

WHAT'S GROWIN' ON

FEBRUARY, 2010

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COMING UP

- ⇒ **Spring Garden Series**
Sat, 02/06/10
Herbs
10am-11:30am, Alvin Library
FREE
- ⇒ **Clute Garden Seminar**
Sat, 02/06/10
8am-noon, Clute Community
Center, FREE
- ⇒ **BCMGA Board Meeting**
Tues, 02/09/10
5:30 pm, AgriLIFE Office
All members welcome!
- ⇒ **BCMGA MEETING**
Tues, 02/09/10
6:30 pm, AgriLIFE Office
Citrus & Fruit Sale Prep
- ⇒ **CITRUS & FRUIT SALE**
Sat, 02/20/10
8 am-sellout, BEES
- ⇒ **Fruit Tree Grafting Seminar**
Peaches & Pears
Sat, 02/27/10
9 am-12 noon, BEES
Fee: \$25

ED BARRIOS, THE PREZ, SEZ

Wow what a January! So much for global warming; heck it's been cold, dang cold. You know I'm an engineer so I collected some data from our weather unit at BEES. We had below freezing temperatures from January 5-11. The lows were:

1/5	28°
1/6	31°
1/7	31°
1/8	26°
1/9	20°
1/10	23°
1/11	26°

We haven't seen these temperatures since 1989. There were 65 hours where the temperatures were below freezing in January at BEES. (In warmer parts of the county, only about 50 freeze hours were reported — positively balmy.) There was an additional 9.5 hours that were below freezing in December, 2009. In all of 2009 the BEES weather station recorded only 27.5 hours below freezing.

But this is Texas so we also had a high in January of 78°. But don't get too relaxed just yet as we still have February to go with the possibility of more freezes ([see the frost/freeze probabilities on Page 2](#)).

Driving around the cities and walking around BEES shows a lot of brown. Several types of palms were hit hard and they will take the longest to recover, if at all. But some of the plants that we think of as evergreen are actually root hardy much further north so the brown is temporary. If your shell ginger has already started resprouting, you can cut back the dead stalks now when there's less chance of accidentally cutting off new shoots. Of course the new shoots will need protection if there's another freeze.

There are so many damaged plants, especially the tropicals. Carole Wenny and I were actually thinking about expanding our tropical gardens this spring. But now we are looking at how many lost plants we might have to replace. (Remember don't prune damaged plants yet until the last frost day which is mid-March — but I have to admit I always prune in late February to early March.)

I hope you were able to attend Ann McLain's presentation on the freeze damage. I liked how she emphasized that this is a new beginning. Rather than getting depressed about what you lost, look forward to trying new plants and new designs for your garden. With about 750,000 plants on the planet (75% of which are tropical) you should be able to find something exciting. [One new possibility is on Page 7.](#)

We all know it has been a very wet fall/winter. Our weather station recorded 11.5" in October, 1.8" in November, 7.3" in December and 3.8" inches in January. That's 24.4" in the last 4 months, or a little less than half of our annual total. El Niño is throwing a tantrum this winter.

Finally I was so glad to see so many of you at the retirement parties for Sandra and Rich on the 29th. It was a wonderful time and some of the stories that were told were drop dead funny. We will have some pictures of the events in the next newsletter.

HIGHLIGHT ON CITRUS THIS MONTH

As you can see from the photo at right, area citrus fruits that were still on trees really hated the 50-60 hours of back-to-back freezes we experienced on those days in January. However, many of the trees will survive to fruit again.

This issue's theme is citrus in anticipation of the upcoming **Citrus & Fruit Sale on February 20**, but citrus isn't the only fruit we'll have. You'll find low-chill apples, pears and peaches; hardy avocados; pomegranates; figs; blackberries and grapes. See you there!



THE BEES BUZZ

THE UPPER GULF COAST CITRUS SHOW

AND THE "BEST OF SHOW" WINNER IS ... RAY MICHALIK
AND THE RESERVE CHAMPION WINNER IS ... RAY MICHALIK

At the December 10th Upper Gulf Coast Citrus Show in League City, Brazoria County Master Gardener **Ray Michalik** won the top two honors. His 'Rio Red' grapefruit took Best of Show, and his 'Myer' lemon gave Ray the Reserve Champion Rosette.

