

TEXAS A&M
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EXTENSION

Orange County
AgriLife
Newsletter
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This program is presented by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service - Better Living for Texans

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Holiday Cacti: Thanksgiving, Christmas & Easter (Part 1 of 3)

By John Green, Certified Texas Master Gardener, Orange County Master Gardeners

Gardeners, we are once again experiencing brisk weather, though it's cold to me and looks as though it'll be "hanging around" for more than a week. In preparation of rainy, colder temperatures, my first step sent me scrambling into the vegetable garden, harvesting vegetables and herbs, a few which don't enjoy cold weather, such as English cucumbers and basil. After harvesting more than a bushel of cucumbers, I phoned friends and neighbors who would be interested in a share of the bounty.

Next step, shopping for a few grocery items at a local Bridge city store as I tend to stay indoors once cold weather arrives. While picking up "groceries", I noticed a multi-tiered nursery rack loaded with an abundance of blooming Thanksgiving cacti in numerous colors. Always on the lookout to add new plants to my collection, each plant on the rack was thoroughly scrutinized. Several were noted to have one paramount characteristic: bloom buds well developed yet remain unopened. What a great find and at a very reasonable price! I conveniently failed to mention replacement Thanksgiving cacti. I wanted to purchase new plants since last year's purchases didn't survive this Master gardeners heavy-handed watering technique! So, let's dig into this week's topic, Holiday cacti.

Holiday cacti are not like the instruments of torture or spiny plants growing in our succulent gardens. These cactus plants are epiphytes, originating from the tropical treetops of the rainforests and the natural forests of Brazil. These cacti produce beautiful blooms which vary in color from bright orange, red, and purple to subtle pink and white variations. There are three varieties which are considered holiday cacti: Thanksgiving (*Schlumbergera truncata*), Christmas (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*), and Easter (*Rhipsalidopsis gaetneri*). These three plants look remarkably alike, and require similar care, but as we closely inspect them there are differences to be noted.

The leaves of Thanksgiving cactus plants are flat and wide, with small, serrated edges. These plants often bloom in shades of pink, yellow, white, or red, which is notably a bright contrast to traditional fall décor. The blooms may last from two to four months, but for them to flower again the following year, the plant requires a dormant stage by providing it with less light and cooler temperatures.



Thanksgiving Cactus
(*Schlumbergera truncata*)

The most important aspect to consider while caring for a Thanksgiving cactus is watering. Carefully provide the amount of water necessary to keep the soil moist. The soil needs to remain moist, but it will not tolerate being overly saturated or having "wet feet". These plants grow naturally in the tops of the trees, where there is less moisture and more sun. Further, these plants enjoy the sun, but direct sunlight is not required. High humidity encourages this plant to thrive, which is the way these plants are found in nature.

Prune the plants during the summer months to prepare them for their Thanksgiving blooming period beginning in September. During this time, the plant requires 12 hours of darkness a day. Propagation of the plants is easy and begins with a stem having a few leaves attached. It is imperative to allow the stem to callus for a few days (1 to 3 days) before planting the cutting into moistened soil. Place a clear plastic tent over the cutting to increase the humidity level around the plant cutting and secure to the pot with a rubber band. Remove the plastic tent every couple of days to allow the cutting to have fresh air for an hour or so, and in three weeks the cutting will take root. Normally, it will take 2 or 3 years for cuttings to bloom.

If you have specific gardening questions or would like more information, contact the Orange County Master Gardeners **Helpline:** (409) 882-7010 or visit our website: <https://txmg.org/orange>, **Facebook:** Orange County Texas Master Gardeners Association or **Email:** extension@co.orange.tx.us.



The images (illustrations) highlight differences between the three types of holiday cacti (Image courtesyworldofsucculents.com).

Holiday Cacti: Thanksgiving, Christmas & Easter (Part 2 of 3)

By John Green, Certified Texas Master Gardener, Orange County Master Gardeners

Hey gardeners, more than likely a few, if not many, of you are enjoying our colder, winter-like weather conditions! Okay, now before you start shaking your head from side-to-side, simply know it feels like winter to me! Anyway, daytime temperatures have shifted dramatically downward from our typical moderate weather conditions. Obviously, you've guessed my personal weather preference leans toward warmer, balmy days and if possible, curtailing the number of cold, dreary days which is our forecasted outlook. Such is life! While I'm not one to complain (too often), I must admit the cooler outside conditions have made performing some gardening chores, especially the physically demanding, and strenuous gardening tasks, more enjoyable. Corraling fallen leaves, gathering downed tree limbs, or even bagging composted manure, seem a bit more pleasant or rather as pleasant as is possible, all due to the cooler weather! Let's dig into this week's second installment in the three-part series and discuss Christmas cactus.



Christmas Cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*)
Christmas cacti are often mistaken for
Thanksgiving cactus (Image courtesy
homesandgardens.com)

Incredibly, Christmas cacti very much look like Thanksgiving cacti; in fact, they are often mistaken for one another, but there are a few notable differences. Some of the differences include stems, leaf shape and blooming period. The Christmas cactus has very flat stems with broad leaves, which have rounded indentations. The leaves are also segmented, but they look completely different when you closely inspect the foliage.

