TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Agriculture and Natural Resources Newsletter

January 2021

Take Care of Your Living Holiday Plants

Shannon Dietz, Harris County Extension Agent, ANR

If you struggle to keep your holiday plants and live decorations looking great, you're not alone. Here are some pointers to keep them looking beautiful for the remainder of the holiday season.

Poinsettias, Thanksgiving, and Christmas cactuses are the most colorful plants we will bring indoors this season.

Poinsettias provide that traditional red and green color to the home. Although poinsettias come in a wide variety of colors these days, from hot pink, orange to white, the go-to holiday of red remains.

Thanksgiving and Christmas cactuses also come in a range of colors, including fuchsia, red, white, and orange. Both plants are short-day plants, meaning they come into bloom as the days shorten. Chrysanthemums are also short-day plants, hence their use in the fall. As the days shorten in the fall going into the winter months, all of these plants to into their flowering stage

To read the complete article, click on the link below

"Take Care of Your Living Holiday Plants"

Effects of Hay Methods on Cow Performance, Hay Waste, and Wintering Cost

Winter feed costs are significant for most ranchers. A 3-year research project evaluated differences in the hay feeding method on cow wintering costs. Bales of hay were either rolled out on the ground, shredded and fed on the ground, or fed in a tapered cone feeder. A total of 360 crossbred cows weighing an average of 1342 lbs. was randomly assigned to one of twelve 4.5-acre traps (3 treatments, 4 replications) during the three years (January-February). Cows were weighed, body condition scored (BCS), and ultrasonically measured for rib fat at the start and end of the 59-day study. Bale weight was recorded and sampled for quality. Alfalfa-bromegrass-crested wheatgrass hay was offered in the first 2 years, oat hay was offered in the third year. Dry matter intake was predicted using NRC formulas. Hay waste was measured.

Cows were fed to maintain or improve their starting body condition before calving. There was no interaction between treatment and years (method of feeding or hay type). Cows fed bales unrolled on the ground gained significantly less than cows fed shredded hay in cone feeders. Waste increased amounts of hay led to the unrolled and shredded hay groups. Hay waste in the cone fed groups was 4.3 to 5 times **less** than the unrolled or shredded groups. An economic analysis showed that feeding with a tapered cone round bale feeder offered substantial feed cost savings per cow primarily in reduced (5.0 to 15.3%) amount of hay fed to maintain the same body condition of the cows.

E*ditor's Notes:* Winter feeding of hay is expensive (about 15% of all cow costs) and wasteful feeding methods should be avoided to minimize that loss. Most studies have shown that any form of feeding that keeps cows from walking, lying, or defecating on hay will reduce hay feeding losses and reduce cost.

Landblom, et. al, North Dakota St. Univ. The Professional Animal Scientist (2007) 246-252.

Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) Tip:

Dr. Jason Banta, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Beef Cattle Specialist, Overton.

Feeding Cubes

Cubes are often used to supply energy and protein supplementation during the winter. When feeding cubes on the ground it is best to feed cubes in small piles instead of feeding them in a continuous line. Feeding in small piles will reduce waste and fighting. Ideally, there would be enough piles for each animal to have its own pile. In general, it is best to feed in troughs or at least avoid feeding on gravel, rocky roads, or pads as this can increase tooth wear and breaking. If feeding in bunks, make sure there is adequate space for all cows to eat at the same time.

Winter Protection For Your Citrus Trees

Cold Protection

Even the most cold-hardy young citrus trees cannot withstand freezing temperatures as well as more mature, bearing trees. Before the first freeze, trees up to four years of age should be banked with clean soil to a height of about 15 inches. Soil banks should be removed after the last chance of freeze in the early spring. Wrapping material with good insulating properties such as fiberglass or foam rubber also makes effective protectors and may be used instead of soil banks. These materials should be a minimum of six inches thick and must make good contact with the soil. Special micro-sprinklers can also be used to protect the trunks during freezes. When the trees grow larger, the micro-sprinkler is placed in the lower part of the tree to protect the trunk and lower scaffold limbs.

When only a few plants are involved, protective covers may be used when severe freezes occur. On extremely cold nights, placing one or two electric light bulbs beneath the cover provides good protection.

