# Home Grown Newsletter



## Tree Planting Success by Paul Winski, Harris County Extension Agent, Horticulture

This is the time to install any new trees or shrubs as replacements or to expand your landscape. Our day and night temperatures are dropping resulting in less stress on the newly planted tree. Keep these tips in mind when planning to plant that new tree. (Adapted from <u>https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/fnr/fnr-433-w.pdf and https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/arborday/plantingsteps/</u>)

• Select the appropriate tree for the location. Choose a tree that will grow well in the space that you have. Be aware of both the vertical and horizontal space for the canopy and room for root growth. Need help selecting the right tree, click this link to the Texas Tree Planting Guide:

EXAS A&M

https://texastreeplanting.tamu.edu/

- Dig the planting hole at least twice as wide as the root system. Provide ample space for the roots to expand. Dig the hole no deeper than the depth of the root ball.
- **Provide proper drainage.** Most plants don't like prolonged wetness around their roots. Fill the hole with water and see how long it takes to drain. If it longer than 24 hours, you may need to select another site.
- **Prune sparingly.** Remove only dead, broken, or damaged branches.



### Home Grown Lecture Series:

**Groundcovers for the Landscape** January 5, 2023 - 10:00 a.m. <u>Register Here</u>

**Backyard Poultry Fundamentals** February 2, 2023 - 10:00 a.m. <u>Register Here</u>

## **Tree Planting Success** by Paul Winski, Harris County Extension Agent, Horticulture

- Set the tree in the hole with the root collar even or slightly above the existing grade. Planting too deep is a lading cause of mortality for a newly planted tree. The root flare should be visible above the soil line. Do not handle the tree by the trunk, always handle by the container or root ball.
- **Remove all foreign materials from the root ball.** Remove wire, twine, cords, containers, and non-biodegradable bags.
- Gently fill hole with the same soil that came out of the hole. Soil amendments are not necessary. Settle the soil with water to remove air pockets and insure good root to soil contact.
- **Stake the tree only if necessary.** Support systems for trees are not recommended but may be required to provide additional support and stability in challenging areas. If used, support systems should be left in place longer than 1 year.
- Mulch around the tree at least out to the drip line, 2-3" deep and up to bit not touching the trunk. Mulching keeps the soil temperature constant, boosts soil moisture retention and lowers weed populations. No mulch volcanoes!
- Water the tree but don't drown it. Infrequent thorough soakings are much better than light, frequent watering.
- **Protect the tree from animals and humans.** Plastic, expanding tree wraps are ideal for protection against tree enemies.
- Avoid fertilizing during the first growing season. Adding fertilizer to a newly planted tree can create stress and delay establishment.



## Holiday Trees and Plants by Brandi Keller, Harris County Extension Agent, Horticulture











Out of the reported 15,000 Christmas tree farms around the country, 175 are located in Texas, according to the National Christmas Tree Association. Even though it is a small slice, it adds to the local agricultural sector and, in many instances, supports family-owned businesses. Virginia pine and Leyland cypress are the two most common trees planted for farms along the gulf coast.

Although deciduous, Possumhaw (*llex decidua*) would make a unique outdoor holiday tree alternative. Female plants become adorned with red, orange, or yellow fruits that stay long after the leaves fall. They grow up to 20' tall and 15' wide and provide many benefits to local wildlife.

> **Resources:** <u>History of Christmas Trees</u> <u>Find a Christmas Tree Farm in Texas</u> <u>Where to Recycle Your Holiday Tree</u>



Virginia pine

*Pinus virginia* is not the same as Eastern white pine (Pinus strobus). Viginia pine is native and performs well across the state, but prefers East Texas acidic soils. hoto: Brandi Keller

Imperial Moth

Virginia pine is one of the hosts for *Eacles imperialis* larvae. Caterpillars feed on pine needles, but do no harm. Larvae overwinter in the soil then feed in spring. By June/July, adults emerge.



- Purchase poinsettias before flowers open in the center.
- Do not overwater rosemary and plant soon after holiday.
- Keep Christmas cactus in one spot until fully bloomed.
- Cyclamen like cool temps and slightly moist soil.
- Rotate amaryllis in a window to keep the stem straight .
- Keep Norfolk Island pines damp, but not wet.



Henry Elfin's Butterfly Callophrys henrici is found for a short period in the spring. Yaupon and American holly are hosts for the larvae. Species shown here: Callophrys augustinus



To watch for "Plantable Holiday Tree Alternatives," Click HERE.

## What are GMOs & Why are they important in Agriculture Production Practices?

Shannon Dietz, Harris County Extension Agent, Ag & Natural Resources

GMO is a term thrown around quite frequently, whether it be in marketing, conversation among friends, billboards, and many other locations, but do you know what GMO means and why it's important in the business of agriculture production?

A GMO, or genetically modified organism, refers to a plant or animal with DNA altered using one of a variety of engineering methods. A GMO is not a single type of crop or a crop variety – it is simply a technique that can be used in many different ways or many different purposes.



GMOs are regulated by three federal agencies in the USA; Environmental Protection Agency, Food and Drug Administration and the Department of Agriculture. Each agency plays a specific and important role in the introduction and monitoring of DNA altered organisms for public safety. EPA regulates GM crops with bio-pesticide markers, FDA ensures GM crops grown for human and or animal consumption are safe and finally USDA is required to assure GM crops are not a threat to existing plants.