Typically, blooms are red and white, but yellow and white are becoming common as well. For optimal growth, the plant needs ambient temperature to be around 68 degrees Fahrenheit with lots of bright light with indirect sunlight being best. The plant's soil should be kept moist, but do not overwater the plant—water the plant when the top of the soil feels dry to the touch. Make certain the soil drains well, since these plants do not appreciate sitting in water, in other words “wet feet”. The plants are tropical, misting the leaves daily will provide them with elevated humidity which they enjoy. A Christmas cactus is meant

to bloom at or near the Christmas holiday. To ensure that this occurs, forcing the plant into a dormant state may be necessary, meaning the plant will need 12 hours of darkness daily, less water, and ambient temperature reduction to 55 degrees Fahrenheit. The dormant period should be started at the beginning of October, lasting for 5 to 6 weeks. If completed correctly, you will be generously rewarded with magnificent, beautiful blooms for Christmas which will last for about eight weeks.

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Holiday Cacti: Thanksgiving, Christmas & Easter (Part 3 of 3)

By John Green, Certified Texas Master Gardener, Orange County Master Gardeners

Gardeners, many of you hosted neighbors, friends, and family (as did we) during the Thanksgiving holiday. Some family members drove considerable distances and others traveled greater distances, traveling from Europe to be with us. Thanksgiving 2022 is now a pleasant memory but one of pure enjoyment, as meaningful time spent with people in our lives who matter most! It's truly amazing how quickly this year is coming to an end, with the joy of Christmas a few short weeks away and the New Year rapidly approaching!

This is the final installment in the three-part series, where we will discuss the Easter cactus. Easter cacti have many similarities to Thanksgiving and Christmas cacti, such as segmented leaves, soil conditions, light and water requirements. There are also a few differences between the three cacti.



Easter Cactus *Rhipsalidopsis gaetneri* - courtesy extension.umn.edu

The Easter cactus is another type of holiday cactus which is like the Christmas and Thanksgiving varieties. The main difference between these plants is that the Easter cactus blooms during spring. Budding typically begins in March, and blooms can normally be enjoyed during April and May. The leaves also vary slightly from the other two plants that we've reviewed. Easter cactus leaves are also segmented and broad, but they have small bristles (which look like whiskers) at the ends of the foliage that help to distinguish them. Additionally, the flower petal tips are more defined, have sharper details and are more star-shaped than the other cactus types.

Easter cactus blooms are brighter in coloration, and the color range is from vivid pinks, reds, to royal purple petals, which are perfect for a bright addition to your Easter dinner dining area. There are a few variations which produce white blooms, though not as common and the bloom color is less vivid. These plants require the same indirect sunlight and well-drained soil, but they are especially sensitive to excess water! When I say to make certain you wait until the top of the soil is thoroughly dry before watering your Easter cactus, I'm speaking from years of personal experience and copious plant *annihilations* before finally learning! These

plants are also somewhat stubborn, as too much shade or direct sunlight will cause detrimental issues such as root fungus (root rot) or sun burn (sun scald).

There are no tricks to getting an Easter cactus to produce beautiful blooms, the simplest way is to place the plant outdoors from May through beginning of October. The perfect outdoor location is a shady spot, but which receives morning sun only. Once autumn arrives, for us this is sometime in October, return the plant indoors to rest during the winter months. Direct sunlight should be limited and reduce watering during the resting period. The optimal temperature range is between 45 to 59 degrees Fahrenheit, which for most gardeners is not achievable. These plants will flower quite nicely if the temperature can be maintained between 60 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Buds will begin to appear in late February or early March.

Holiday Cacti Differences

While each of the holiday cactus plants tend to look similar, pay closer attention and look more carefully at the leaves, as this is the best way to tell the three plants apart from one another, other than the time of year that they bloom. If the plant has broad, thin leaves with three pointed edges on each side, it's a Thanksgiving cactus. A Christmas cactus also has segmented leaves, but they are rounder with small indentations and no pointy edges. Easter cactus leaf segments are thicker than the other two cacti's leaf segments but without pointy edges or indentations. Further, Easter cactus leaf segments will have small bristles on the edges which look like whiskers. So, the easiest way to remember the differences between the three holiday cacti are as follows:

- Thanksgiving cacti have the spikiest stem segment, and the bloom pollen is yellow
- Christmas cactus leaf segments are rounder, less spiky and its bloom pollen is pink, and
- Easter cacti have leaf segments with gently rounded edges which have bristles protruding from leaf segments.

Cacti Growing Tips for Success

- All Holiday cacti must be forced to bloom.
- Start the process about two months before the blooming period, mark your calendar to know when to begin.
- This requires a few weeks of less sunlight & water, and longer periods of uninterrupted darkness.
- Do not overwater these plants as they are extremely sensitive to excess water, especially the Easter cactus.
- Heat fluctuation (high temps & dry air) are not ideal for holiday cacti.
- Mist the leaves to increase humidity around the plants, as most of our homes have much less humidity during the cooler months.

So long for now my fellow gardeners. Let's go out and grow ourselves a greener, more sustainable world, one plant at a time!

