

“As the Garden Grows”

A Publication of the Gonzales Master Gardeners, Gonzales, Texas
April, 2021, Edition



Spring Plant Sale! April 17th 8:30A-1P, Texas Hero's Square

**Annual Bedding Plants, Perennial/Adapted Native Plants, Herbs,
House Plants, Succulents, Hanging Baskets, Citrus Trees,
Blackberries and Blueberries and More!**

**It's spring! Weather's warmer, time to replace those plants killed by
the freeze and add new ones to your landscape! The Gonzales Master
Gardener greenhouse is packed with plants and more are coming!
For more information visit: www.gonzalesmastergardeners.org**

Note: See February's newsletter, After the Freeze, for pruning winter damage pointers.

April Weather Outlook:

March actuals and long range estimates put Gonzales county in a persistent moderate drought model. Rain is projected to be less than normal while temperatures higher than normal. Monitor for drought stress in your landscape.

Conserve soil moisture by applying at least a 2-3" layer of mulch in landscape beds and vegetable gardens. Drip irrigation (under the mulch) is the most efficient way for delivering water at ground level. Be sure to check lawn irrigation system for problems, adjust timing to match seasonal/soil conditions. For more information see – copy and paste links into your browser:

<https://agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/library/landscaping/lawn-water-management/>

<https://agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/library/landscaping/ten-ways-to-make-your-landscape-earth-kind/>

<https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/watermyard/educational-resources/>



What's Bugging You?

Spring brings insects both “good, neutral, and bad”. Identification is the key to recognize the difference. Finding pest at their egg and immature stage allows a gardener to “get rid” of them with less toxic means. Some damage from insects is to be expected and tolerated. We don't want to reach for insecticides unless absolutely necessary. Practice your garden detection skills: inspect plants, look for damage, what type of damage do you see? Not every problem a leaf or plant has is caused by insects, sometimes it due to environmental damage (wind, hail, poor drainage, planted too deeply, etc.), herbicide damage, or nutrient deficiencies. Some insects feed at night! A flashlight equipped with a black light bulb may reveal the culprit plus you'd be surprised to see what happens under the cover of darkness!

For an introduction to garden insects see Molly Keck's (Extension IPM Program Specialist & Entomologist) YouTube videos:

Beneficial Insects

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pY6doASM6vI>

Landscape Pests

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rg8Dp79fMRU>

GrowGreen Earthwise Guide to Beneficial Insects

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/growgreen/downloads/beneficial.pdf>

On-Line gateway to more information by topic

<https://citybugs.tamu.edu/factsheets/landscape/>

Encourage beneficial insects to hang out in your garden by including flowering plants that meet their need for nectar (sugar) while they're feasting on pest insects and laying their eggs for the next generation. Plant them among your landscape beds, include them in your vegetable garden. Most can be direct seeded; a few examples are:

Aster Family: Blanket flower, Cone flower, Coreopsis, Shasta daisy, Calendula, Asters, Zinnia, Cosmos, Sunflower, Yarrow, Goldenrod & Tansy. (Note: Single flowers produce more nectar than doubles flowering hybrids and singles give tiny insects a place to land.)

Carrot Family: Caraway, Coriander, Dill, Fennel, Queen Anne's Lace, Bishop's Flower, Parsley, etc.

Mustard Family: Alyssum, Mustards, Rocket

Create a couple of seating areas around your garden so you can enjoy flowering plants too!



Tomatoes are the number 1 homegrown vegetable!