Growers submitted a record 194 entries in the competition. Entrants provided three fruits of each cultivar they wanted judged. Criteria for all fruits were cleanliness; symmetry; unblemished fruit exterior; color, texture and segment uniformity of the interior; and shortness of stem length. The large number of entries this year precluded weight and taste tests for the two judges. But quality and uniformity let Ray out-citrus lots of competition.

To top it off, he is the first person in the show's history to take BOTH of the top honors. Ray also took second place with a satsuma and a third place ribbon for a 'Kinnow' mandarin.

Photo courtesy of Dr. William Johnson, Galveston County



MORE BUZZ

AND THE WEATHER WINNER IS...NOT 2009

Plants struggled to recover from Ike...struggled through a months-long severe drought...only to be nailed with the December 4-5 snow and freeze.



Photo courtesy of Les Cooper

Angleton (BEES-FM 523 & Hospital Drive) Compiled by Ted Jagen				
	October	November	December	1999 Year
High Temp	91.1°	81.4°	77.3°	99.4°
Low Temp	46.5°	35.9°	27.5°	27.5°
Avg Temp	71.9°	61.4°	51.7°	69.9°
Historical Temp	70.8°	62.2°	55.2°	69.2°
Avg Humidity				
Max Wind (mph)	29 SE	28 SE	36 NNE	38 ESE
Avg Wind (mph)	3.4	2.6	3.9	3.3
Rain	11.48"	1.77"	7.26"	39.48"
Historical Rain	4.25"	4.86"	4.17"	57.24"
Through December 31, there were already 200 chill hours				

GAMBLING ON SPRING

Average last freeze date? The NWS climatologists believe in probabilities. If you're a big gambler in Angleton, you might plant your tomatoes on February 15 as you'll have a 50% chance of no freeze after that date (but a much higher probability of frost until March 9). To be really safe you'll wait until March 26. The 36° dates indicate frost, and of course the evil 28° is the hard freeze number. It's too bad there are only 3 stations for the county listed.

Station Name		Last Spring Frost (Date)		
		Probability Level (1)		
		90%	50%	10%
ALVIN	36°	Feb08	Mar05	Mar29
	32°	Jan10	Feb15	Mar20
	28°	Dec14	Jan27	Mar02
ANGLETON 2W	36°	Feb09	Mar09	Apr05
	32°	Jan04	Feb15	Mar26
	28°	-	Jan30	Mar12
FREEPORT 2NW	36°	Jan14	Feb18	Mar24
	32°	-	Jan31	Mar03
	28°	-	Jan09	Feb17

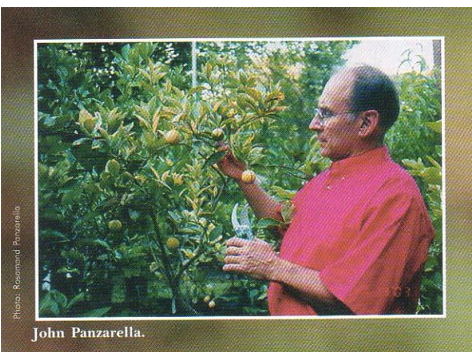
(1) Probability of later date in spring than indicated.
- Indicates the probability of occurrence of threshold temperature is less than indicated probability.

Data from National Weather Service Climatology Division: <http://cdo.ncdc.noaa.gov/climate normals/clim20suppl/states/TX.pdf>

GROWING CITRUS IN CONTAINERS: INTERVIEW WITH JOHN PANZARELLA

No space for an orchard? Don't want 500 oranges of a single cultivar? Trying out freeze-sensitive citrus?

John Panzarella of Lake Jackson, well-known king of container-grown citrus, provided a ton of info on how to grow citrus in containers.



Do we need the dwarfing 'Flying Dragon' rootstock? What do you use?

Actually the regular *trifoliata* rootstock is a semi-dwarf. There are a few selections you can find on 'Flying Dragon', but all of mine are on *trifoliata*. Shackleford [Brazos Citrus Nursery] has some plants on 'Flying Dragon', but it's not a common rootstock.

