



HORTICULTURE NEWS

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IN THE GARDEN

March is one of my favorite months of the year because I always love to see the azaleas blooming. They are so beautiful for a few weeks when they make a color splash that is hard to beat; however as the flowers fade, the azaleas will soon become just another green landscape shrub. The peak azalea bloom season is usually mid March through early April. There are many varieties of azaleas to choose from and even a few new varieties such as the Encore series that will repeat bloom. Azaleas require an acidic (pH of 4 to 6.5), well-drained soil and partial shade.

Wait until the plants has finished flowering to prune them. New flower buds for next spring's bloom are set by midsummer, and any pruning after mid-June could result in diminished flower production next year. Old azaleas that

have grown too large for their space in your garden can be brought down in size by cutting the large branches back severely. Heavy pruning will cause flushes of new growth from the stubs that are left. Before too long, your plant will have filled back in and be looking shapely.

Fertilization is another post-bloom activity for azaleas. You may fertilize azaleas with a special purpose azalea/camellia fertilizer; which can be purchased at nearly any nursery or garden center. Azaleas have a shallow root system, so be sure to follow label recommendations and avoid using too much fertilizer. Excess fertilizer can easily burn the delicate roots of azaleas. Scorched leaf margins are another sign commonly associated with over fertilization; especially if you're using a liquid foliar feed fertilizer. Iron deficiency is common with azaleas and it can be corrected with either granular iron fertilizers or with liquid iron fertilizers. Just be sure to follow instructions.

Some azaleas are native to the U.S, but many of our ornamental evergreen azaleas have their origins in China and the orient. Here are a few of the more common azaleas that you will see in Jefferson County. 'Formosa' (magenta), 'Mrs. G. G. Gerbing' (white) and 'George L. Tabor' (light pink) Coral Bells' (salmon pink), 'Hinodegiri' (vivid red) 'Gumpo Pink' (pink), 'Gumpo White' (white), and the Encore series (various colors).

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HORTICULTURE TIPS

- We always get many calls wanting to know if Round-up is safe to use in a vegetable garden. The answer is Yes! Just be careful that you do not let the herbicide drift onto your desired plants or you can stunt or kill them. Tomatoes are particularly sensitive to herbicide drift.
- Pruning of evergreens and summer flowering trees and shrubs should be completed in early March. Prune spring flowering trees and shrubs as soon as they finish blooming
- As camellia and azalea plants finish blooming, fertilize them with three pounds of azalea-camellia fertilizer. Check mulch on azalea and camellia beds and add where needed
- Roses have high fertilizer requirements. For most soils, use a complete fertilizer for the first application just as new growth starts, then use ammonium sulfate, or other high nitrogen source, every 4 to 6 weeks, usually just as the new growth cycle starts following a flowering cycle. For organic sources use cottonseed, rotted manures or alfalfa meal.
- It will soon be time for bagworms to attack junipers and other narrow-leaved evergreens. Control measures, such as Sevin dust or spray, should be applied while the insects and the bags are about one-half inch in length.
- You can save unused seed packets by storing the seed in the packets and placing them in a sealed glass jar in your refrigerator.

NEWS FLASH- New Earth Kind Roses

DALLAS – Two long-established roses have earned Earth-Kind distinction for their beauty, fragrance and ease of maintenance, said Dr. Steve George, Texas AgriLife Extension Service horticulturist in Dallas.

Monsieur Tillier, a rose released in 1891, has earned Earth-Kind distinction for 2011. To be Earth-Kind, a rose must have received the designation from the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, an agency of the Texas A&M University System. (Photo courtesy of Jay Goode). The Monsieur Tillier and Mrs. Dudley Cross varieties were named Earth-Kind Roses for 2011 by a team of horticulturists with AgriLife Extension, an agency of the Texas A&M University System, George said. Only 23 roses hold the distinction.

Mrs. Dudley Cross, a rose released in 1907, has earned Earth-Kind distinction for 2011. To be Earth-Kind, a rose must have received the designation from the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, an agency of the Texas A&M University System. (Photo courtesy of Jay Goode) “Though very different, both roses are gorgeous,” he said. Monsieur Tillier, released in 1891, is classified a “tea” rose and grows to about 7 by 6 feet, George said. It has a double blossom, is orange-pink and a repeat bloomer. “The orange-pink color of its blossoms provides a color not often seen in other roses,” George said. “The blossoms are packed with fragrant petals. This plant gets large so it’s best used at the back of the flower bed. It makes an excellent large hedge.”



Monsieur Tillier



Mrs. Dudley Cross

NEWS FLASH (continued)

Mrs. Dudley Cross, released in 1907, is also a tea rose and grows to about 5-by-5 feet, he said. Its blossom's coloring is a yellow and pink blend, and it too is a repeat bloomer.

"One of my all-time favorite landscape roses, it is a very long-lived, compact, healthy bush with beautiful, moderately fragrant blossoms," he said. "And, as an added bonus, this plant is nearly thornless." Mrs. Dudley Cross is so outstanding that it is also being named the Earth-Kind Rose of the Year for 2011, he added.

There is much more to these roses than just good looks, George said. Earth-Kind Roses are robust and thrive in tough conditions. Grown and evaluated for more than eight years on average, the roses are not fertilized or pruned when tested. They are not treated with pesticides, and are watered far less than other roses. They also are grown on their own roots, as opposed to those grafted onto other plants. This process selects roses that are easy to grow and maintain, he said.

To be Earth-Kind, a rose must have received the designation from AgriLife Extension. Earth-Kind is a registered trademark of AgriLife Extension. "These winners of the prestigious Earth-Kind designation are long-lived, tolerant of most any soil and are so environmentally responsible that in most areas almost never will you need to apply harsh pesticides or even commercial fertilizer," George said. "These are truly roses with which anyone can be highly successful."

