

Here's the Dirt



January Happenings

Happy New Year! I hope that all of you faired well during the holidays and the freeze we endured. Here's to hoping that all your plants and trees are recovering! January is a great time to start fresh with a renewed sense of purpose for the new year. Maybe you're planting and growing something that you've never grown before or you've committed to get that Advanced Training that you've always wanted. Whatever your goal for the new year, please know that I am here and available to help you attain those objectives. I am a phone call or email away or I would love to chat with you in my office. Let me know how I can help!



Coming Soon

We have lots of great ways for you to learn, serve and share coming up in 2023.. Be sure to check out the page on obtainable opportunities to volunteer as well as ways to earn Continuing Education hours. This is just one more way that we are making it easier to stay active and certified as a Master Gardener. One last friendly reminder to be sure and pay your dues for 2023 and log your hours in the VMS system.



What's Growing on...
01/10/23 - Board Meeting
01/13/23 - General Meeting
01/26/23 First Day of Intern Class @ BEES
01/30/23 Interpretation Event
01/31/23 Horticulture Committee Meeting

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KIMBERLY MAYER, CEA - HORTICULTURE

Brazoria County

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

Nominate a Horticulture Hero:

I may have only been here since September 1st, but boy, oh boy have I been impressed by all the hard work, drive, and dedication of our Master Gardeners in Brazoria County. We truly have an amazing group of individuals. I wanted to make sure that we recognize and fully appreciate our volunteers on more than just a yearly basis. That's where this program comes in to play. I would love for you to send me your nominations for a monthly Horticulture Hero. The requirements are simple. Just send me an email with a paragraph explaining why this individual should be nominated for this award. I will make the final decision each month and then award that person at the General Meeting. Some examples could be: above and beyond service at an outreach event, behind the scenes planning and coordinating, or even an outstanding presentation to a local group, The possibilities are endless. We will start this in February, so get your nominations to my by January 31st. Email me : kimberly.mayer@ag.tamu.edu



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Brazoria County



Brazoria County Master Gardeners

SAVE THE DATES!

Upcoming Plant Sales

Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale

February 11, 2023 9:00-12:00 pm

Online Sale Pick Up Date

Online Sale Dates TBA

Spring Plant Sale

Vegetable Seedling Sale

March 11, 2023 9:00-12:00 pm

Angleton Fairgrounds, 901 South Downing, Angleton, TX

Check and Credit ONLY. NO CASH

**We are delighted to host 2 shopping events that include
ornamentals, select citrus and fruit trees, native and
adapted plants, veggies and more!**

For more information:

<http://txmg.org/brazoria/>

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperat-



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Obtainable Opportunities

Volunteer Ops

- BEES - Tues. and Friday 9-12
- BCMG Monthly Meeting
- Tree Sale
- Plant Sale
- Learn Grow Eat Go!
- Growing and Nourishing
- Healthy Communities (GNHC)
- Pearland Community Garden
- Richwood Community Garden
- Speaking Engagements
- Website/Facebook Management

- And much more...see VMS for more options

Continuing Education

- Facebook Live - Aggie Horticulture, KPB, KAB

- Plant party Webinar - Quarterly

- Harris County MG - Green Thumb Series (FB)

- Monthly Speaker at General Meetings

- Fort Bend Vegetable Conference - February 7th

- Rainwater Harvesting and Turf Management - May 2023

- Master Gardener State Conference - May

- Urban Orchard Series - March (TBD)

Advanced Training

- Budding & Grafting
 - Compost
 - Earth-Kind®Landscaping
 - Entomology
 - First Detector
 - Greenhouse Management
 - Home Fruit (South Texas)
 - Junior Master Gardener (JMG)
 - Plant Propagation
 - Rainwater Harvesting
 - Texas Superstars®
 - Tree Care
 - Turf Grass
 - Vegetables
- **Available through TMG and more opportunities coming soon.

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Project Polar Freeze By: Nick Felsted

Master Gardeners -

The Orchard Committee is working on Project Polar Freeze. We hope to wrap it up and publish it in January 2023. Since there are predictions for serious cold weather this week, I thought I would share the interim results with you. I invite others to share it with others.

Summary: Use bark mulch in extreme cold, but heat source and plastic/tarps/cloth in modest freezing conditions.