You use large containers, 15 gallons. Can fruit be produced in smaller containers?

The larger the container, the more fruit produced. Smaller fruits (like limes, lemons, kumquats, satsumas, calamondins) will produce okay in even a 5-7 gallon container. Large fruit, like grapefruit and pummelos really should be in the ground since they're fast growers, need a large leaf surface and they're naturally large trees.

What about repotting? Can trees be left in the same container indefinitely or do they need to have larger and larger pots?

I bump up pot sizes as the trees grow. You wouldn't take your new 3 gallon tree and re-plant it into a 15 gallon pot right away. It should go up in pot size gradually...3 to 5 to 7 and I stop at 15 gallons. Take it out of the container every 6 months and check to see if it's ready to be bumped up.

How about leaving them in a, say, 7 gallon pot? Would you want to root prune and branch prune and replace some of the soil? That's something that would make sense. I don't do that because I have too many containers. Some of my trees have been in the same 15 gallon pots for 20 years. But, yes, if you have a few plants, root pruning and soil replacement would be ideal, especially in a

smaller container size.

Branch pruning would be similar to in-ground pruning: remove any dead or crossing branches. You could even shape the growth to keep a pot/tree balance. Also prune to keep fruiting branches off the ground. Fruit will bend down the branches and the fruit will rot if it's laying on the ground.

Like all citrus, any growth below the graft is from the rootstock and needs to be removed.

When would pruning take place?

After fruiting, but not in the winter. Just before bud break, which is about mid-February in normal years.

What's the best soil mix for containers?

Citrus requires well-drained soil at about a pH of 6-6.5. I use 50% premier quality landscape mix (it's a combination of mushroom compost, sand, some peat moss and loam) and 50% ground pine bark, both purchased locally. The pine bark helps keep the acidity up. That's a relatively fast-draining mix.

Speaking of drainage, do potted citrus require more water?

Well, I leave saucers under my pots to catch the drainage. Plants in 10-15 gallon pots lose a lot of water through their leaf surfaces. As long as the saucer doesn't hold water for more than 24 hours, it reduces the number of times a week that I have to water when there's insufficient rainfall.

If you only have a few plants, or in smaller sized pots, saucers aren't necessary as long as you can provide sufficient water during the hottest months. You want the soil to be moist and never soggy. Soggy soil encourages root rot. Let the soil mixture dry a bit between watering. Too dry soil is indicated when the leaves start curling like a cigar. If rainfall is heavy, the mix I use allows good drainage of excess water.

If you do use saucers, the container needs to be flushed once a month. Let the water run through the whole container without the saucer to remove excess fertilizer salts that accumulate when saucers are used.

What kind of fertilizer do you recommend and at what rates?

There's a commercial citrus fertilizer that I use. A citrus fertilizer should be higher in nitrogen than phosphorus and potassium. A 2-1-1 (N-P-K) is about right. Citrus need high nitrogen. It should also contain trace minerals. Citrus requires higher amounts of water-soluble iron and zinc than other plants might

— you need to look at the label to make sure the iron and zinc are water-soluble as some are not. They also want magnesium which can be supplied by Epsom salts.

It's very important to follow the application rates shown on the fertilizer bag. Slow release granular fertilizers are much better than the fertilizer stakes which can burn or even kill a young tree.

Do you fertilize all year? How often?

You would fertilize starting in mid-February through, say, Labor Day. Applications during the growth period are once to twice a month depending on rain, drainage and heat. But stop for the rest of the year.

Your containers are on ground. What about containerized citrus on concrete driveways? Or patios?

I've seen sun scald and fruit scald when the containers are on concrete during the summer. There's a lot of heat radiated up from concrete on sunny 90+° days. Some growers paint the tree's bark white to mitigate the heat from concrete. It's best to place containers on ground if possible. Or move pots to shadier areas during the hottest part of the day. Even though citrus thrives in full sun, it bears quite well even with filtered or partial sun. You see that most of my trees are quite shaded in the yard.

Are container citrus more prone to freeze damage? How would be protect against freeze?