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SKILLET NOODLE PIE

8 1 1/2 cup servings

- 10 ounces whole wheat penne pasta
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup diced yellow onion
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup water
- 2 teaspoons chicken bouillon low sodium
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon poultry seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 cup skim milk
- 4 ounces fat free cream cheese
- 3 cups frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 pound chicken breast diced and cooked (about 2 cups)



1. Start a large pot of water to boil. Once boiling add pasta and cook for 10 minutes or until tender. Drain and set aside.
2. In a large skillet over medium heat add olive oil and sauté onions until translucent.
3. Add flour until combined and then add 1 cup of water, chicken bouillon, garlic powder, poultry seasoning, and black pepper.
4. Once combined add milk and cream cheese. Stir to combine
5. Add mixed vegetables and cooked chicken, and stir to combine.
6. Last add pasta to the chicken and vegetable mixture. Once everything is combined and hot it is ready to serve.



Why are eggs different colors?

Eggs-ploring why chicken eggs are laid in different colors, shapes, shades

Have you ever been curious about why chicken eggs can be different colors? While most eggs are white or brown, they also come in colors like cream, pink, blue and green. In addition — and this is no “yolk” — some are even speckled.

Nature has provided chickens with diverse color patterns for their feathers, skin patches and eggshells for various purposes, including camouflage, protection from predators and to signal individual identity.

According to a [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#) poultry specialist, the color of an egg is mainly determined by the chicken’s genetics. That means the breed of hen will usually indicate what color of egg will be produced.

For example, Leghorn chickens lay white eggs, while Orpington’s lay brown eggs and Ameraucana lay blue eggs. And the “olive egger” breed lays ... wait for it ... olive-green eggs.

But appearances aside, all chicken eggs have no major differences in taste or nutritional composition.

Chicken earlobes help predict egg color

You’ve got to hear this ... a good way to guess what color eggs a chicken will lay is to take a gander at the hen’s ear lobes.

“Generally, hens with white earlobes will produce white eggs,” said [Gregory Archer, Ph.D.](#), AgriLife Extension specialist in the [Department of Poultry Science](#), Bryan-College Station. “But all eggs start out white because the shells are made from calcium carbonate. They get their color from the hen’s genetics as the egg forms.”

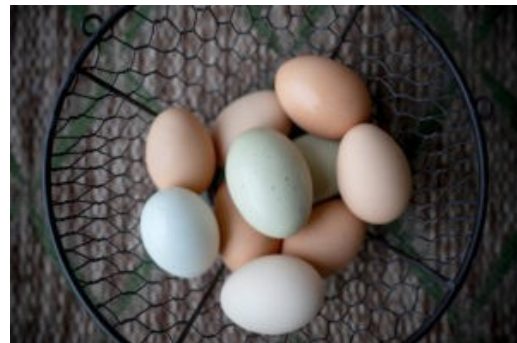
Archer said, more often than not, chickens with lighter earlobes also have white feathers and produce white eggs. Those with colored feathers and darker earlobes will likely produce colored eggs.

Chicken egg formation

Nature has its own way of coloring eggs, and it doesn’t require boiling water, food coloring or paintbrushes. Let’s eggs-plore how this happens. Different eggshell colors come from pigments deposited onto the shell as the egg forms in the hen’s oviduct. The oviduct is a tube-like organ found along the hen’s backbone between the ovary and the tail.

A chicken yolk, or ovum, forms in the hen’s ovaries. A fully formed ovum leaves the ovary and makes its way into the oviduct. There, it goes through a five-stage process to help ensure the yolk makes it safely to the outside world. The entire egg-forming process usually takes a little more than 24 hours.

It’s during the fourth stage of this process involving the shell gland that pigments are deposited onto the shell, producing its color. So, in short, different breeds of chicken deposit different pigments on the shell as it forms, changing its exterior — and sometimes its interior — shell color.



Chickens can lay different colored eggs, in which color is determined by the hen’s genetics. (Texas A&M AgriLife photo by Laura McKenzie)

A pigment of your imagination

White Leghorn chickens lay white-shelled eggs and breeds like Plymouth Rocks and Rhode Island reds lay brown-shelled eggs. The shells are brown because a pigment known as protoporphyrin is deposited onto the shell. But because this happens late in the process of shell formation, the pigment doesn’t penetrate the shell’s interior.

“This is why when you crack open a brown egg, you will see the interior of most of the shells remains white,” Archer said.

A pigment called oocyanin is deposited on the egg of the Ameraucana breed, penetrating both the exterior and interior of the shell and making them blue. Other breeds such as Araucana, Dongxiang and Lushi lay blue or blue-green eggs.

An olive egger results from a cross between a hen and rooster from a brown-egg-laying and a blue-egg-laying breed. The hen produces a brown pigment that penetrates the blue shell of the egg, resulting in a greenish-hued egg. The darker the brown pigment, the more olive-colored the egg appears.

Other chickens that lay colored eggs include the Easter egger, barred rock, Welsummer and Maran, with the color of the egg depending on the breed and its genetics.



James Scales, Health Inspector
Deputy Director
Orange County Environmental Health
and Code Compliance



Fallon Foster-White, M.P.H.
County Extension Agent
Family & Community Health
Orange County

THE 2022-2023 4-H YEAR .
NOV. 1ST ENROLLMENT IS \$30 PER CHILD. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE .

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<https://v2.4honline.com/>

Clover Kids 5-8 years of age free to join.