Most of the foods we eat today were created through traditional breeding methods. But changing plants and animals through traditional breeding can take a long time and it is difficult to make very specific changes. Beginning in the 1970's, scientists developed genetic engineering allowing them to make similar changes in a more specific way and with a much shorter time period. In 1922 the first hybrid corn was produced and sold commercially and then in 1953, scientists Crick and Watson identified the structure of DNA. In 1982, FDA approved the first GMO product developed through genetic engineering which was human insulin to help combat and treat diabetes.



## What are GMOs & Why are they important in Agriculture Production Practices? Shannon Dietz, Harris County Extension Agent, Ag & Natural Resources

So when it comes to agronomic crops, why are they modified in the first place? Scientists have researched and modified the genetic material in an organism that exhibits desirable traits for the environment or humans either for the farmer or the consumer. One example is that of crops that have been modified to produce a compound preventing pests from feeding on them, protecting yield and quantity, and at the same time reducing the amount of pesticide being used through the environment or soil. Some food crops have been modified to increase shelf life, so less food is wasted.

From a consumer standpoint and the way GMO is tossed around you would think there are more crops that are modified than there actually are. Currently, the list of products include apples, rice, papaya, corn, soybeans, cotton, squash, tobacco, tomato, potato, sugar beet and some ornamental plants.





As far as safety to the consumer, yes, GMO are safe for you and your family to eat. There have been hundreds of studies testing the safety of GMO-derived foods and long term tests involving millions of animals. As concluded by independent testing labs across the globe, GM crops are the most studied and tested food crops ever.

In closing, science and scientists are continually developing new and innovative practices and products to improve the lives of consumers, improving health issues, environmental practices, and stewardship, as well as extending shelf life ultimately reducing food waste. Through these practices and many more, we can only imagine what the future holds for the daunting numbers of worldwide populations we continually will be faced with in the coming years. Through safe and effective GMO, we can ensure that our future generations will continue to reap the benefits of certain modifications for global food security.

For more information on GMO's and the roles they play in our daily lives please visit <u>https://www.fda.gov/food/consumers/agricultural-biotechnology</u> and become a well-informed consumer.

Happy Holidays and Merry Christmas to you and your loved ones from the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Harris County Agriculture and Natural Resources Unit.

# **The Home Grown Podcast!**



The Home Grown podcast is presented by the Agriculture & Natural Resources (ANR) Unit of the Harris County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office. The series provides information on urban agriculture / horticulture / gardening and ag literacy. Check out our latest episodes below.

#### Episode #17

Shannon is sharing the importance of Texas Agriculture in planning your holiday meals. He also speaks with special guests Kristina Brown, Better Living for Texans Agent and Registered Dietician, along with Cindy George, who is currently working on her master's in public health and an intern with Texas A&M AgriLife in the Harris County Office.

#### Episode #17

Brandi interviews Jaime Gonzalez, Houston Healthy Cities Program Director for The Nature Conservancy. Jaime talks about his history with various organizations and how they all blend to create a rich story of experiences that can be shared with diverse communities on nature, health, and Houston.

#### Episode #16

Paul talks with Becky Bowling and her position as an urban water specialist in Texas. They'll discuss how education is evolving to better prepare city & county governments, the green industry and homeowners for developing sustainable landscapes.

#### Episode #15

Brandi interviews Bryan Kratish, Manager of Outreach Services with the Harris County Public Library System. They discuss the partnership with the Master Gardener Green Thumb Gardening Series and the library system's creative programming to reach more county residents.

#### Episode #14

On this episode, Paul talks with Lauren Kirchner, the director of sales & marketing at Spring Creek Growers in Waller, Texas. Paul & Lauren talk about her family's greenhouse operation and the current trends that she is seeing in the industry.

#### How do you access the podcast?

Click on the image below or go to <u>https://www.buzzsprout.com/1791415</u>. You can also search "Home Grown" wherever you find your podcasts.



<u>Harris County</u> <u>Extension Agents</u> <u>Horticulture</u> Paul Winski Brandi Keller <u>Ag/Natural Resources</u> Shannon Dietz



# Home Grown Lecture Series 2023

10:00 - 11:00 AM

10:00 - 11:00 AM

## **Groundcovers for the Landscape**

Paul Winski - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Harris County Extension Agent-Horticulture

# **02** FEB

05

JAN

## **Backyard Poultry Fundamentals**

Shannon Dietz - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Harris County Extension Agent-Agriculture and Natural Resources



## Top "T" Questions: Tomatoes, Turf & Trees

Brandi Keller - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Harris County Extension Agent-Horticulture

### Lectures are free & presented on Microsoft Teams. Please register at:

http://HomeGrown2023A.eventbrite.com



10:00 - 11:00 AM

The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife..

# **Contact Us**

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Shannon Dietz - County Extension Agent AG/NR - Shannon.Dietz@ag.tamu.edu

# **Social Media/Websites**

Harris County Horticulture Facebook

Horticulture YouTube Channel

Harris County Master Gardeners Facebook

Harris County Ag & Natural Resources Facebook

Harris County AgriLife Website

If you would like to **unsubscribe** from the Home Grown newsletter, please email Susan Hubert at <u>susan.hubert@ag.tamu.edu</u>





The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife. Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service, or accommodation in order to participate in this meeting are encouraged to contact the County Extension Office prior to the meeting to determine how reasonable accommodations can be made.