Trifoliata is pretty cold tolerant. It's the scion and graft union that need protection, especially on young trees. The plant can be damaged when the temperature drops below 26°. You could bring it into a garage, shed or greenhouse when it's young. Trees will become somewhat harder as they mature. Immediately after the freeze bring the plant back outside unless you have adequate lighting to maintain the tree's health over a longer period of time.



ANN McLAIN, THE INQUIRING GARDENER: THE ORCHARD AT BEES

Recently, I spent some time walking around in the orchard at BEES with Dan Sebesta. Maybe "mucking around" would be a better term - much of the time I was sinking into mud above my ankles, and fighting to keep my boots with my feet.



The first thing we saw as we waded a ditch full of water and started down the row was a particularly nasty looking lime tree. Limes are the most frost-tender of the commonly grown citrus, and this one seemed to bear that out. Dan pointed out that, unlike the other trees, this one was loaded with dead, brown leaves. It was clear that other trees had dropped some leaves, or had green leaves with some brown damage, but this lime had a total lack of any green at all. Dan claimed that when a citrus tree holds onto a full set of dead brown leaves like this, it's a really bad sign.

When I first thought to do a story about the BEES orchard, this was not what I was envisioning. I had thoughts about nice glossy green trees, with bright orange fruit. Citrus is so photogenic. But then, along came the winter of 2009-10.

Dan began planting our demonstration orchard in the spring of 2008. You remember 2008 - that wasn't a very good year either. The first year the orchard occupied two rows, and was planted with an assortment of fruit trees that any Brazoria gardener might choose to have in a backyard orchard.

The rows in which the trees were planted were mounded up into berms before planting. Then, further raised mounds were created atop the berms for each individual tree. The original intent was to eventually build up the berms between the mounds, to provide plenty of root room for the trees, but that hasn't happened yet. In the meantime, the mounds have eroded some, but as of now, the still young trees haven't outgrown the space they have. The extra height of the planting bed has been a good thing, especially this year. As we discovered, the heavy rains of this winter have turned the soil between the rows into a mud hole only one step removed from open water. But the tree roots are up out of the saturation zone.

Last spring Dan planted another row of trees, including some less common things, such as a jujube. He also had to replant several spots in the older rows, due to herbicide damage to the original occupants. He also experimented with grafting some cocktail trees - one tree trunk carrying several varieties.

Some of the trees have done very well in their first years. One peach, 'Florida King', has grown very well and looks very happy now. Dan expects that it will bear well this spring, considering the chill hours it has received this winter. And, for youngsters, the satsumas and grapefruits produced well this fall.

The current condition of the avocado trees is interesting. When they were planted, each tree got a shade structure built over it. Evidently, young avocados grow under mature trees for the first years of their lives, and their large, thin leaves need

that shade to avoid burning. The avocado babies have had a lot of hard knocks - shade houses blowing down, herbicide overspray, heat, drought, and more. When the freeze threatened, Dan wrapped up each one of them in frost blankets.

The end result was mixed.

Despite the TLC, one avocado, 'Brogan', looks dead - brown leaves, shriveled wood, and all.

But another one seems to have virtually no damage at all. It is bushy and green, and looks ready for spring. In case you're in the market for a new

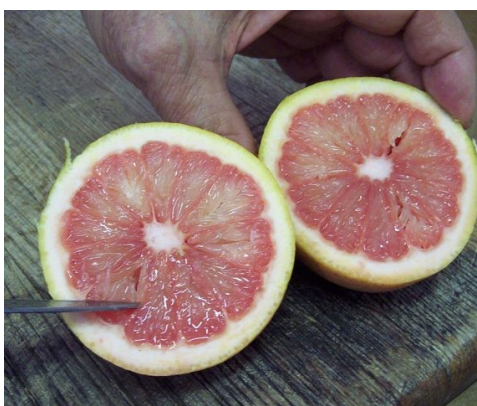


avocado, you might like to know that this tree is the 'Opal' variety. It did have some extra help in its life, which may help to account for its success. It was babied along in a big pot for a year or more before it was set out into the orchard with the other original inhabitants. So it is a little older, and is probably in better condition, than the other avocados.