Your tomato plants should be in the ground or in large 10-15 gallon containers by now. It's the last chance to get spring grown tomatoes established and growing before summer heat sets in. Large fruited "determinate" types produce a crop within a short period of time and shutdown in hot weather. "Semi-determinate" types produce over a slightly longer period. Small fruited "indeterminate" types (Sungold, Large Red Cherry, etc.) will continue to grow and produce as hotter weather sets in. Hybrids were developed to resist disease and produce a consistent crop that can be mechanically harvested— in other words qualities commercial producers are looking for. Flavor was not a primary consideration until recently. Some "Heirloom" or "Open Pollinated" varieties may not be as productive however are touted as having that "old fashion tomato flavor" and you can save their seeds! If you have room plant more than one variety and type. Results can vary from season to season depending on weather and other factors. To learn more about growing luscious tomatoes see:

David Rodriguez's "Tomato Basics 101"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1JCkp3hdVg>

Molly Keck's "Pest of Tomatoes"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53OCEwTcaM>

April Planting Guide

Vegetables: Beans – bush, pole, butter & lima (S), Beets (S) [first few days of April only], Cantaloupe, Swiss chard (S/T), Corn (S), Cucumber (S), Eggplant (T), Warm Season Greens (S), Okra (S), Southern Peas (S), Peppers (T), Sweet Potato (Slips), Pumpkins (S), Summer Squash (S), Winter Squash (S), Tomato (T) by mid-April at latest, Watermelon (S) (T = transplants S = seeds)

Flowers from Seed or Transplant: Zinnias, Cosmos, Sunflowers, Mexican Sunflower, Salvia (coccinea, gregii, and bonariensis), Cosmos, Marigolds, Verbena, Gomphrena, Pentas, Shrimp Plant, just to name a few. **Note** - check your local nursery for seasonal flowering transplants.

“Texas Superstars”

<https://www.bhg.com/gardening/gardening-by-region/south/super-plants-for-texas-landscapes/>

Herbs: Basil, catmint, comfrey (in container – it spreads), fennel, horseradish (in container it spreads), feverfew, oregano, thyme rosemary Mexican mint marigold, lemon verbena, bay laurel (in a protected area).

Garden Bulbs: allium, canna crinum, daylily, gladiolus, hyacinth, spider lily, rain lily society garlic, agapanthus, amaryllis, and amarcrinum.

April Garden Maintenance Activities:

Vegetables need good fertilization and adequate water to produce a successful crop. Apply at recommended rates at times suggested – for tips see:

<https://agrifetoday.tamu.edu/2020/09/17/how-to-choose-the-right-fertilizer-for-home-vegetable-gardens/>

Lawn grass benefits from fertilization after the second mowing. Apply according to your soil test or use a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio at ½-1 lb per 1000 square feet. Remember organic fertilizers have a lower ratio so more is applied; soil microbes process organic materials into nutrients grass roots take up while chemical fertilizers are readily available – always follow bag instructions for application.



Did you know Texas A&M AgriLife Extension offers on-line courses covering many topics including those of interest to gardeners? Well they certainly do! Check out the latest offerings: <https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu/>

The gateway to “all things horticultural” is: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/>
Once there you can link to a wide range of information from fruit to vegetable gardening, landscaping and earth-kind gardening techniques.

Visit our web page at: <http://www.gonzalesmastergardeners.org>

We meet the first Thursday of the month at 623 N. Fair Street at 12 noon. COVID recommendations regarding face mask, social distancing followed until further notice.

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Resources:

Vegetable Gardening Books – by Texans for Texas Gardeners, just to name a few:

THE VEGETABLE BOOK by Dr. Sam Cotner

TEXAS FRUIT & VEGETABLE GARDENING by Greg Grant

TEXAS ORGANIC VEGETABLE GARDENING by Garrett & Beck

EASY GARDENING FOR TEXAS by Joseph Masabni

TEXAS TOMATO LOVER'S HANDBOOK by William Adams

Note: Above available for ordering through www.texasgardener.com. You can find them via other on-line sources, just be sure to compare prices!

Free On-Line Vegetable Resources:

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/>

When viewing YouTube videos try to find those produced by Texas A&M, Texas Master Gardeners or Horticultural Organizations knowledgeable on the subject you're researching. Recommendations for varieties and planting dates may differ from those adapted to our area of the country and state. Other videos are fun to watch, just base your decisions on those tailored to our conditions.