**Adult Volunteer Application Fee
\$10**

**Adult Leaders Association
(ALA)**
1st Monday 6 pm
4-H Office
All enrolled Adult Volunteers
are encouraged to be a
part of ALA

County 4-H Council
All enrolled 4-H youth
are encouraged to
be a part of
County Council
1st Monday 6 pm
4-H Office

**Dusty Trails 4-H &
Clover Kids Club**
1st Tuesday
6:30 pm 4-H Office
Club Manager
Anna Bandy
409-988-3666
Co-Manager
April Cade

Mighty Pirates 4-H
2nd Tuesday 7 pm
4-H Office
Club Managers
Lisa Edwards
409-554-1960
Co-Manager
Jennifer Hurlburt

OC 4-H Judging Club
Practice Thursday's
6 pm 4-H Office
Club Manager
Melissa Pyatt
409-679-2441
Co-Manager
London Die

**Clay Busters Shotgun
Sports**
Meetings 3rd Tuesday*
6 pm 4-H Office
Practice Tuesdays 6 pm
Orange County Gun Club
Club Manager
Chris & Robyn Clausen
409-882-4977

Hearts @ Home 4-H Club
4th Thursday @ 12 noon
Club Manager
Christie Randall
409-679-9904

**Projects outside
of
4-H clubs**

Archery
To Be Announced
Project Leaders
Certified Coach
Tommy Harrington

Food & Nutrition
2ND MONDAY 6pm
4-H Office
Project Leaders
Christie Randall
Tonya Wright

**Equine
Riders & Non-Riders**
3RD MONDAY 6pm
Tin Top 2 (T2) Arena
3810 Old Peveto Road Orange
Project Leader
Sharon Dowden

Robotics
4TH MONDAY
4-H Office
Project Leaders
Aaron Randall
Cindy Childress

Fashion & Interior Design
4TH TUESDAY 6pm
4-H Office
Project Leader
Shelda Randall

No cost to members who participate in projects

If you need any type of accommodation to participate in this program or have questions about the physical access provided, please Orange AgriLife Office 409-882-7010, at least 2 weeks prior to the program or event you are interested in.

Lawn and Garden Tools: Maintenance & Winterizing

By John Green, Certified Texas Master Gardener, Orange County Master Gardeners

Last week, I wrote about transitioning houseplants back indoors or other areas, such as a porch, greenhouse, or garage, allowing plants to be protected from cooler nighttime temperatures. Our first “real” cold snap arrived this past week with day temperatures in the lower 60’s, and some areas experienced night temperatures below freezing, even dropping down into the low 30’s F. Uhm, I’m not sure how some of you feel about cooler weather, but to me that’s cold! Of course, living in SETX, we all know our temperatures will moderate, bouncing back into the mid -80’s after a couple days of cooler weather.

Many of you have planted fall and winter vegetable gardens, green cover crops or colorful fall flowers, providing them with a warm layer of mulch for the coming months. Cooler weather is a clear signal for gardeners. It’s time to begin other gardening tasks, such as lawn and garden tool maintenance, garden hose inspection and repair, and tool winterizing. Some gardeners, okay most gardeners, “conveniently or selectively” forget the importance of caring for garden tools. Many of us (myself included) choose to simply ‘knock off the soil’ and put the gardening tools away once fall arrives-thinking all is good! Well, I’m here to tell you, this is not at all a good practice and in fact, it’s a bad habit! Perhaps now is the time to make garden tool maintenance a priority? To help persuade you (in case you haven’t noticed escalating prices), garden tools are no exception, prices have increased dramatically, and yes, in part due to exorbitant inflation, but also due to unprecedented material shortages and shipping bottlenecks which have diminished product availability. So, a modest effort on your part will go a long way, proving to be cost-effective. Since a bit of maintenance will ensure garden tools are in good working order, sharpened and ready-for-use, and will last longer, especially necessary once spring arrives. Today, let’s discuss how to give our garden tools much needed TLC. Here are some tips on how to keep them in great shape while they await the return of springs’ warm, sunny days.

Care and Maintenance

The fact is lawn and garden tools deteriorate from- time, use and moisture, when combined with soil and oxidation (rust). Thorough cleaning and proper care as described will keep them in good working condition, while greatly extending their life.

- Initially, begin maintenance by removing dried, crusted soil with a wire brush, followed by a rinse in clean water, then dry thoroughly. If necessary, soak extremely dirty tools in water for an hour.
- Sharpen dull tools (shovels, hoes, bypass pruners, loppers, etc.) by using a file or whetstone. Working at a 45-degree angle, begin at the outer edge, moving toward the center.
- Use fine grit sandpaper and steel wool to remove rust. Once rust is removed coat the metal surfaces with oil (vegetable).
- Inspect garden tool wooden handles closely, if splinters are evident, sand lightly with fine sandpaper, removing dust once completed. Using linseed oil or paste wax, apply a thin layer or light coating to the wood handles to preserve them and prevent cracking, splitting, and splintering.
- To further deter rust from forming on garden hand tools, store hand trowels and other small tools in a bucket containing sand which has been saturated with used oil.
- Once rust has been removed, hang rakes, hoes, and shovels in an easy-to-access location.
- Garden hoses need to be thoroughly inspected for leaks and cracks while under pressure. Once inspected, drain, and relocate into an area out of the weather. Repair leaks using a hose repair kit or replace leaky fittings which can be purchased from a local home and garden center or hardware store. Hose repair is easy with minimal effort, cost, and time commitment.
- Finally, the hardest working garden tool is the lawn mower. Clean and sharpen the blades which can rust or simply replace the blades. Change the oil and oil filter (utilize the spent oil into the bucket containing sand, to store garden hand tools). Avoid storing gasoline in mowers over winter, either drain the gasoline and use in another gasoline powered tool or add a fuel stabilizer to mitigate residual gums from forming in the fuel line, injectors and carburetor.