Sprinkler irrigation also is used to protect citrus during some freezes. Start applying 1/4-inch of water per hour when temperatures drop below freezing and continue until temperatures rise above 32 degrees F. If possible, support weak limbs to prevents breakage from ice. The ice should be clear, and icicles should be present. If the ice is milky white, increase the volume of water being applied. See ***www.smallfruits.org*** for a chart to determine if overhead irrigation can be used for freeze protection.

Cold Hardiness and Factors Affecting Freeze Damage

Citrons, lemons, and limes are most easily killed by freezing temperatures. Temperatures from the mid-to-high-20s will readily kill or severely damage these plants. Sweet oranges and grapefruit are somewhat colder hardy and usually require temperatures in the low-to-mid-20s before incurring major damage to large branches. Tangerines and mandarins do well in the cold and usually can withstand temperatures in the low 20s before significant wood damage occurs. Among the edible types of sweet citrus, the satsuma has the greatest degree of cold hardiness. Properly hardened bearing trees will withstand temperatures as low as 19 to 20 degrees F without appreciable wood damage.

Citrus fruits, on the other hand, easily freeze at 26 to 28 degrees F, especially when these temperatures last for several hours. A longer duration of freezing temperatures is required to freeze grapefruit than sweet oranges, and tangerines and satsuma fruits are more easily frozen than either of the former.

The particular temperature at which tissue of a given plant will freeze and the degree of the damage sustained are functions of many factors in addition to the species and variety involved:

Winter Protection For Your Citrus Trees - Continued

- The freezing temperatures reached
- The duration of the minimum temperatures
- How well the plant became hardened or conditioned before freezing temperatures occurred (the tissue freezing point of a hardened citrus plant may be five to six degrees lower than the unhardened plant).
- Whether the plant is wet or dry (the killing temperature is two to four degrees lower for a dry citrus plant); and
- The age of the plant (a young plant cannot withstand as much cold as a more mature tree)

Some years, citrus plants seem to freeze at higher temperatures. The contributing factor seems to be the difference between air (ambient) temperature and leaf (tissue) temperature. On a windy night with clear or cloudy skies, leaf temperature will be approximately the same as air temperature. On a cold, clear night with little or no wind movement, leaf temperature may easily drop 3 to 4 degrees F below air temperature because of radiation heat loss. Thus, under the latter circumstances, while the minimum air temperature on a given night may have only been 25 degrees F, actual leaf temperature may have reached 21 to 22 degrees F. The critical temperature is that of the leaf or fruit, not the air.

Christmas Tree Recycling!

What do you with your tree after the holidays? Recycle it of course! Recycling your Christmas tree provides many beneficial reuses. It can be used for fertilizer, a winter blanket for the yard or flower bed, mulch and it's even used to maintain hiking trails! There are 25 locations across the City of Houston to drop off your tree through January 26th.

Note: Flocked trees cannot be recycled, and be sure to remove tinsel, ornaments, lights, and stands before recycling your Christmas tree. Click on the link below for more information and the various locations.

Where to Recycle my Christmas Tree

FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans!

The USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) ***Direct Farm Ownership Loans*** can help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.

There are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment, and joint financing. FSA also offers a ***Direct Farm Ownership Microloan*** option for smaller financial needs up to $50,000.

Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program, or the seller of the property being purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a joint financing loan is $600,000, and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

The operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years before the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.

For more information about farm loans, contact your Harris-Montgomery-Waller County USDA Service Center at 281-469-7856 or visit ***fsa.usda.gov***.

Better Living for Texas

Lora Jorgenson, Harris County Extension Agent, BLT
Kristina Brown, Harris County Extension Agent, BLT

Green Beans with Almonds

Ingredients

- 3lbs of fresh green beans, trimmed
- ½ cup sliced almonds
- 1TBSP unsalted butter
- 2TBSP Olive or Vegetable Oil
- 2 onions, sliced thin or diced
- Pinch of salt
- 2-3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- Any *Mrs. Dash* seasoning (optional)

Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container

Serving size	**1 Serving**
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	**160**
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 8g	**10%**
Saturated Fat 0g	**0%**
Trans Fat 0g	
Sodium 220mg	**10%**
Total Carbohydrate 9g	**3%**
Dietary Fiber 4g	**14%**
Total Sugars 3g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	**0%**
Protein 3g	**6%**

Not a significant source of cholesterol, vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Instructions:

Fill the deep-sided skillet or pan with water, leaving enough room for beans. Bring water to a boil. Add green beans. Cook for 5-8 minutes. Drain the beans and run under cold water to stop the cooking process (beans will still be crisp). Set beans aside.

