



The Latest Dirt

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Upcoming Meetings:

November 12: Tyrell Park 6pm (Face to face or Zoom)
December 12: Tyrell Park
January 14: TBA

Message From The President

JCMG Members,

Our summer is ending and hopefully so will Covid-19 and hurricanes. It is time to plant our fall garden. I visited the Seed and Need garden this week and they have planted carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, just to name a few. They have an impressive garden on Major Dr. with all of their production benefitting Nutrition and Services.

If you haven't visited the JCMG test garden lately, you should try to make some time to visit. The volunteers have really done a great job cleaning it up, and the green house sale helped clean out all of the extra plants that we will not have to house over the winter.

Our Winter Sale was such a success last year that we are going to conduct another one in January. Only this time, it will be an online sale. We will offer roses, fruit trees, and pecan trees. The sale will begin January 29 and conclude February 4 with pickup on Saturday, Feb. 6. Please mark your calendars for that week as we will need volunteers to transport and pick up orders and assist on Saturday to distribute orders.

We will also begin our Intern pro-

gram on February 16, 2021. If anyone of our members is interested in speaking or teaching a topic to the new interns, please contact David Oates.

As my garden is beginning to shut down for the summer, I have harvested red cayenne peppers, jalapeno peppers, bell peppers (both red and green), sage and basil. I have started clearing my beds for winter plantings. Carrots and potatoes seem to my best producers in my winter garden.

I, like many of you, am enjoying the last blooms of the summer. My zinnias have bloomed beautifully this summer as well as my bougainvilleas. In a few weeks it will be time to move the plumerias into the garage so they can rest during the winter.

I hope that we can all spend time with family during this upcoming holiday season. I know many are concerned about large gatherings during the pandemic. We must all do what is best to keep ourselves and those we love healthy and safe.

Happy Thanksgiving Master Gardeners!

Brenda Beadle

JCMG President

Agent's Two Cents

By David Oates, Horticulture Extension Agent

"Throughout all these conditions and adversities, gardeners and gardening enthusiasts have proven that they are up for the challenge, whatever it may be."

The fall season is finally upon us here in the Southeast Texas area. Hopefully, by the time that you are reading this, cooler weather has arrived and is here to stay for an extended duration. The last couple of months have been a challenge for gardening with weather conditions that would be extreme for most, but are the normal for residents in Southeast Texas. With all our extremes that we have experienced, it truly makes gardening a challenge. We have seen two major hurricanes in less than two months, record rainfall for the year, and extreme heat for the summer months just to get started. When you throw in a multitude of issues related to the weather such as fungal pressures and diseases, insect damage beyond belief, ongoing stress related issues affecting our tree canopy, and just downright harsh growing conditions affecting our outdoor daily activities, it is a wonder why anyone would want to be outside in the garden or yard. To top off this drudgery, we are still faced with a multitude of Covid-19 pandemic issues that will most likely stay with us for an extended period.

Throughout all these conditions and adversities, gardeners and gardening enthusiasts have proven that they are up for the challenge, whatever it may be. Covid-19 has proven to be a challenge for all parties involved. We have been forced to rethink a lot of our programming and our activities. We have tried to maintain a good variety of informational activities and programs via distance platforms such as Zoom and Teams Meetings, where we can still share information and ideas with each other to highlight our successes and

maybe our failures (maybe not so much on the failures?) while limiting our personal interactions with other individuals. Gardeners have embraced multiple new ways of doing things in the gardens and landscapes. Some of these ideas have been quite successful. Have you ever participated in a drive-thru plant sale, an outdoor education seminar, or online educational seminars? Master gardeners can check these events off their list now. These activities are possible due to the diligence and hard work of volunteers such as yourselves. The current restrictions have made everyone appreciate multiple types of activities that we sometimes do not think anything about or give a second thought.

Whether you are working hard at catching up on your backlog of gardening educational videos online or working in the vegetable beds and making preparations for next season, I encourage everyone to simply strive to learn something new everyday and apply that to your daily activities.



TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

GOLDEN TRIANGLE CITRUS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Tuesday, November 10th, 6 - 7pm

Growing Citrus in Southeast Texas

"WHAT - WHEN - WHERE"

(Zoom Webinar Conference)

Featured Speakers: Jim Hearn,
Robert Saldana, Texas A&M Univ.
Weslaco Citrus Center

****CALL Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Service Jefferson County
(409) 835-8461 TO REGISTER****

THIS IS A FREE PROGRAM AND EACH
REGISTRATION WILL RECEIVE A LINK THE DAY OF
TO JOIN THE WEBINAR CONFERENCE

Sponsored by the Jefferson County Horticulture Committee

Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aids or services are requested to contact Cary Erickson, Jefferson County Human Resources Director at (409) 835-8461. The meeting will be held in a virtual format and will be accessible to all participants.

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Caring for Christmas Plants

By: Melissa Starr, JCMG

The sweet smell of pine needles and the cascading flowers of Christmas cactus tantalize the senses at Christmas. Plants make wonderful decorations and Christmas gifts, but what do we do with them after Christmas? If you don't want to take care of your Christmas plant, give it to a friend who has a green thumb. If you want to try your hand at keeping them alive, follow some of these tips.