Storage

Store tools in a clean, dry area. Tools can be stored on shelves, racks, or simply leaned up against a wall. Do not store tools that have wooden handles with the wood in contact with soil, concrete, or outside environment.

Good garden tools are expensive. If you take good care of them, they will contribute to many years of productive gardening. So, now my fellow gardeners, let’s go out and grow ourselves a greener, more sustainable world, one plant, at a time!

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Different chicken breeds lay eggs in different colors or shades. The darker the feathers, the more likely the hen will lay a brown or darker-colored egg. (Texas A&M AgriLife photo by Laura McKenzie)

"I believe Easter eggers lay the most fun and interesting eggs," said Garrett Webb, a [Texas 4-H](#) member in Fancy Feathers 4-H, part of the Kyle 4-H club. "Each bird lays a different colored egg. The eggs can be blue, green, pink or a blue-green mix."

Webb, who is this year's Fancy Feathers Poultry Show director, said Easter eggers are mixed Ameraucana or Araucana breeds.

"Easter eggers can be any other breed mixed with either of these two main breeds," he said. "A hen only lays one color of egg her whole life. She does not change colors. If she starts laying blue eggs, her eggs will always be blue."

Some speculation about speckled eggs

As it turns out, the speckles on speckled eggs are just extra calcium deposits. One reason for the speckled-egg spectacle is that speckles are formed when the egg-shaping calcification process is disturbed. Another possible reason is a defect in the shell gland. Then again, it could result from excess calcium in the hen's system. Sound a little scrambled? Don't worry about it ... just keep your sunny side up and know there's probably more than one explanation for this speck-tacular occurrence.

Oh, and although technically considered "abnormal," speckled shells have been shown to sometimes be stronger than the regular kind.

Egg-straneous factors change shell color, shape

While genetics primarily determine egg color, other factors can also influence the color and other characteristics of the shell. These factors include a hen's age, [diet](#), [environment](#) and [stress level](#).

"As they age, hens that lay brown-colored eggs may start to lay larger and lighter-colored eggs," Archer said. "But though this may produce an egg of a lighter or darker shade, it will not alter the egg's basic color."

While not directly associated with color, an oddly or ir-

regularly shaped egg may occasionally pop out. This may result from a problem during the hen's egg-forming process.

Archer said both very old and very young hens are the most likely to lay abnormally shaped eggs.

"Stress factors like disease, heat or overcrowding may also affect the hen and impact the size, shape and quality of the egg," he said. "A lot also depends on the amount of calcium the hen has in its body and can provide for the egg-making processes."

All things yolk: Color, nutrients and double yolks

You may also be wondering if the color of the egg affects the color of the yolk. Well, it doesn't, but the hen's diet certainly does. For example, if a pasture-raised hen eats plants with yellowish-orange pigmentation, the yolks can take on a more orange color. If she eats mainly a corn- or grain-based diet, the yolk is more likely to be a pale yellow.



While genetics is the main reason for egg color, other factors may influence an egg's size, shape or shading. (Texas A&M AgriLife photo by Laura McKenzie)

Here's a little egg-stra information for you. Research shows that darker, more colorful yolks have the same amount of protein and fat as lighter yolks. However, studies have shown that eggs from pasture-raised hens can have more omega-3s and vitamins as well as less cholesterol.

Speaking of yolks ... this will crack you up. Sometimes an egg will have two yolks. While some people think a double yolk is good luck, the reason is more mishap than fortune. A double yolk is a fluke that occurs when a hen ovulates too rapidly, releasing two yolks, usually about an hour apart. These yolks go into the oviduct and eventually wind up in the same shell.

Hormonal changes or a hyperactive ovary will also cause these double releases. These "double-yolkers" are most common among younger chickens due to their reproductive systems not yet being fully developed.

Where can you learn more about chickens and eggs? Well, you could go to the "hen-cyclopedia" of course. But if you don't have one handy, visit the AgriLife Extension website <https://tx.ag/ChickensEggs> for more information.

