

“As the Garden Grows”

A Publication of the Gonzales Master Gardeners, Gonzales, Texas

May, 2021, Edition

Plant Sale a Great Success!

Many thanks to folks who purchased plants at our Master Gardener April 17th sale. We're very glad you found plants to your liking and appreciate your support for our community/school outreach programs. Can't say enough about our GMG team leaders and volunteers who devoted many hours planning, resourcing, growing plants preparing for our major fund raiser.

Master Gardener Training Class Announced

The Gonzales Master Gardeners will offer their extensive Texas Master Gardener training class again this fall. Classes will start September 2021 and conclude May of 2022. Classes are held at 623 Fair Street in Gonzales on Tuesday mornings from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm approximately every two weeks though the schedule may vary slightly to accommodate holidays, Christmas break and spring break. Pass the word to friends and neighbors who may be interested!

Updated class schedule and details will be available soon. To view the previous schedule see: <https://www.gonzalesmastergardeners.org/class-schedule.html>

May Weather Outlook:

US Drought Monitor Map puts most of Gonzales County in a severe drought model (?) as of April 15th release. Long range forecast projects less than normal rainfall while temperatures climb higher than normal. Currently we're running a 25% deficient in average rainfall. May is usually a rainy month with temps ranging from lows in the upper-60s to highs reaching 90+, especially toward the end of the month. Fingers crossed we get some much needed rain.

See Texas AgriLife Extension Service “Earth-Kind Drought Preparedness” page for recommendations: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/drought/>

CoCoRaHS – Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network is a citizen volunteer effort to track and report site specific rainfall data. Our county only has 3 people reporting data to this network. More of the county's area needs to be monitored and measurements reported. If this interest you see:

<https://www.cocorahs.org/County.aspx?state=TX&county=GZ>
https://media.cocorahs.org/docs/CR_MasterGardeners_FINAL_v2.0A.pdf



What's Bugging You?

Have you noticed mosquitos buzzing around turning you into a tasty snack? Be sure to dump anything that's holding water after rainfall and after watering your landscape. Standing water is the primary breeding site for this pest. Learn more about this insect and what you can do to combat them in your landscape:

<https://mosquitosafari.tamu.edu/> Note: Insecticide misting systems don't discriminate between pest and beneficial insects, so please give careful consideration before choosing to use this control option.

Tree Damage by Caterpillars: Some live oak trees in our area, including mine, are showing heavy damage caused by forest tent and tussock moth caterpillars feeding on leaves. Fewer leaves means limited carbohydrate (sugars) production; trees pull from the stored energy in their root system to flush out more leaves. Badly stressed defoliated trees are most at risk.

"To minimize stress and to restore plant vigor, oaks or other trees that have been severely defoliated should be fertilized and watered regularly. Choose a balanced fertilizer, one that has equal amounts of the three major elements nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, apply it at the rate of 1 pound of nitrogen (N) per diameter inch of the trunk at waist height. Apply the fertilizer in a circular pattern within the tree's drip line, which is the area under a tree from the trunk to the outermost limb." (Note: A balanced lawn fertilizer with higher nitrogen will do. Water in as directed by package instructions. No "weed & feed" fertilizers please.)



Figure 1 Forest Tent Caterpillar



Figure 2 Tussock Moth Caterpillar



Figure 3 Tussock Moth Caterpillar Cocoon

Tussock moth caterpillars have caustic hair tufts on their back that cause contact dermatitis so please don't try to brush them off by hand if they fall on you. They'll be pupating now and those cocoons also cause contact dermatitis. Remove and destroy as many as you can. For more information see:

<https://citybugs.tamu.edu/2015/04/10/tent-caterpillars-without-the-tent/>

https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/Gardening_Handbook/PDF-files/GH-016--live-oak-tussock-moth.pdf



