



Grimes County Master Gardeners



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**Check Out Our
Newly Updated
Website:**

txmg.org/grimes

Get Ready—It's Spring

Planting season begins this month for annuals, perennials, fruit and nut trees, and vegetables. If you haven't already prepared your beds, now is the time to start pruning, weeding, dividing and mulching. Many gardeners have already purchased and spread mushroom compost. You can purchase the good stuff at Monterrey Mushrooms in Madisonville or look for cooled off bagged compost at your local feed store. If you buy directly you will need to let the compost "cool off" for several weeks before planting.

Daylight Saving Time is Sunday, March 8th

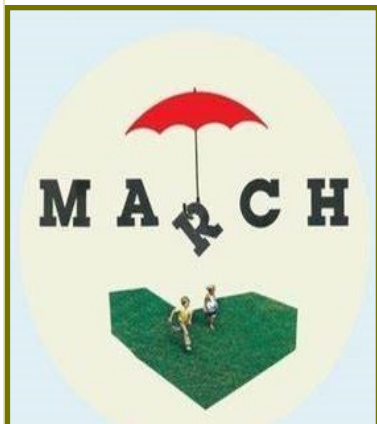


Benefits of Daylight Saving Time:

- Decreases residential electricity usage
- Decreases the number of traffic accidents
- Reduces crime
- Increases recreational time like gardening
- Brings a smile to everybody's faces by providing more light and sunshine

Area Plant Sales

- March 7: Waller County Master Gardeners. Vegetable and Herb Sale. 9:00—1:00, Waller County AgriLife Office, 846 Sixth Street, Hempstead.
- March 20-21: Herb Society of America: Pioneer Unit. Vast Selection of Herbs, Natives, Perennials and More. 8:00—5:00, 248 Jaster Road, Festival Hill near Round Top.
- March 21: Brazos County Master Gardeners. Spring Plant Sale. Natives, Perennials, Herbs, Vegetables & Bulbs. 9:00—Noon. Thomas Hildebrand Equine Complex, 3240 F&B Road, College Station.
- March 28: Montgomery County Master Gardeners. Spring Plant Sale. 9:00—Noon. 9020 Airport Road, Conroe



To Peach or Not to Peach

Peaches, a popular stone fruit in Texas, are not native to the United States and were actually first imported from Iran. Backyard orchards can contain a single peach tree or they can be grown as a cash crop with several trees fairly easily. Gardeners need to make a few decisions before choosing a variety of peach tree. Information about chill hours, plant site location, soil and water amendments, and fruit varieties can help you determine to peach or not to peach.



Chill hours are the hours the temperature of a location is below 45 degrees. Peaches have varieties that can produce with as little as 150 chill hours. Grimes County has a chill unit rating of 600. This rating is calculated by averaging our mildest winter with 450 chill hours and our coldest winter of 750 chill hours. A chosen peach variety should stay within this range. Varieties on the lower end (450) run a risk of early bloom and bud damage from spring frosts. Varieties on the high end (750) may not produce buds and therefore not produce fruit in warmer winters. Choosing different varieties in multiple tree plantings increase the likelihood of having peaches every year.

Plant site location is critical to successful peach production. Peach trees need full sun (minimum direct sun 6 hours a day). With morning sun being necessary. Morning sun helps keep the fruit dry by evaporating the morning dew. Fruit trees do better when planted at the highest elevation on your property. The elevation helps protect the fruit from late spring frosts. Cold air will flow away faster from high elevations than low elevations. Fruit trees tend to live longer and produce more fruit when planted on 12 to 18 inch high terraces. The added height improves the drainage for the trees.

Soil and water are important for all plants. Peach trees are no different. Sandy loam is the best soil type. These trees prefer a PH between 6 and 7. If your location PH is below 6, lime can be added to raise the PH. If your reading is higher than 7, a peach variety that is designed to overcome alkalinity in the soil can be chosen. A knowledgeable nursery dealer can point you in the right direction. Other soil factors to consider include the presence of certain soil diseases or nematodes. Soil tests can help determine the presence of these problems. A clean, low salt content water source is also important for successful peach production.