Paul Scattenberg
Communications and Media Specialist



James Scales, Health Inspector
Deputy Director
Orange County Environmental Health
and Code Compliance



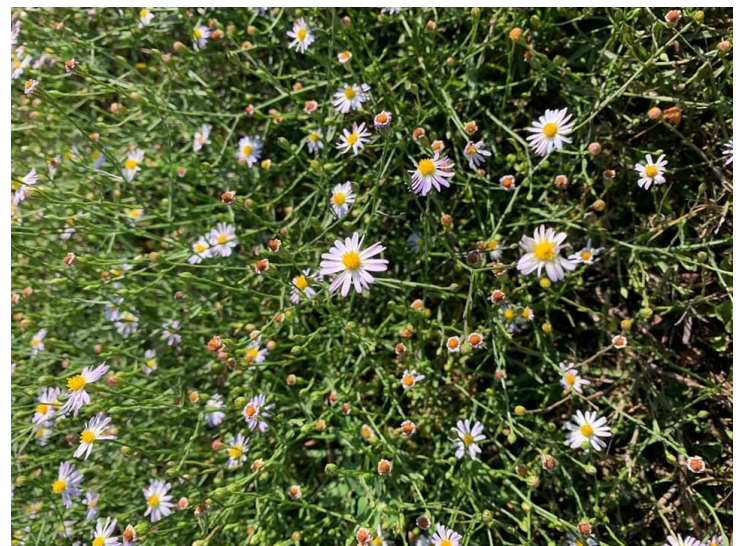
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NEW TEXAS SUPERSTAR! GULF MUHLY GRASS (*MUHLENBERGIA CAPILLARIS*), ALSO KNOWN AS PINK MUHLY GRASS, HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS A TEXAS SUPERSTAR! IT GROWS WELL IN MOST PARTS OF THE STATE AND ADDS A SPLASH OF WHIMSICAL COLOR IN LATE SEASON GARDENS.

READ MORE:

<https://agrifetoday.tamu.edu/2022/10/27/gulf-muhly/>



Native Asters are very commonly treated as a weed in lawns. In ecological terms, the lawn is the weed- not the aster.

Many pollinators depend on asters as a fall nectar source, so leaving them is very important to sustain their populations.

It's imperative that we start to change the concept of what a "weed" is and start sharing our properties with nature. It did belong to nature first, after all.

Natural Texas Lawn & Property Care

Facebook
 Orange County Texas Master Gardeners Association
 Website: <https://txmg.org/orange>
 Email: ocmg1990@gmail.com
 Gardening Hot Line
 Tuesdays & Thursdays 10 am to 2 pm
 Call 409-882-7010
 Or can email questions, concerns and or pictures to
extension@co.orange.tx.us



Orange County Master Gardeners
 Meet the 2nd Thursday of each Month
 At the Orange County Convention & Expo Center
 Meeting begins at 6 pm with a cover dish social
 6:30 pm begins business meeting and/or guest speaker/
 program.
 Public is invited to attend a meeting to learn more about
 Orange County Master Gardeners.



You may have heard the saying, often credited to a Chinese proverb, that the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago, and the second-best time is now.

What's less well-known is how to choose the best tree and the best site in your landscape to ensure years of enjoyment.

Putting the right tree in the right place will help avoid future problems and bolster the benefits the tree provides over its lifetime. Those benefits include providing shade for energy conservation, increasing property values, reducing stormwater runoff, providing habitat for wildlife and enhancing quality of life.

The best time to plant trees in Texas is November through early spring, and a little research before planting will increase your chances of long-term success.

For more about planting the right tree in the right place, visit <http://bit.ly/3UJR7uK>



**Orange County 4-H volunteering with the
Special Angels Rodeo**

A Safe Holiday Meal



Follow these simple steps to ensure a **SAFE** holiday meal

SHOP SAFELY

Keep fresh fruits and vegetables **separate** from raw meat and poultry



Store perishable foods quickly: within **30 minutes**



PREPARE SAFELY

WASH HANDS, SURFACES, AND UTENSILS **between** EACH FOOD-PREP STEP



Never thaw frozen meat on the counter



THAW FORMULA: 24 HOURS FOR EVERY 4 POUNDS OF MEAT

Thaw it in the refrigerator instead



A **FOOD THERMOMETER IS THE ONLY WAY TO KNOW THAT MEAT HAS BEEN COOKED TO A SAFE TEMPERATURE!**



Keep **hot** foods above **140°**
Refrigerate **cold** foods at **40°**



COOK TURKEY AND CHICKEN TO **165° F**

STORE SAFELY

Store leftovers in shallow containers for faster cooling

EAT OR STORE **2 hours** (cooked foods within **3** days)



REHEAT LEFTOVERS TO **165° F!**



Distributed by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Adapted from www.holidayfoodsafety.org

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status.

CREATE YOUR OWN SPICE BLEND



ITALIAN BLEND, 1/2 CUP

- 2 tablespoons dried basil
- 2 tablespoons dried marjoram
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme
- 2 teaspoons crushed dried rosemary
- 2 teaspoons crushed red pepper
- *Best for pasta, chicken, pizza and herbed bread

GREEK BLEND, 1/2 CUP

- 3 tablespoons garlic powder
- 3 tablespoons dried lemon peel
- 2 tablespoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- *Best for seafood, poultry, and herbed bread

MIXED HERB BLEND, 1/2 CUP

- 1/4 cup dried parsley
- 2 tablespoons dried tarragon
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon dried dill weed
- 1 tablespoon dried celery flakes
- *Best for salads, pasta, steamed vegetables and fish

source: ADA Complete Food and Nutrition Guide, 4th Edition.