A list and descriptions of all Earth-Kind Roses can be found at <http://earthkindroses.tamu.edu>



George and the team of Earth-Kind rose evaluators offer growing tips:

- The roses should be planted where they receive at least eight hours of direct sunlight daily.
- Their location should allow for good airflow over the leaves.
- They should be planted in well-aerated soils
- They need the year-round protection of a 3-inch layer of organic mulch over their root systems.

What is Earth-Kind Landscaping?

Earth-Kind Landscaping uses research-proven techniques to provide maximum garden and landscape enjoyment while preserving and protecting the environment. The objective of Earth-Kind Landscaping is to combine the best of organic and traditional gardening and landscaping principles to create a horticultural system based on real world effectiveness and environmental responsibility. Earth-Kind Landscaping Encourages:

- Landscape Water conservation
- Reduction of fertilizer and pesticide use
- Landscaping for energy conservation
- Reduction of landscape wastes entering landfills

Individuals using Earth-Kind landscaping principles and practices can create beautiful, easy-care landscapes, while conserving and protecting natural resources and the environment.

FEATURED PLANT

Peppers

The weather is warming up and it is time to plant peppers. Peppers should be planted in areas with at least 6 hours of sunlight each day. Work the soil 8-10 inches deep and break up any large clods. The addition of compost, rotted leaves, rotted hay, or other forms of organic when working the soil is beneficial. When purchasing you want to buy healthy plants about 4-6 inches tall. It doesn't take many pepper plants to sustain the needs of most families, so don't get carried away with planting.



You can incorporate 2-3 pounds of fertilizer such as 13-13-13; 15-5-10; or any other fertilizer per 100 sq ft of garden area at planting time. Make the transplant holes 3-4 inches deep and about 1 1/2 ft apart in the row. Carefully transplant the plants into the garden and water them in. Slow, deep watering helps grow a strong root system. After the first fruit begins to grow, side-dress with 1 -2 tablespoons of fertilizer scattered around each plant. This will increase the yield and quality of the peppers.

Generally peppers are classified according to their degree of hot or mild flavor. The mild peppers include Bell, Banana, Pimento and Sweet Cherry; while the hot peppers include the Cayenne, Anaheim, Serrano, Tabasco and, everyone's favorite, the Jalapeno.

One common pepper problem is related to fruit set. Just like tomatoes, peppers do not set fruit as well when temperatures are above 90 degrees consistently, so fruit production generally decreases in midsummer. Another common pepper question is that if you plant hot peppers beside sweet peppers, will the sweet peppers turn out hot? The answer is No. Peppers are self pollinated. They will occasionally cross pollinate with other peppers. The result of a cross will appear only if seed is saved from the crop and planted next year.



HORTICULTURE ISSUES

A few weeks ago I received my first phone call about bed bugs. I have never seen a bed bug in person and I would like it if I never see a bed bug. However, they are an emerging pest in the U.S. and their populations are starting to grow in Texas. The following article about bed bugs was released by the AgriLife Extension Service:

“ From Texas to Michigan and California to Florida, news media reports show bed bugs have become a national nuisance. Texas AgriLife Research and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service has information on identification and prevention in English and Spanish that can be helpful to commercial property owners, homeowners and members of the news media, agency experts said. The Texas AgriLife Extension Bookstore can be found at <https://agrilifebookstore.org/>. Search for "bed bugs" or publication L-1742.



Bed bugs have been a problem in the U.S. since the 1800s, said Roger Gold, professor and entomologist with AgriLife Research. But through most of the 1900s they were controlled by chemicals, now banned, that were once used to control other pests. Since the 1990s, bed bugs have been able to flourish, being often spread by travelers, both nationally and internationally, particularly in large business and tourist destinations such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston. “They have always been associated with transitory populations,” Gold said. They are found often in hotels, housing complexes, college dormitories and large retail outlets where people might return or exchange clothing items, he said. “They’re known to hitchhike,” he said. A large adult bed bug, the size of an apple seed, can be mistaken for a tick, Gold said. Bed bugs locate their human hosts by body heat and the carbon dioxide exhaled during respiration, but they are also attracted to the human body smell, he said. Their bite leaves a welt. True to their name, bed bugs prefer to hide in beds and bedding, but they can also be found under cushions, behind picture frames, on lamp stands, behind baseboards, in back of electrical switch plates and in a variety of other locations.



The best defense is inspection, Gold said. Bed bugs often leave dried blood or rust-colored stains or tracks, especially on mattress folds and tufts. Pull back the bedding to expose the mattress and box springs, and check the mattress, especially the



areas closest to the headboard and foot of the bed. The next step would be to hire a pest-control professional, he said.

But in the meantime, infested areas can be vacuumed to remove adults and eggs. Gold said the pests have not been found to be associated with communicable diseases, and people are much more likely to encounter a mosquito than a bed bug.”



AgriLIFE EXTENSION

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Improving Lives. Improving Texas.

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The Jefferson County Office of Texas 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 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

“T” Budding & Grafting Workshop

Saturday, April 9th 9—Noon

Registration begins 8:30 am

1225 Pearl Street, Suite 200

\$10 per person, grafting tape,
knives and graftwood for sale

Call to pre-register 409-835-8461



Master Gardener Market Day

April 16th 8am—noon

Jack Brooks Regional Airport

Free Admission, Free Parking

Vendor space available



Food Preservation Seminar

Saturday, May 7 9—3 pm

Registration begins at 8:30 am

1225 Pearl Street, Suite 200

Free to attend; Open to the Public

For more information, call 409-835-8461

Master Gardener Shortcourse

August 10—October 26th 1-6pm

Wednesdays only. \$160, includes

500 page manual. Call for application
or get it on our website.