable benefits including color, shade, beauty, etc.

The gardeners' calendar of activities for August includes the following:

Inspect Trees Before Storm: Except for Hurricane Hanna, the Gulf of Mexico has been rather quiet thus far. However, the peak season for tropical storm and hurricane formation occurs over August and September.

Inspect larger trees for broken, dead, damaged





and weakly attached limbs as soon as possible before a tropical storm or hurricane threatens. Strong winds can tear such limbs from trees and turn them into dangerous projectiles. Also, inspect tree trunks for signs of structural damage. Obtain the services of a qualified tree care professional as needed.

Large limbs are capable of causing damage to homes, vehicles and other property as well as causing harm to people in the event of violent weather. It is wise to consider calling a professional for help with big jobs who have the know-how and equipment to avoid injury.

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.

Rose bushes: A late-summer pruning of rose bushes can be beneficial. Prune out dead canes and any weak, brushy growth. Cut tall, vigorous bushes back to about 30 inches height. After pruning, apply fertilizer, and water thoroughly. If a preventive disease-control program has been maintained, your rose bushes should be ready to provide an excellent crop of flowers this fall.

Plumeria: Plumeria 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, plumeria 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.

Plumeria 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 num-

ber) 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.

Deadheading: Removing faded flowers from the annuals and perennials (known as deadheading) before they set seed will help keep plants growing and encourage production of more flowers. A light application of fertilizer every four to six weeks will also be helpful.

PRUNING: Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning from now until midwinter. Severe pruning at this time will only stimulate tender new growth prior to frost.

The sultry, sweaty days of August will soon be at hand. So, carry an extra-large glass of iced tea or water and make sure to wear a hat for protection from the sun.