In the Veggie Garden

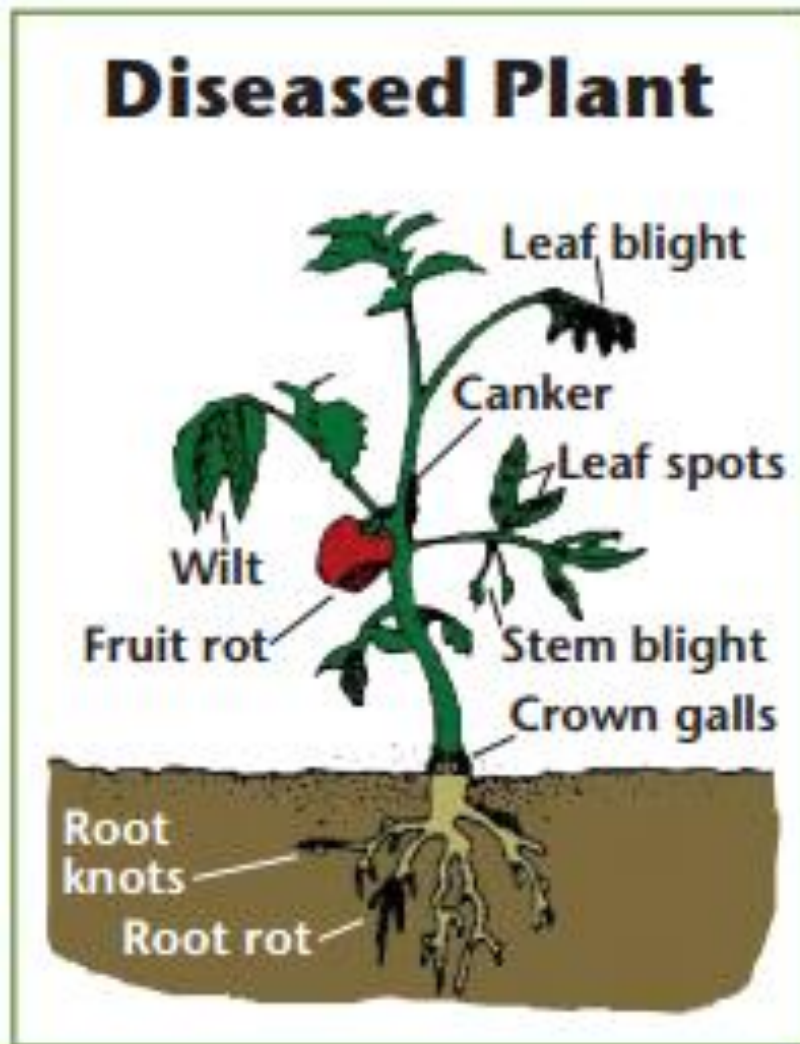
May signals the change over from cool season to warm season veggies as temps rise and days grow longer. Remove and compost cool season plants that are past production stage such as lettuce, Cole crops, spinach, etc.

Monitor your tomato plants for hornworms, leaf-footed bugs and disease problems. Mulch will help prevent fungal spores from splashing onto lower leaves during rain. Removing lower shoots with leaves close to the ground will improve air circulation. Drip irrigation instead of overhead watering is preferable.

Other warm season veggies have their pest problems too – squash vine borers, flea beetles, aphids, cucumber beetles, cutworms, stinkbugs. The best control is your shadow in the garden “scouting” for problems: look at the underside of leaves, in crevices where insects hide, look for egg masses (usually single eggs aren’t from a pest insect). Come out at night to check for insects! Sometimes the bug you see isn’t the one causing problems, avoid guilt by association. Proper ID is the key to deciding what action to take. For more information see:

<http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Watershed/growgreen/factsheets/diagnostics.pdf>

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



“Plant diseases are worst when light rain showers or heavy dews have fallen and when temperatures are mild. During these times, watch the garden closely for signs of disease.” This article covers the different disease organisms that cause problems:

<https://agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/library/gardening/disease-control/>

<https://plantdiseasehandbook.tamu.edu/>

May Planting Guide

Fewer **Vegetable** varieties are recommended for May plantings due to on-coming hot weather conditions. We can still plant Snap and Lima Beans the first week of May. Cantaloupe, Okra, Southern Peas (cow peas), Pepper transplants, Sweet Potato Slips, Winter Squash and Watermelon can be planted throughout the month.

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). Please note that French Tarragon does not grow well here, use Mexican Mint Marigold instead. For more information on growing and using herbs see:

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/files/2013/09/EHT-079.pdf>

May Garden Maintenance Activities:

Skip Richter came up with this handy “do it yourself” weed wiper. It’s used to apply herbicide directly to poison ivy in your landscape while avoiding damage to nearby landscape plants. NOTE: Do take precautions when using chemicals. Be sure to read and follow instructions to keep YOU safe. Instructions were published in 2010, chemicals listed have been not updated. For instructions see:

<https://travis-tx.tamu.edu/files/2020/07/HomemadeWeedWiper.pdf>

Garden tool maintenance is essential to keeping tools clean and useful. Daily care calls for cleaning tools after each use to remove dirt and debris. Quality tools are an investment that should give years of service if treated properly:

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/travis/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/EAGF-2017-Garden-Tool-Care.pdf>

Deadhead flowering annuals and perennials as the blooms fade. There are recommendations on how to prune specific plants, where to make cuts to encourage re-blooming if that's the plants growth habit. Tip pruning young plants such as zinnias and other flowering plants encourage side shoot grow, a bushier plant and more blooms. YouTube videos can be useful to see how this is done.

If you haven't done so already lawn grass will benefit from fertilization before it gets too hot if using chemical fertilizers. A 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio fertilizer at ½-1 pound per 1000 square feet is recommended for our area. "Weed & Feed" fertilizers aren't recommended. Organic fertilizers have a lower N-P-K ratio; 3+ pounds per 1000 square feet can be applied to provide that 3-1-2 ratio. Soil microbe's process organic materials into nutrients grass roots take up while chemical fertilizer nutrients are readily available – always follow bag application instructions. Make certain your lawn grass variety is listed on the product label.

"Cycle and Soak" irrigation method is recommended for watering lawn grass in heavier clay soils, those that absorb water slowly. You can set up a timer to achieve the same if you don't have a lawn sprinkler system. For more information see:

<https://agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/blog/2015/08/06/cycle-soak-method-of-lawn-irrigation/>



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.