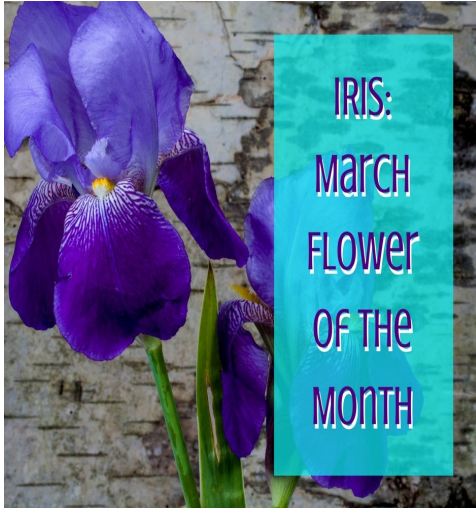
There are numerous varieties of peaches. They differ by chill hours required, ripening dates, color, size, stone (free or cling), and size of tree, just to name a few. To choose which peach is right for you, consider all or some of these. Peaches, which are self-fertile trees, can be planted as a single or as multiples. If you plant multiple trees, they can be of the same variety or they can be of multiple varieties. Many growers choose to plant multiple varieties with different chill hours and different ripening dates. Multiple variety orchards allow for successful crops in different chill hour winters and staggers ripening. Varieties recommended for our area include: **Tex Star, Tex King, Florida King, La Feliciano, and June Gold.** This group contains varieties with 450 to 650 chill hours, and ripening dates from mid May to mid June.

All gardening endeavors contain problems and rewards. Problems with peaches can include non-production or disease. Non-production is usually attributed to weather or soil and water issues. Most soil and water issues can be solved, but weather is out of the gardener's control. Rewards for peaches include the joy of producing a successful crop, and of course, peach jam, peach pie, peach preserves, and a nice juicy peach. I think the rewards outweigh the problems.



Submitted by Jena Jackson, Grimes County Master Gardener

The Iris



Iris is a super tough, drought-tolerant genus of plants, with many species, that do fabulously well in Central Texas gardens. And they're virtually indestructible, making them the perfect plant for both beginning gardeners, who need some successes to boost their confidence, and more seasoned folks, who need at least one or two garden beds to be easy-care.

Irises are available in almost every color in the rainbow, from vibrant, glaring purples and yellows to the most muted lavenders, creams, and blues. And with so many different sizes, colors and types to choose from, it will be very difficult not to end up planting more Iris than you had planned on.

Bearded Irises are perhaps the most familiar to most people, but there are also German, Siberian, Japanese, and Louisiana Irises. Some grow best in full sun, while others need a bit of shade. And some Irises, such as Siberian and Louisiana, prefer boggy, soggy soil. So if you have heavy clay, these plants may be perfect for you.

Although gorgeous, Iris blooms don't last long, but the foliage is beautiful too, providing a nice sculptural element to the landscape. Like roses, Irises are an old-fashioned plant. Growing from a large underground stem, Irises are very easy to divide and pass along. The non-boggy species require very little water to survive and thrive.

Irises are perennial, so they'll go dormant in early winter. In winter, be sure to cut the leaves of your Iris completely to the ground, and clean away any garden debris in your iris beds. Slugs, snails, and a whole host of insect larvae will happily overwinter in leaf matter, just waiting to munch on all the stored carbohydrates in your lovely Iris rhizomes, before they have a chance to grow and sprout with warmer temperatures.

Article from Central Texas Gardener

Bearded Iris versus the Louisiana Iris



Bearded Iris plants are named for a fuzzy ridge that is along each of the three downward-facing petals, called *falls*. The three upward facing petals, called *standards*, may be a different color than the falls. Blooms can be found in shades of **blue, pink, purple, gold, apricot, burgundy, russet, white, yellow and bi-color**. These iris plants have thick, sword-like leaves and fleshy underground stems called rhizomes. Feeder roots extend into the soil from the rhizome, which grows at soil level or just below the soil. These iris are drought tolerant but do best in well drained soils. The most common is the Cemetery Iris which can be seen in old homesteads and cemeteries.



Louisiana iris are essentially beardless which means they lack the hairy ridge along their petals. While the bearded iris is drought tolerant, the Louisiana Iris must stay moist and is most successful in a wet, acidic soil. They are the most common type of iris that will thrive in poor draining soil and are considered a companion plant for water gardens if grown on the edges. Almost every color is represented in the Louisiana Iris plus their stalks can reach a height up to six feet. They are common throughout the south with five different species available. These five will interbreed with each other but not with any other species of iris.

Continuing Education/ Events

- Mar 4: Brazos County Master Gardeners, **"Vegetable Gardening in Brazos Valley"**, Noon—1:00 p.m., 2619 Highway 21 West, Bryan
- Mar 4: The Arbor Gate, **"Choosing Excellent Fruits for Growing"**, Noon—1:00 p.m., Tomball
- Mar 5: Waller County Master Gardeners, **"Grow and Tell"**, 9—10 a.m., Waller County Extension Office, Hempstead
- Mar 7: The Arbor Gate, **"Gunter's Heirloom Vegetables"**, 9 a.m.—Noon, Tomball
- Mar 7: The Arbor Gate, **"Converting a Ho-Hum Landscape to Fabulous"**, 10 a.m.—11 a.m., Tomball
- Mar 10: Grimes County Master Gardeners, **"Monthly Business Meeting"**, 9—11 a.m., Court Annex Building, Navasota