If you have a poinsettia, put it in a sunny window. It needs at least six hours of indirect sunlight per day. When the soil is dry, water it, but remove any water from the drainage tray. Poinsettias also like temperatures between 65-75 degrees. If the poinsettia survives until October, about 8-10 weeks before you want it to bloom, put it in total



darkness for 12 hours a day and give it only 6 hours of sunlight each day. This will force the development of blooms.

Christmas cactus can be easy to grow. They will grow well in low light conditions near a sunny window, and they love temperatures between 60-70 degrees with high humidity. Allow them to dry out some between watering, and feed them a light application of fertilizer every two weeks.

This time of year, Christmas tree shaped rosemary bushes are popular gifts. To grow



this rosemary, put it in a location where it gets at least six hours of sunlight every day.

Water it only when the top two inches of soil is dry and never leave the pot in standing water. Overwatering is one of the leading causes of container rosemary death. As the plant grows, it can be trimmed to keep its shape, but don't throw away the trimmings. They are great herbs to use for seasoning meats and vegetables.

Follow these tips and you can enjoy your green Christmas decorations and gifts long after the holidays draw to a close.



TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

GARDENING ON THE GULF COAST

Join our Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Horticulture agents and specialists online as they discuss gardening in the Gulf Coast Region of Texas.

November 2020 Schedule

- November 4 at 10:00am -Gardening for Hummingbirds
 - by Ginger Easton-Smith AgriLife Extension Horticulture Agent in Aransas County
- November 11 - NO PROGRAM (Veterans' Day)
- November 18 at 10:00am - Homeowner Chemical and PPE Safety.
 - by David Oates, AgriLife Extension Horticulture Agent in Jefferson County
- November 25 - NO PROGRAM (Happy Thanksgiving)

Online via Microsoft Teams
[Register Here](#)

Registration Questions? Please email Lindsey Munyon at lindsey.munyon@ag.tamu.edu

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Master Gardener State Awards

Our Master Gardeners worked very hard in 2019. We entered several state awards' categories and after waiting several months to learn of the results, we are excited to announce that we won awards in three categories. Congratulations!



Norfolk Island Pine

By: Melissa Starr, JCMG

The smell of pine needles in the air and the smells of cookies baking in the oven at Christmas are all childhood memories that will never be forgotten. I remember Christmas trees during family gatherings at my grandparents' house decorated with delicate, white, crocheted snowflakes, but I

also remember Christmases when there wasn't a traditional tree. A few times, when all the grandchildren were small, we had something nontraditional such as a potted Norfolk Island Pine. My grandmother decorated it with tiny ornaments and set it in the living room. Sometimes the nontraditional moments are the ones you remember for a lifetime. There are many potted plants sold as decorations at Christmas time, but if you want to decorate a small tree, the Italian stone pine, Aleppo pine, and Norfolk Island pine are the most common.

Italian stone and Aleppo pines are usually bought at the store already shaped as Christmas tree topiaries. However, they can only tolerate low light indoors for a couple of weeks. Unless you have a window that allows direct sunlight for 6 hours or more, these trees need to live outdoors as soon as you are finished using them as a Christmas tree. While indoors, check the soil daily to see if

they need water. Even though they are drought tolerant, they will dry out quickly indoors. If the top one inch of the soil is dry, water them. Because these pines like alkaline soil, they will not survive planted in the ground in our area. However, if you plant one in Central, West, or South Texas it should grow to 50 feet tall there.

Norfolk Island Pines, on the other hand, do not have as much dense foliage and have a more "Charlie Brown Christmas tree" look. It can stay indoors longer than Italian stone pines, but it cannot survive Texas outdoor temperatures. Any temperature above 95 degrees will burn the needles, and anything below freezing will kill the top of the tree. If you decide to plant it in the ground, be aware that they grow 200 feet tall in their native habitat. With our cold and hot temperatures, however, that should not be a problem here.

Growing trees in pots can be rewarding, but tricky. These trees can make beautiful patio plants, but they need to be cared for more than a tree in the yard. Make sure you let the soil dry out some before watering. Once the soil is dry to a 1 or 2 inch depth, it is time to water. Every year, gently pull your tree out of the pot and either repot it into a bigger pot, or add an inch or two of fresh potting soil mixed with the recommended amount of organic fertilizer to the bottom of your current pot. Organic matter in the soil breaks down over time, and organic fertilizer won't burn the roots.



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We're On The Web:

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

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MISSION STATEMENT

To encourage and support the horticultural community of Southeast Texas through education and example.

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John Hughes

Past President—Eileen Slater

Newsletter Staff:

Editor: Melissa Starr

Announcements

Online Winter Fruit/Nut Tree and Rose Sale

January 29 through February 4, 2021

Orders will be picked up at the garden on Sat-

Master Gardener Shortcourse

Feb 16-29 and every Thursday
afternoon until March 18



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