Return skillet or pan to stovetop. Add almonds and toast over medium heat, stirring every once in a while, until a light golden color. Remove almonds from skillet/pan and set aside.

Return skillet or pan to stovetop. Add butter and vegetable oil to skillet/pan and heat on medium until butter melts. Add onions, garlic, and a pinch of salt to the skillet/pan. Cook stirring frequently until onions are caramelized (about 20-25 minutes).

Add green beans and almonds to skillet and stir. Cook just long enough to warm (about 2 minutes). Top with your favorite Mrs. Dash Seasoning, if desired.

The Better Living for Texans (BLT) program provides research and evidence-based nutrition, health, and wellness information to empower individuals, families, and communities to make positive changes for healthier lives. BLT helps people make better choices with their limited resources, by providing programs that are cost-free and close to home. BLT is a cooperative endeavor among Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Health and Human Services Commission, and USDA's Food and Nutrition Services, and has a presence in 205 Texas counties, providing educational programs to SNAP-participants, and SNAP-eligible audiences. BLT programs help participants improve their ability to plan and prepare nutritional meals, become more physically active, stretch their food dollars, and prepare and store food safely. For more information on BLT programs, please contact the Harris County AgriLife Extension office at 713-274-0976.

HomeGrown Lecture Series

Join us every other Thursday
at 10:00 a.m. CST

JANUARY
FEBRUARY **2021**
MARCH

01/07 **Pollinator Gardens**
Paul Winski - Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Horticulture

01/21 **Soil Testing**
Shannon Dietz - Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Agriculture & Natural Resources

02/04 **Spring Garden Prep**
Brandi Keller - Harris County Master Gardener Program Coordinator

02/18 **Spring Vegetable Gardening**
Paul Winski - Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Horticulture

03/04 **History of Cattle in Texas**
Shannon Dietz - Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Agriculture & Natural Resources

03/18 **All About Basil**
Brandi Keller - Harris County Master Gardener Program Coordinator

TO REGISTER FOR THIS FREE EVENT, PLEASE VISIT
HTTPS://HOMEGROWN2021Q1.EVENTBRITE.COM/

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Home Grown Upcoming Lectures

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Harris County ANR Annual Vegetation Management Conference

FRIDAY, JANUARY 15, 2021
9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

OR

FRIDAY, JANUARY 22, 2021
9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

DOOR PRIZES WILL BE AWARDED THROUGHOUT THE DAY FOR EACH CONFERENCE!
MUST BE ON-LINE TO CLAIM YOUR PRIZE!

For More Information Contact:

Julie Menn
Administrative Assistant
(713) 274-0976

julie.menn@ag.tamu.edu

13105 Northwest Fwy
Suite 1000
Houston, TX 77040

Check-In Time: 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM
Classes start promptly at 9:00 AM

*** RECEIVE 5 TDA (Ag Only) CEU CREDITS ***
(pending TDA approval)

Registration:
$45.00 - "VIRTUAL ONLY"
On-Line Registration & Pre-Payment ONLY
2021vegetativeconference.eventbrite.com

Home Grown Upcoming Events

Fruit Tree Sales!

- All trees will be in a 3-gallon container
- Pick-Up times will be assigned at a later date
- Tree sales must be kept within our quarantine areas: Galveston, Fort Bend, Harris & Montgomery

Contacts/Social Media/Websites

CONTACTS

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Social Media/Websites

Harris County Ag & Natural Resources Facebook

Aggie Turf

Harris County AgriLife Website

Texas Department of Agriculture

If you would like to be added to our mailing list/delete please email: julie.menn@ag.tamu.edu

If you have any questions, please contact us at:
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