March 2020

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 ★ | 5 ★ | 6 | 7 ★ |
| 8 | 9 | 10 ★ | 11 | 12 ★ | 13 | 14 ★ |
| 15 | 16 | 17 ★ | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 ★ |
| 22 | 23 | 24 ★ | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | | | | |

Continuing Education / Events

- Mar 10: The Arbor Gate, **"Attracting Bluebirds to the Garden"**, 10—11 a.m., Tomball
- Mar 12: The Arbor Gate, **"Best Trees & Shrubs for a Changing Climate"**, 10—11 a.m., Tomball
- Mar 14: Producers Co-Op, **"Bee-Keeping Basics"**, 10—11 a.m., 1831 N. Texas Avenue, Bryan
- Mar 14: Montgomery County Master Gardeners, **"Must Do, Should Do & Don't Do in your Garden"**, 8—10 a.m., Tom LeRoy Building, Conroe
- Mar 14: Montgomery County Master Gardeners, **"Attracting Bees, Butterflies and Other Pollinators"**, 10:30—12:30 p.m., Tom LeRoy Building, Conroe
- Mar 17: Grimes County Master Gardeners, **"Garden Workday"**, 9—11 a.m., County Extension Office, Navasota
- Mar 21: Washington County Master Gardeners, **"12th Annual Beekeeping School"**, 8:00 a.m.—5:30 p.m., Brenham High School, Brenham
- Mar 24: Brazos County Master Gardeners, **"Garden Harmony 101"**, 7 p.m.—8 p.m., Brazos Center, 3232 Briarcrest, Bryan



Notice Board



Volunteer Opportunities

1. Write an article for the newsletter/website.
2. Set up and document a trial garden.
3. Work at Extension Office.
4. Label all garden equipment.
5. Sign up for Social Media Committee.
6. Join Jr. Master Gardener Committee.
7. Bake for the Spring Bake Sale: May 9th
8. Help out at Ag Day or Senior Day at the Grimes County Fair.

Save the Date



2020 TMGA State Conference

May 12 – 14, 2020

Waco, Texas

Go to TXMG.org

For more info.

Advanced Training

Save These Dates!

- **Plant Propagation:** 4/17-18, Fort Worth
- **Vegetables:** 5/5-7, San Antonio
- **Texas Superstars:** 5/26-27, San Antonio
- **Rainwater Harvesting:** 9/24-26, Fort Worth
- **Greenhouse Mgmt:** 10/15-17, Fort Worth



DON'T FORGET!

Grimes County 4-H Crawfish Boil

- Date: April 4, 2020
- Time: Noon – 7:00 p.m.
- Location: Navasota High School
- Tickets: \$10/person
- Information: 936-873-3907



February 11th Meeting: Bulbs

Robert Martinez, Brazos County Master Gardener and Bulb Expert, gave a presentation on the different variety of bulbs that grow in the Brazos Valley Area. After the presentation, there was a bulb sale which included a large variety of bulbs rarely for sale in the area.



Leap Into Spring Seminar

On February 29th, Grimes County Master Gardeners presented two topics to Grimes County Residents: **Spring Landscape Planning** and **Growing Your Own Groceries** provided by Dia Copeland and Cathey Hardeman. Attendees not only learned a bit of horticulture education but also received door prizes and plant give aways. Thank you to all our members who volunteered and provided help!



Texas Master Gardeners

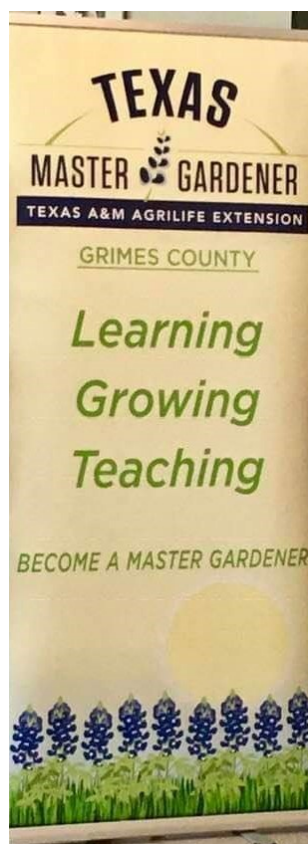
203 Veterans Memorial Drive
Navasota, Texas 77868

Website: txmg.org/grimes
Facebook: www.facebook.com/GrimesCountyMasterGardeners



Grimes County Master Gardeners

Please send submissions and photos by the
20th of each month to: pwparmley@gmail.com



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