



HORTICULTURE NEWS

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GREETINGS!

Hoping you had a good Thanksgiving and now looking forward to the Christmas holidays. This is my first newsletter issue since taking this new position. Let me introduce myself, my name is Jeanene Ebeling and I was hired to work in the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office. I am the Jefferson County Horticulture Program Assistant...Whew! My job mostly consists of answering questions from the public related to plant pest identification and control plus their care whether it's the garden, the lawn or trees but in no way limited to that. I design educational programs to present to various community groups. I'm trying to fill the vacancy left by our last Texas AgriLife



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Horticulture Agent and give assistance to our Agriculture Agent. I bring my life experiences and my association with the Jefferson County Master Gardeners to the position. Gardening plus the love of nature is in my blood and helping people is what I'm about.

I was born in Port Arthur, moved away with my family at a young age, graduated from La Porte Sr. High and lived in Pasadena for most of my adult life. I moved back here over 5 yrs. ago to take care of my Mom...living in the family home with my husband. I have many, many interests and I find time for them whenever possible. Such things as gardening, staying fit, taking care of my pets, fishing, reading, and working at my many part-time jobs. My life is full and I'm blessed beyond belief.

Give me a call or come by the office next time you have a plant and/or bug question. Many thanks for this opportunity to serve Jefferson County in the big state of Texas!



IN THE GARDEN

Another drought could be just around the corner so here is a reminder:



According to a recent article in AgriLife Today, a typical family uses 60-80 gallons of water per person per day. Water is always precious, but it's especially important to conserve water during a drought. That's 240-320 gallons for a family of four for one day. The largest water users are the shower, clothes washer and toilets, accounting for about two-thirds of the water used in an average household. There are many ways to avoid wasting water at home, in the lawn and the garden.



Check your water meter to monitor water use. Water faucets should be turned off quickly and tightly after each use. Report broken pipes, open hydrants, errant sprinklers, abandoned free-flowing wells, etc., to the property owner, local authorities or your water management district. Inspect the plumbing system to see that there are no leaks but if there are, repair the leaky faucets.

In the landscape make sure your irrigation system is in good working order. Find any leaks and broken heads. Turn off automatic sprinkler settings. Irrigate based on plant stress or on-line tools. Water in the early morning, not in the heat of the day. Use low volume drip or trickle irrigation for garden and bedding plants. Mulch shrubs and other plants to keep moisture in the soil longer. To irrigate trees and large shrubs, water at their driplines – that is where the feeding root system of a tree or shrub is. Rainwater harvesting systems can provide supplemental water. Don't use the hose to clean off sidewalks or driveways; sweep them clean.

Texas has seen many droughts over the centuries. If we all do our part we can get through the next one in good condition.



HORTICULTURE TIPS

Pruning plants is an art which can be acquired through learning certain basic principles and the exceptions to them. There is a proper technique whether it's a tree, shrub, hedge or rose. But generally all new shoots on plants begin as buds. Sometimes these buds have been formed and have been dormant for a long time. They are located at the base of the leaf stalk in the axil where it joins the stem. They are visible on most ornamental plants.



When a plant is pruned, new shoots are likely to begin near the point at which the pruning cut was made. The new stems produced by these shoots generally will grow in the same direction that the bud was pointing before the shoot emerged from it.

The cardinal rule to follow in pruning ornamental plants is the same as that which applies to fruit bearing plants: if you have no good reason for pruning a plant, put the tools away without using them. Pruning is an accepted practice and fairly frequent in the

rose garden, but it may be rather haphazard in the landscape. There are several reasons why you would prune: to maintain plant health, to train the plant, to restrict growth so as to maintain desired size and/or to produce more flowers or fruit.

Proper tools are required for a proper job. Pruning tools should be of high quality, sharp and well adapted to the job at hand. Pruning shears come in sizes 7 to 9 inches long, pruning saws 12 to 14 inches long are well suited for shrubs and small trees and pruning saws 18 to 26 inches long should be used for large tree limbs. The traditional pair of scissor-action hedge shears is still the best all-around tool for trimming hedges.

For more detailed information call your Extension office.



