

“As the Garden Grows”

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



March 6th annual Tomato & Vegetable plant sale tips:

Harden off tender tomato and veggies transplants before planting – expose them to more sunlight over a week’s time to accumulate plants to outdoor garden conditions. Be prepared to cover warm season veggies with floating row cover in the event of strong windy weather and especially if temperatures dip below 50.

Best time for transplanting in the garden is in the afternoon on a cloudy day so plants don’t have to struggle through sunny conditions their first day in the ground. Water in with a liquid fertilizer solution per label instructions. You may have to water daily for a week until plants establish and begin to grow, then fertilize as recommended. See last page for vegetable gardening resources.

After the Freeze:

Lots of advice on the web from Texas A&M about what to do now that plants have thawed out from the week long freeze – some points to remember:

Remove mushy leaves (plant cells have burst from the freeze and turned into a jelly like mass) and wait to see if the plant comes back from the roots, bulb or corm. Fleshy leafed plants and tropical are likely to suffer from mushy leaves and may have died out completely. Woody perennials, evergreen shrubs with freeze

burned leaves are best left alone to see if they sprout new growth in the spring. Then you can see what has died and where to prune. Fruiting trees may not produce a crop this year as buds have frozen. Tender tropical fruit trees, limes, lemons and such if left outside may have been killed. Watch for growth from below the graft point on any such plants – rub off any growth coming out on the rootstock below the graft point; if no new spring growth above the graft that plant has died. This includes grafted fruit trees and rose bushes.

Dates to Remember

Est. (20% chance) Last Spring Frost Date – March 29, 2021 (variable +/- 7 days)

Daylight Savings Begins – March 14, 2021

1st Day of Spring – March 20, 2021 (Equinox when day/night is equal)

March kicks off planting for the spring/summer season as soil temperatures and weather warms and daylight lengthens. However we're still subject to unpredictable cool snaps so be prepared to take protective measures for those newly planted, cold sensitive seedlings.

March Planting Guide

Vegetables: artichoke (crowns), Asian greens, asparagus (1-2 yr. old crowns), beets, broccoli (T), cabbage (T), carrots, cauliflower (T), Swiss chard (S/T), collards (S/T), Fava beans, cool season greens, kale (S/T), kohlrabi (S/T), leeks (T), lettuce (S/T), mustard (S/T), onion (T), English & snow peas, Irish potato (certified disease free), radish, spinach (S/T) and turnip. (T = transplants S = seeds)

Flowers from Seed: ageratum, alyssum, calendula, coreopsis, cornflower, delphinium, Echinacea, feverfew, gaillardia, hollyhock, larkspur, nasturtium, drummondii phlox, poppy, queen anne's lace, petunia, snapdragon, sweet peas and sweet William, just to name a few. **In addition to these in February:** cosmos, nicotiana, four o'clocks, marigold, stock, and verbena. **Note** - check your local nursery for seasonal flowering transplants.

Herbs: onion & garlic chives, parsley. **In February add:** dill, fennel, lemon balm, mint, rosemary and summer savory. **Note** – grow horseradish in a deep container

to keep roots from escaping; even a little bit of root will grow a new plant and become invasive.

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

St. Augustine Lawn Grass after the Freeze:

St. Augustine is a warm season subtropical grass harmed by drought AND extended sub-freezing conditions such as we had several weeks ago. Your lawn is probably brown now, wait to see if any new growth appears. Then decide if enough survived to grow and fill in dead areas or if you need to re-sod. Please avoid using “weed & feed” products, such a combination is not suited for our area of the state. (Note: Bermuda lawns go dormant and should be just fine.)

For Lawn Care recommendations see: <https://aggieturf.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/Water-Wise-Checklist-for-Texas-Home-Lawns-1.pdf>

March Garden Maintenance Activities:



Time for lawn equipment and gardening hand tool maintenance. Clean mower under-carriage of debris, sharpen or replace mower blades, filters and oil. Battery or electric operated mowers also need maintenance checks, refer to owner’s manual for tips. Examine tool handles for cracks, weak points and loose connections; remove rust and sharpen blade edges at the proper angle. Clean hand

pruner blades, sharpen cutting edges to ensure a clean cut. There are many helpful YouTube videos for reference. Please don't forget to protect yourself when using any equipment – gloves, eye and hearing protection, feet and leg protectors, whatever is suggested to keep you from accidental harm.

For safe use of lawn equipment see:

<http://agsafety.tamu.edu/files/2011/06/LAWN-MAINTENANCE-SAFETY3.pdf>

If you have a lawn irrigation system you should audit it. Check your system for leaks from broken lines caused by the recent freeze. Measure the output of watering cycles and sprinkler heads then adjust the timing or replace heads as required to keep your lawn grass alive during drought periods. Wetting the soil to a depth of 6" is desired; watering infrequently, "as needed", will encourage roots to go deep rather than stay near the soil surface. Landscape trees and shrubs with larger root systems need deeper watering at 8"-10" for root survival so soaker hoses are a better option for watering them. (**Tip:** Drip irrigation is a water saving improvement in landscape beds and vegetable gardens.)



Test your soil at least every 3 years and do keep the results for comparison. A soil test report tells the gardener the pH, salinity, major nutrients such as (N) Nitrogen, (P) Phosphorus and (K) Potassium and the levels of micronutrients required for plant growth. Various test can be ordered, for the home gardener test #3 should provide the information you'll need to decide which fertilizer to use. You can stop by the Gonzales County Extension Office (see page 4) for a soil test bag or use a freezer quart size bag for your sample. For instructions, to print the test form and mailing directions see: <http://soiltesting.tamu.edu/files/urbansoil.pdf>

Compost: Finished compost that is broken down doesn't smell stinky or vinegary is a good amendment to veggie beds ahead of spring planting. Lawn grass also benefits from a light ¼" to ½" top dressing of compost and a generous top dressing around perennial beds will help kick-start spring growth when soil begins to warm up.



Pruning of most perennials and evergreens is delayed until just before spring growth begins or after spring bloom if buds form on previous season's growth. Removing dead branches can be done anytime however removing live material encourages tender new growth subject to injury during a cold snap. Consult references for recommendations in our area for each species of plant in your landscape, such as roses (mid-February), firebush, canna, rosemary, plumbago, etc. For more general information on pruning landscape trees and plants see:

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/landscape/proper-pruning-techniques/>



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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Web Site: <https://gonzales.agrilife.org/>
Dwight Sexton, County Extension Agent-ANR

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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.