Citrus trees, like many other of our favorite plants with iffy hardiness, seem to get more tolerant of frost as they get bigger and older. The trees planted into the orchard just last spring suffered noticeably more damage than those a year older. So there is hope that if you can provide extra protection during your tree's younger years, by the time it is too tall to be bundled up, it may not need help anymore.

So what about the frost damage? Dan says that by March, the damaged leaves will have dropped, and damage to the wood should be easier to detect as the live wood begins to grow. Then we can get to work pruning back to healthy wood. If trees send up sprouts from below the graft union, those should be removed. Trifoliate orange (which lent its roots to your grafted tree) isn't good eats.

Any fruit still on the branches during the January freeze was probably damaged. Generally speaking, the fruit is less tolerant of freezing temperatures than the tree itself is. After that first frost in December, Dan found that some of the fruits still at the tops of trees in his own orchard had had spots of ice on the skin, resulting in areas of rot. But that freeze was relatively short, and many of us were able to continue to enjoy fruit that had been on our trees through that event.



But this more recent freeze was a different story. Dan showed me a 'Rio Red' grapefruit that he had just picked at home. It looked pretty good on the outside, but when it was cut open, it was evident that it had at least partially frozen; the texture was poor. Fruit begins to freeze when it reaches 28°. In order to drop the fruit temperature to that level, air temperature

(Continued on page 5)

THE ORCHARD AT BEES *(cont'd from page 4)*

needs to be held at 24° for four hours. In much of our area, this was achieved on several days in a row.

Will the trees bloom this spring? The peach trees, with no damage, should do well. The citrus trees, many of which will have damage to the newest wood at the tips, may not bloom as well. Dan expects a lot less fruit next fall.

I asked Dan what fruit tree he would recommend for a gardener with room for only one. His hands down choice among the citrus fruits is the satsuma, for many reasons. First, the satsuma is smaller and hardier. It is the best adapted to our growing conditions. Once past the young stages, it is low maintenance. And best of all, the quality of fruit freshly picked from a locally grown satsuma can't be matched by anything from the grocery store. The most popular satsuma these days is the 'Owari', but other varieties have their supporters, too.

What if the gardener doesn't care for citrus? Then Dan would recommend a peach tree. Again, the strongest reason is that store-bought peaches aren't worth much.

Peaches require more care: once they begin bearing, the gardener needs to remove about 75% of the fruit set so that the rest will develop well. Peaches also need pruning. It's important to choose a peach variety with a chill hour requirement appropriate to our area. Dan especially likes 'Tropical Sweet'.



The so-called round oranges are a bit problematic for us. These are oranges such as navels, blood oranges, and valencias. The problem with them, from Dan's perspective, is that they are not as cold hardy, not as productive, and some require up to fourteen months from blossom to harvest. Round oranges on the trees during our recent freeze were a total loss, because they were not yet ripe enough to pick.

Dan does like Mexican, or Key lime trees, even though they are the least frost hardy of all. He considers that it is worthwhile to provide some protection and then put in a new one when the freezing temperatures win. This is because key limes bear well at a young age, and they produce up to three crops a year. We can be picking limes pretty much all the time. He does caution that, unlike most of our citrus fruits, limes can't be stored on the tree - when they begin turning orange, they will soon drop.

All in all, our orchard at BEES is not a bad news story, even if it doesn't present that glowing picture in green and orange. Most of the trees are only lightly damaged, if at all, and we may have that green and orange picture next winter.

FEBRUARY JOB JAR

Veggies Gardeners who put their fall energies into a winter vegetable garden made the smart move. Veggies are doing well all over. Carrots, turnips, cabbages, cauliflowers - those are just some of the goodies being picked. Ray Michalik will be planting potatoes the first week of February. He plants the potatoes right at ground level (not in raised beds). About two weeks later he'll pull up the soil around them, covering up to the leaves. He'll do that a few more times. This ends up with the potato roots planted quite deep, but the little beginner potatoes have good light right from the first. When the ground dries out a bit, Ray will be tilling up most of his garden to prep it for spring crops. Then the soil can rest a bit. At the end of the month beans go in, and he gets set for the big March planting. Barbara Brown and Lee Withers suggested that February is not too late to sow a bit more lettuce and radishes. They suggest dill and cilantro, too. Neither herb likes hot weather, but they are ready for harvest quickly.