FEATURED PLANT

When several residents called to find out what was this odd plant they had seen in their neighborhood, I did some checking with resources and discovered this plant to be one of seven species of flowering plants in the family Solanaceae. Their large, fragrant flowers give them their common name of angel's trumpets, a name sometimes used for the closely related genus *Datura*.



One of the odd things about them is how their large, trumpet-shaped flowers droop or are pendulous instead of being erect. And according to *Perennial Garden Color* written by William Welch, they can make a dramatic impact in the landscape. They are only a true perennial in tropical or semi-tropical areas and are planted as an annual in areas outside their range of cold tolerance.

Typically, Angel's Trumpet flowers measure ten inches in length and may be white, pink, lavender or yellow. These plants are rapid growers and are

started from seed in the spring to flower during the heat and humidity of summer and can continue into the fall. In cool winters, outdoor plants need protection from frost, but the roots are hardier and may resprout in late spring. With abundant fertilizer and water, plants may reach 6' to 8', especially in sunny locations with well-drained soils.

The leaves and seeds of the species contain a strong alkaloidal drug with narcotic properties that can be poisonous to humans and animals. The concentrations of alkaloids in all parts of the plant differ markedly. They may vary even with the seasons and the level of hydration, so it is nearly impossible to determine a safe level of exposure. In many South American cultures they have mostly been used externally as part of a poultice, tincture, ointment or where the leaves are applied directly to the skin.

HORTICULTURE ISSUES

Whether it's aphids in the garden, web worms in the fruit trees, beetles in the pine trees or grubs in the lawn as well as ants, moths or crickets in the home... this year has seen a bumper crop of pest. I receive calls weekly regarding the latest and most annoying critter that has invaded the landscape or home. Last winter went by without seeing any hard freezes which usually holds our pest population down. That being said, the best weapon against invasive pest is a healthy plant or home. A healthy plant can ward off most attacks whether it is pest or disease. So first and foremost we should look at the care and maintenance of our environment.

Keeping plants free of weeds means less competition for the nutrients they need. Therefore when we are fertilizing and watering, it's going to



the plant and not freeloaders. Pruning dead or damaged plant matter when necessary also helps to that end. Having your soil tested on a regular basis will keep your plants healthier since it aides you in knowing what they require at any given time. We should be the best caregivers of our plants then we can spend the time to watch them grow.

If our landscape is healthy thereby reducing the number of pest then it will help keep them from invading our home. And as with plants, keeping our house environment healthy will also help to keep pest away. Good sanitation practices and general upkeep of the home can prevent outbreaks. Keeping our home free of debris, dust and dirt as much as possible makes it better for us and less inviting to pest.

When that fails more measures are needed but correct pest identification should be done before any chemicals are used.

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The Jefferson County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service educates Texans in all areas of agriculture including horticulture, marine sciences, environmental stewardship, youth and adult life skills, human capital and leadership, and community economic development. We offer the knowledge resources of Texas A&M and Prairie View A&M Universities to educate Texans for self-improvement, individual action and community problem solving. We, the Jefferson County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, are part of a statewide educational network and a member of the Texas A&M University System linked in a unique partnership with the nationwide Cooperative Extension System and Jefferson County Commissioners Court.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The schedule for next year's calendar of events has not been confirmed yet, but stay tuned for further information!

GOLDEN TRIANGE CITRUS SHOW RESULTS

The 2012 Citrus Show held last month was a success with over 100 entries and many happy ribbon winners. There was an eager group of participants that evening to hear the speaker, Hermann Auer with the Galveston County Master Gardeners. His presentation on backyard citrus was well received. Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to taste some very wonderful fruit samples. Cecil Hightower won the best of show ribbon for his beautiful limequats. We also had the unexpected privilege of several members from the Texas A&M University System drop by. They travel a large area checking traps for pest and watching out for disease. They were kind enough to give us information on pest and disease detection as well as an update on their attempts to control citrus greening in our area. If you missed this show make plans to attend the Annual Vegetable, Fruit and Herb Show held the 2nd Saturday in June at Central Mall in Port Arthur.