Temperature Ranges

First of all, there are different temperature ranges to consider. Additionally, the length of time at a given temperature matters. If the temperature barely dips below freezing for an hour, minimal damage will occur. If temperatures get down to 20 degrees continuously for 4 days, that is a much more serious temperature event; it is serious both because of the low temperature and because of the length of time at that temperature. At this point, the effect of the length of time at a given temperature will not be quantified, but the reader should be aware that it makes a difference. If longer freezing periods are predicted, greater freeze protection should be used.

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Project Polar Freeze By: Nick Felsted

28-32 F: If the temperature only gets down to 28 degrees, most citrus will survive with minimal protection. That does not mean that the tree won't defoliate, but that the trees will survive. I still protect my trees with level 1 citrus protection when temperatures are predicted to fall below 32 F for more than a couple of hours.

25-28 F: If the temperature gets down to 25-28 F, that is low enough that some citrus trees will start to die without protection. I use the level 1 citrus protection, see details below.

12-25 F: If the temperature gets down into the mid to low teens, most citrus will die back to ground level. In this case, the graft on most grafted citrus trees will die. This requires level 2 citrus freeze protection. This is not a guarantee, but most of the people who have used this level of protection have successfully protected their trees.

Disclaimer - While these recommendations are made, it depends to a large degree on how well they are implemented. Two people who use the same techniques may implement them extremely differently. The effectiveness of the implementation can vary widely and accordingly the result of the same techniques will vary.

Level 1 Citrus Protection: Anytime the temperatures are predicted to drop to 25-32 F, I try to use these techniques. Add a heat source to the tree that will provide heat (don't use LED lights) and wrap them with a plastic cover. Some people use cloth, but it blocks the sun. I typically use 1-2 strings of conventional Christmas lights and a plastic drop cloth. For smaller trees I use an old shower curtain. I try to wrap the sides, but leave the top so I can close it when it freezes and open it when temperatures will stay above freezing. In this way, I can wrap them in December and open the top when it warms up. I can leave it this way for weeks and each time it freezes I can close up the top. One year I left the trees totally wrapped in plastic for several weeks and when the sun came out it roasted many of my trees causing them to defoliate. I believe that it killed one or two of my trees as well.

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Project Polar Freeze

By: Nick Felsted

Level 2 Citrus Protection: Anytime the temperature is predicted to drop below 25 F, consider using mulch to protect the graft. With citrus it is most important to protect the graft. Usually the roots will survive, but if the graft dies, the tree will no longer produce fruit that is useful. Level 1 techniques may be used, but in addition, pile 8-12 inches of bark mulch around the trunk and under the tree. The trunk is the most important part of the tree. The graft must be protected or it will die (it is true that not all citrus is grafted, but a large majority of citrus is). The deeper the mulch the better the protection. Respondents who used 6 inches of mulch lost half their trees. Respondents who used 8-12 inches of mulch lost very few trees. One respondent used 5 ft of mulch and saved the roots, graft, most of the trunk and some branches. Finding 5 feet of mulch may be difficult and/or expensive. Leave the mulch around the trunk as long as the very low temperatures last. Once temperatures rise and appear to stay above freezing, then pull the bark mulch back from around the tree. The mulch can cause disease if left piled around the trunk for a long period of time. During the freeze of February 2021 in Texas, 95% of those in Brazoria County who carefully used a bark mulch technique saved the grafts of their citrus (see disclaimer). It is the best known technique for saving citrus in a polar freeze.

Question: Can someone skip level 1 citrus protection and only use level 2? This is not necessarily a bad approach, however, it has a drawback. The leaves are much more likely to be frozen and die if you skip the level 1 protection. The graft will be protected, but the branches and leaves may or may not survive in a lesser temperature event. If that is all the energy one has, it is a good method,

I am always trying new techniques. These are not proven, but the research suggests it may be beneficial is to use a heat lamp under the plastic or cloth covering. Providing more heat in a serious event should help.

Others are invited to share their favorite methods since these are not the only good ideas.

Best wishes on protecting your citrus trees this winter. Anyone wishing to ask questions may contact me by email, text or phone.

Nick Felsted
Brazoria County Master Gardener
Orchard Committed Co-Chair
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