Starting seeds It's really too late to be starting tomato seeds (and eggplant and peppers as well), but if you have a batch of seedlings Barbara Brown warns not to fertilize them too soon, or you may burn their delicate roots. A little weak plant hormone is okay once they get true leaves, but don't fertilize until they have four leaves; and only at 1/8-1/4 strength.

This would be a good month to start some annuals for warm season color. Many people direct sow things like zinnias, but you can start them inside in six-packs as well. This will allow you to lay out your beds knowing just what color you're putting where. Sunflowers are fun to start if you want something growing now. It's also time to start coleus and impatiens, if you haven't been able to carry over rooted cuttings, or you want to try a different variety. Start warm season annual or tender vines: Black-Eyed Susan vine, Moonflower, Snail and Purple Hyacinth Bean vines. Toward the end of the month you could start cucumbers and melons, to give them a head start before the soil in the garden warms up.

Roses Everyone knows that when it's Valentine's Day, it's time to take care of your roses. The first step is pruning. This year, be alert for freeze damage - the center pith of the canes should be white. If it's discolored, Barbara Ray says it's a sign of frost or other damage, and you should make your cuts lower, where you see healthy wood. Generally we're told to prune away one third to one half the length of canes in hybrid teas; but quite a bit less than that in old roses. After their haircuts, your roses would like to be fed. Barbara suggests using a combination of a 3-2-1 type granular fertilizer plus some alfalfa pellets. And it's traditional to sprinkle Epsom salts around roses at this time.

Hardy Woodies Remember that shrub you root-pruned last November? Time's running out to get that thing dug up and moved. Since our weather generally warms up quite a bit in March, woody plants need to be growing their roots by then so that they will be ready for the spring growth spurt. Losing roots in the process of being transplanted is stressful enough - get it done before warm weather. The same applies to planting bare root material - those plants have lost a lot of feeder roots.

This also is the last month for doing any major pruning. Wounded wood, ie, pruning cuts, will heal fastest around the time of the spring growth flush, which will be setting in by March.

Tropicals and Sub-Tropicals Don't mess with them for at least another month unless there are mushy leaves or stems. Those should be cut back. Even the palms and bamboos that look awful should be left alone for now. By March you should know which of them limped through the ghastly hard freeze.

INSECT PESTS OF CITRUS BY PAULA CRAIG

Disclaimer: Information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by AgriLIFE Extension or BCMGA is implied

An insect becomes a pest when it is present in sufficient numbers to interfere with either the economic performance or the life processes of a plant. In the case of citrus, there are many economic pests and few serious life threatening pests. In the former case, treatment is optional; in the latter, it is crucial. Injudicious use of chemical pesticides can result in secondary infestations. For example, treating for an insect (6-legged) can lead to a mite (8-legged) problem.

Sucking Insects

Like most sucking insects, they pierce the plant tissue with a straw-like proboscis and extract its juices. Tissue may become distorted and stunted. They then excrete honeydew which hosts the even more unsightly black sooty mold. Depending on the degree of the infestation, sooty mold can interfere with photosynthesis and harm the plant. Mealy bugs, aphids, thrips, white flies and black flies are all sucking insects that appear following a growth flush when new and succulent tissue is abundant. These are rarely serious threats due to the presence of natural enemies.



Lacewing eggs on underside of citrus leaf —a beneficial predator of aphids, mites, thrips and scales



Juvenile Lacewing polishing off an aphid



Scales

Scale is an insect that has a crawling phase and an immobile phase to its lifecycle. The immature crawling phase distributes the pest. Scales can be soft or armored. They are more prevalent where air circulation is poor.

Scales are also sucking insects and can cause a **sooty mold problem**. Natural enemies of scale include lady bugs and parasitic wasps. Refined horticultural oils are also effective and non-toxic.

According to the University of Florida, "large numbers of [scale] crawlers do not always indicate an infestation since the mortality rate of the first few instars is extremely high. For most of the scale species present on citrus, biological control of the



later instars and adults is also quite effective. Problems usually arise due to improper spray programs. Over spraying, or use of pesticides not recommended, can seriously weaken the biological control complex holding most scale populations in check. An insufficient spray program can also result in large scale populations."