HERB & FOOD COMBINATIONS



BEEF:

- Bay leaf
- Basil
- Marjoram
- Curry powder
- Onion
- Oregano
- Black pepper
- Savory
- Thyme

POULTRY:

- Ginger
- Curry powder
- Marjoram
- Paprika
- Sage
- Tarragon

TOMATOES:

- Basil
- Bay leaf
- Cilantro
- Cloves
- Marjoram
- Nutmeg
- Oregano
- Sage

PORK:

- Cayenne pepper
- Chile powder
- Cinnamon
- Cloves
- Fennel (sausage)
- Sage
- Thyme

POTATOES:

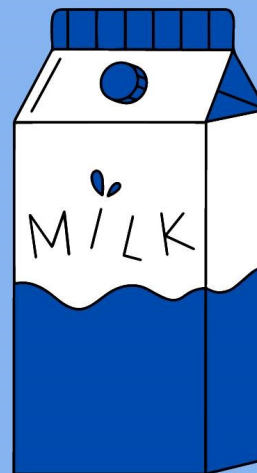
- Basil
- Caraway
- Chives
- Dill
- Garlic
- Parsley

CARROTS:

- Basil
- Bay leaf
- Ginger
- Marjoram
- Mint
- Oregano
- Parsley
- Thyme

Source: ADA Complete Food and Nutrition Guide, 4th Edition.

Milk Facts



All milk has the same amount vitamins and minerals. The only difference is the amount of fat and calories in the milk

WHOLE MILK

8 ounce glass is 3.5% fat and has 150 calories

LOW-FAT MILK

8 ounce glass is 1% fat and has 110 calories

SKIM MILK

8 ounce glass is 0% fat and has 90 calories





Source: Southwest Dairy Farmers

Orange County 4-H Calendar DECEMBER 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 4-H Christmas Party	2	3
4	5 ALA & CC 6 pm	6 Dusty Trails 6:30 pm	7	8 OC4-H Judging 6 pm	9	10
11	12 Food & Nutrition 6 pm OCLSA 7pm	13 Mighty Pirates 7 pm	14	15 Hearts @ Home evening OC4-H Judging 6pm	16	17
18	19 <u>No meetings or projects this week</u>	20	21	22 Office Holiday Closed	23 Office Holiday Closed	24 
25 	26 Office Holiday Closed	27	28	29 OC4H Judging 6pm Fashion & ID 6 pm	30	31

Orange County 4-H JANUARY 2023 Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 	2 Holiday Office Closed	3 Dusty Trails 6:30 pm	4	5 OC4H Judging 6 pm	6	7
8	9 Food & Nutrition Project 6 pm	10 Mighty Pirates 7 pm	11	12 OC4H Judging 6 pm	13	14
15	16 Holiday Office Closed 	17 Claybuster 6 pm	18	19 OC4H Judging 6 pm	20 YMBL Roaster Pickup Bring a box	21
22	23 Robotics Project 6 pm	24 Fashion & ID Project 6 pm	25	26 Hearts @ Home 12 noon OC4H Judging 6 pm	27	28
29	30	31				

Chicken Fried Steak Air Fryer Minis

Servings 6 (3 steak bites per serving)

In

- * 2 tablespoons parsley flakes
- * 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- * 2 teaspoon pepper
- * 1 tablespoon onion powder
- * 1 teaspoon crushed red pep-pers
- * 2 1/2 tablespoons paprika
- * 1 teaspoon salt
- * 1 pound 95% learn ground beef
- * 3/4 cup 1% milk
- * 2 large eggs
- * 2 cups flour
- * 2 cup panko breadcrumbs



the first bowl place flour and one-third of the home-made seasoning and mix. In the second bowl, whisk 2 eggs with milk. In the third bowl, lightly mix panko breadcrumbs with another one-third of the homemade seasoning mix.

4. Next, take the ground beef in a bowl and lightly mix the remaining one-third homemade seasoning mix into the beef. Take about 1 tablespoon size piece of beef and form into palm size square mini. Place in a bowl or on a plate until all are ready to coat.

5. To bread, first place steak minis in the flour bowl to coat, then place in egg bowl to dredge, and them place in breadcrumb bowl to cover the minis with breadcrumb mixture.

6. Continue the process until all steak minis are breaded.

7. Place steak minis in the air fryer basket in one even layer and air fry at 370 degrees for 1- minutes turning halfway.

1. Wash hands and clean the food prep area.
2. In one bowl, combine ingredients for homemade seasoning and put aside.
3. To prepare breading stations set out 3 medium size bowls.

Nutrition facts: Calories 380, Total Fat 6g, Saturated Fate 2.5g, Cholesterol 105mg, Sodium 510mg, Total Carbohydrate 54g, Die-tary Fiber 3g, Total Sugars 3 g, Protein 26g.

Cowboy Caviar



- 1 can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can black eyed peas, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup tomatoes, seeded and finely diced
- 1 jalapeno, seeded and finely diced
- 1 cup corn, can be fresh, canned or thawed from frozen
- 1 avocado, chopped
- 3/4 cup orange bell pepper, seeded and finely diced
- 1/3 cup red onion, finely diced
- 1/3 cup cilantro leaves, chopped
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup lime juice
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- Salt and pepper to taste

1. Place the beans, black eyed peas, tomatoes, jalapeno, corn, avocado, bell pepper, onion and cilantro in a large bowl.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lime juice, honey, chili powder, cumin and salt and pepper.
3. Pour the dressing over the bean mixture and toss gently to coat. Serve as a salad or with chips.