Chewing Insects

Chewing insects may work on leaf and fruit tissue from the inside out or the outside in. Leaf cutting ants and orange dog caterpillars work outside and can harm young trees that have little foliage to spare.



Leaf Cutting Ants are reddish brown and up to ½" in length, and form trails to and from large mounds. They swarm from early April to early June. Collecting leaves for their compost pile, they feed on the fungus that grows in their compost. Natural enemies include birds and lizards. They can also be controlled with baits and citrus-based oils.



Orange Dogs are **Giant Swallow-tail** butterfly larva disguised as bird poop. Eggs are laid on the underside of leaves. Some say that they emit an odor like dog urine, though I have never personally been that close to one. They



generally are not present in sufficient number to do damage and are controlled by parasitic wasps and birds. Monitoring for eggs and crushing some or all of them will also solve any potential problems.



Citrus Leaf-miner is a potentially harmful pest that works from the inside out. The rather nondescript female moth deposits eggs on new growth. Newly hatched larvae bore into the leaf and proceed to tunnel back and forth while feeding on inner tissues. Production of fruit can be reduced and trees can be killed by large infestations, especially on young trees. If monitored and controlled early, pruning affected limbs can be effective. Spinosad-containing products such as Conserve® SC and Ferti-lome® Borer, Bagworm, Leaf-miner and Tent Caterpillar Spray are insecticides. Refined horticultural oils sprayed according to directions will smother the little beasts.

Leafminer and tunnels from UC-Davis. Usually the critter itself isn't so visible, but the damage always is

PLANTS OF THE MONTH: ALL SURVIVORS OF THE BIG CHILL

ANNUAL/PERENNIAL: *Cynara cardunculus* (Cardoon)

Size: to 8'x8'

Shape: Vase, arching

Light: Sun

Soil/Water: Average, well-drained

Flowers: Purplish, thistle-like

Fertilize: Average

Propagation: Seeds; there are several cultivars in Europe, but haven't found any of them in U.S. seed houses



ARCHITECTURAL ARTICHOKE RELATIVE

A big freeze winner is this perennial herb/veggie that is typically grown as a winter annual in this area. It might make it through a summer, but don't count on it. The jagged edged, often spiny, leaves make a lush fountain of gray-green. In spring here, thistle-like flowers rise up above the foliage.

Unlike artichoke, the immature flower buds aren't the edible portion. Rather the stem midribs alone are steamed separately or cooked with other veggies. Popular in Europe and North Africa (Morocco is its native home) as an edible, we in the U.S. primarily use it as an ornamental.

But what an ornamental! It's size and structure is striking and makes an idea background plant for lower growing winter annuals. It's only drawback is that wind can tatter the huge leaves, decreasing its ornamental value.

Availability: Small plants in autumn at area nurseries; seeds very common

NATIVE TREE/SHRUB: *Ilex vomitoria* (Yaupon)

Size: 3'x3' — 20'x20'+

Shape: Round to irregular to weeping depending on the cultivar or tree

Light: Full sun to shade

Soil/Water: Sand-clay, acid-alkaline, wet-dry, saline-tolerant

Flowers: Insignificant white; bees love

Berries: Female trees; persistent translucent red or yellow; late winter bird food

Fertilize: Average

Propagation: Seeds for basic species; cuttings for cultivars

FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT, BUT SHOULDN'T

If this were a rare tree, people would pay outrageous sums for it.

From the eastern half of Texas through the southern portions of the Gulf states and up the Atlantic coastal counties to North Carolina, Yaupon is a significant understory tree of the Deep South. The biggest is in Texas (of course) at 47' H x 40' W.

Numerous cultivars include: 'Shillings' Dwarf' (male, compact 3'x3'); 'Condeaux' (male, most compact, gray-green leaves, maroon winter color); var. *nana* (male, to 6'x6', prone to suckering); 'Pride of Houston' (allegedly self-fruitful, 15'x10'); var. *pendula* [pic at right] (female, weeping, 20'x10'); 'Will Fleming' (male, columnar, 15'x5'); yellow berried 'Aureo', 'Otis Miley' and 'Wiggins' Yellow'. And of course the species and *nana* can be topiaried into outrageous geometric shapes and even made to look like a mutant mushroom. Suckering and trunk sprouts can be minimized by not cultivating near the plant.

Species readily available; cultivars in nurseries



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SHRUB: *Myrcianthes fragrans compacta* (Dwarf Simpson's Stopper, Twinberry)



Size: to 6'x6'

Shape: Round, dense, graceful

Light: Full sun to shade

Soil/Water: Almost any soil type; can take occasional wet, yet is drought tolerant; acidic to alkaline

Flowers: White, whenever warm

Fruit: ½" red-orange berry

Fertilize: Average

Propagation: Stem cuttings?

FLORIDA NATIVE WITH A FUTURE IN BRAZORIA COUNTY?

Two Master Gardeners bought this plant last spring. Both are delighted that the young unprotected plants came through the big freeze with no damage.

Small nutmeg-scented evergreen leaves provide a perfect foil for 1" white, fragrant long-stamened flowers that appear frothy from a distance. They attract both bees and butterflies. The red-orange berries appeal to birds. A multi-tasker, the shrub flow-

ers and fruits at the same time throughout the growing season.

Although it takes shearing, it's much too graceful to be subjected to geometric forms.

If it continues to do well, the Dwarf Simpson's Stopper will be a desirable addition to Brazoria County landscapes.

Limited availability to date: Caldwell's Nursery; possibly on-line retailers.

BCMGA

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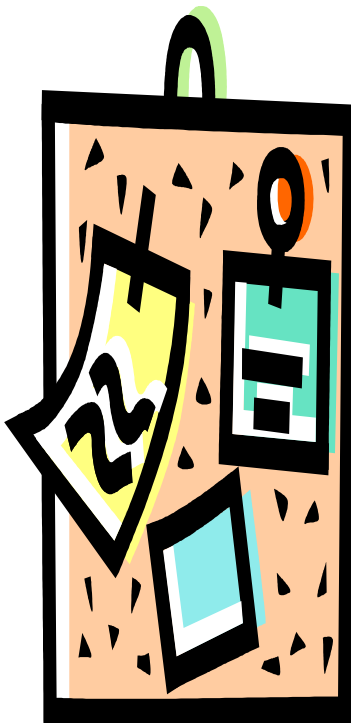


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ANNOUNCEMENTS AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



25th Annual Fort Bend Vegetable Conference: Tuesday, February 2, 8:30 am—4:30 pm, \$15
Fort Bend County Fairgrounds, Building "C", 4310 Highway 36 South, Rosenberg, Texas
Registration Fee includes Barbeque Lunch
Earn 5 CEUs

2010 State Master Gardener Conference in Dallas, TX (April 8-10): March 1 Early Registration Deadline
Information at <http://www.2010tmgaconference.org>

Volunteers Always Needed: B.E.E.S. (the gardens), every Tuesday and Friday, 7:30am—12:00pm

Texas Garden Clubs & Texas AgriLIFE: Landscape Design Study Course IV, Series XXI, February 22-23
Christ United Methodist Church, 4201 State Hwy 6, College Station, TX
Registration Deadline is February 12. Fee: \$115. Earn 12 CEUs
Additional info at: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/LDFeb10/AnnouncLDIV2.10.html>

Lone Star Daylily Society: David Kirchhoff & Mort Moss of Daylily World, Sunday, February 21, 2pm—5pm
Alvin Senior Center, 309 West Sealy
The owners of Daylily World will discuss their hybridization program; Auction follows program

Brazosport Garden Club: Small Fruits, presented by Roy Morgan, Tuesday, February 2, 7pm—9pm
Lake Jackson Public Library, 250 Circle Way

Spring Plant Sale: Our Spring Plant Sale will be coming up soon. We would like for members who are dividing or rearing beds and have plants that are unusual, hard to find (can't buy at the big box stores), or that are good reliable performers, to please let us know what they may have. Contact BeBe Brown or Cindy Goodrum to see if we can use them for the plant sale. Thanks for everyone's help and support. Cindy