Notes

1. Make ahead instructions: Assemble according to instructions, except omit the avocado. Refrigerate for up to 8 hours. Add the avocado right before serving.

Nutrition: Calories 195, Carbohydrates 17g, Protein 4g, Fat 13g, Saturated Fat 1g, Sodium 8mg, Potassium 337mg, Fiber 5g, Sugar 3g, Vitamin A 380IU, Vitamin C 10.6mg, Calcium 16mg, Iron 1.2mg

<https://www.dinneratthetoo.com/cowboy-caviar/#recipe>



Right now we know that going to the grocery store and finding milk isn't guaranteed, or maybe you're trying to limit your grocery store trips. Whatever your reason, you may find a need to freeze milk. Here are our tips on safely and effectively freezing your milk.

Freezing

- First, check the "sell-by" or expiration date on your carton — if the date hasn't passed yet, you're good to freeze. Milk expands when frozen. So storing in an easily breakable glass bottle or cardboard carton brings the possibility of a real mess in your freezer. Technically, you can freeze milk that comes in a plastic gallon bottle, but we recommend pouring your milk into two or three freezer-safe plastic containers to make the thawing process a bit easier and so you can avoid having to re-freeze.

Thawing

- Moving your milk from the freezer to the refrigerator overnight will typically do the trick. If time is of the essence, you can fill a large bowl with cold water and submerge the frozen container of milk inside — just be sure to replace the lukewarm water with the cold water as it warms up. Never thaw milk at room temperature (on your counter), it runs the risk of spoiling the milk. Frozen milk should be consumed **within 2-3 days of thawing**.

Tips

- Milk tends to absorb any odors in your fridge/freezer, so make sure your storage containers have a tight seal and are sealed properly.
- Don't forget to label your new containers with the date that you froze your milk on. The FDA recommends that milk be consumed within 3 months of freezing.
- If your milk experiences separation during the freezing/thawing process, simply stir to recombine.
- Don't forget about powdered milk as a great alternative to fresh milk or freezing your milk!

Milk Nutrition Facts:

- Whole Milk: 8 ounces contains 3.5% fat and has 150 calories
- Low-Fat Milk: 8 ounces contains 1% fat and has 110 calories
- Skim Milk: 8 ounces contains 0% fat and has 90 calories
 - All milk provides 9 essential nutrients that are beneficial to your health:
 - Calcium
 - Vitamin D
 - Protein
 - Phosphorus
 - Vitamin A
 - Riboflavin
 - Pantothenic Acid
 - Vitamin B12
 - Niacin

Reduced Fat Dairy Substitution Tips:

- Substitute reduced-fat sour cream, low-fat or nonfat plain yogurt, or cottage cheese for full-fat sour cream
- Reduced-fat milk can be substituted in most recipes.
- Evaporated milk can be substituted for whipping cream in some recipes

Cajun Shrimp Lasagna Roll-Ups

Serves 8

- * 1 tablespoon olive oil
 - * 1 cup diced Andouille sausage
 - * 1 medium onion, diced
 - * 3 garlic cloves, minced
 - * 1 1/2 pound medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
 - * 1 (14.5 ounce) can petite diced tomatoes, drained
 - * 2 teaspoons Cajun seasoning
 - * 3/4 cup cottage cheese or ricotta cheese
 - * 1/4 cup butter
 - * 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
 - * 2 cups milk
 - * 1 1/2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
 - * 8 lasagna noodles, cooked and drained
 - * 1 cup shredded pepper jack cheese
1. Heat olive oil over medium-high heat in a large nonstick skillet. Add sausage and onion and cook until sausage is browned and onion is soft.
 2. Add garlic, shrimp, diced tomatoes, and Cajun seasoning and cook until shrimp just turn pink. They will cook more in the oven so you want them slightly undercooked at this point. Drain off any excess liquid and stir in cottage cheese. Set aside.
 3. In a medium saucepan, melt 1/4 cup of butter. Add flour and cook and stir for 1

minute. Gradually whisk in milk. Bring to a simmer for a few minutes to thicken.

4. Remove sauce from heat and stir in cheddar cheese until melted.
5. Grease a casserole dish, one that is a little smaller than 9x13-inch. A 7x11-inch will work. You don't want extra space or the filling will ooze out.
6. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
7. Spread about 1/2 cup shrimp filling on each noodle and carefully roll up. Place in prepared pan seam side down. If any filling falls out, just tuck it back in. The roll-ups should be very close together.
8. If there is extra filling spoon it on top.
9. Pour cheese sauce evenly on top. Sprinkle with Pepper Jack cheese. Cover with foil and bake for 15 minutes. Uncover and bake 15 more minutes.

Tip: Spray underside of foil with cooking spray so it will not stick to the cheese.

<https://spicysouthernkitchen.com/cajun-shrimp-lasagna-roll-ups/>



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AGRILIFE ORANGE COUNTY 2022 CALENDAR

DECEMBER

1st 4-H Christmas Party
22nd, 23rd, & 26th Christmas Holidays Office Closed



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Orange County

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