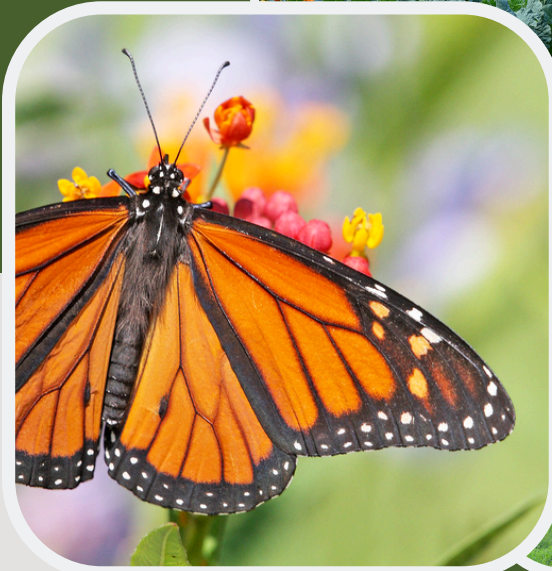


Newcomers Guide **TO GARDENING IN BRAZORIA COUNTY**



The Upper Gulf Coast of Texas

WELCOME FROM BRAZORIA COUNTY JUDGE MATT SEBESTA



Welcome to Brazoria County, a place where rich history, strong communities, and continued growth come together. As more families choose to put down roots here, they become part of a county that values its agricultural heritage, natural resources, coastal landscape, and the neighbors who make each community unique. From our growing cities to our rural areas, river bottoms, prairies, and coastal communities, Brazoria County offers a special place to live, work, raise a family, and enjoy the outdoors.

This Newcomers Guide to Gardening in Brazoria County is a helpful resource for residents learning how to garden in our unique climate and growing conditions. Whether you are planting your first vegetable garden, adding native plants to your landscape, or simply learning more about the soil, weather, and resources available here, this guide will help you get started.

On behalf of Brazoria County, I welcome you and encourage you to explore, connect, and grow right along with the community you now call home.

-
Matt Sebesta

County Judge

L.M. "Matt" Sebesta, Jr.

Commissioner Precinct 1 Jay Burrige

Commissioner Precinct 2 Ryan Cade

Commissioner Precinct 3 Stacy Adams

Commissioner Precinct 4 David Linder

brazoriacountytx.gov

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Angleton, TX 77515

WELCOME TO GARDENING ON THE GULF COAST

Whether you are new to the area, new to gardening in Texas, or new to growing plants altogether, the Newcomers Guide to Gardening in Southeast Texas will help you establish and maintain healthy lawns, productive gardens, and attractive landscapes. Gardening along the Upper Gulf Coast presents unique opportunities and challenges due to our long growing season, high humidity, periodic drought, intense rainfall events, and predominantly clay-based soils. Understanding these local conditions is the first step toward creating a successful and sustainable landscape.



Well-planned landscapes provide many benefits beyond aesthetics. Trees, shrubs, lawns, and gardens can increase property value, reduce soil erosion, improve stormwater management, moderate temperatures around the home, and create enjoyable outdoor spaces for recreation and relaxation. Landscapes also provide habitat and food sources for pollinators and other beneficial wildlife that contribute to a healthy environment.

This guide introduces research-based practices that help homeowners work with Southeast Texas conditions rather than against them. Proper irrigation, fertilization, and pest management are essential components of landscape success, but more is not always better. Excessive applications of water, fertilizer, or pesticides can lead to plant health issues, wasted resources, and unintended environmental impacts. Learning to apply these inputs only when needed helps maintain healthy plants while protecting local waterways and natural resources.

Welcome

UNDERSTANDING OUR CLIMATE

A basic understanding of Southeast Texas climate and weather patterns is essential for gardening success. Selecting plants that are adapted to the Upper Gulf Coast's long growing season, high humidity, periodic drought, and heavy rainfall can help reduce maintenance and improve plant performance. Native and well-adapted plants are often better equipped to withstand these environmental conditions while requiring less water, fertilizer, and pest management.

New residents and experienced gardeners alike may find that gardening practices that work elsewhere do not always translate well to the Gulf Coast. Learning how local weather patterns, soil types, and seasonal conditions influence plant growth will help you make informed decisions and create a healthier, more resilient landscape.

Whether you are new to the region, new to gardening in Texas, or new to growing plants altogether, understanding your local climate is one of the most important steps toward gardening success. Southeast Texas' long growing season provides opportunities to grow a wide variety of ornamental plants, trees, shrubs, fruits, vegetables, and herbs, but local weather conditions also present unique challenges. High heat, humidity, heavy rainfall events, occasional drought, and tropical weather systems all influence plant performance and landscape management.

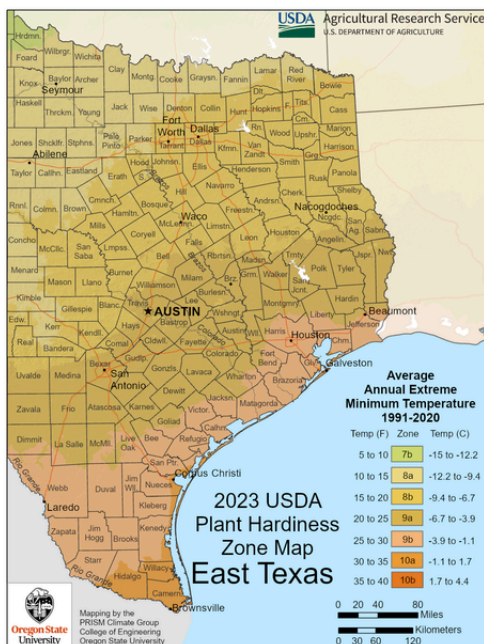


USDA HARDINESS ZONES

USDA Hardiness Zones are geographic areas defined by average annual minimum winter temperatures. These zones help gardeners determine which perennial plants are likely to survive and return year after year. According to the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map, Brazoria County falls within Zone 9b, where average annual extreme minimum temperatures range from 25°F to 30°F.

While hardiness zones are useful for evaluating a plant's ability to survive winter, they do not account for factors such as summer heat, humidity, rainfall patterns, soil conditions, or storm events. For this reason, successful gardening in Southeast Texas requires selecting plants that can tolerate both the mild winters and the long, hot growing season characteristic of the Upper Gulf Coast.

Knowledge of your local frost dates is also important for planning landscape and vegetable garden activities. In Brazoria County, the average first fall freeze typically occurs much later than in most areas of Texas, while the average last spring freeze occurs relatively early, providing gardeners with an extended growing season. Understanding these seasonal patterns can help determine when to plant vegetables, install annual flowers, schedule irrigation adjustments, and perform routine landscape maintenance.



Southeast Texas gardeners enjoy a long growing season, but success depends on choosing plants adapted to our climate.

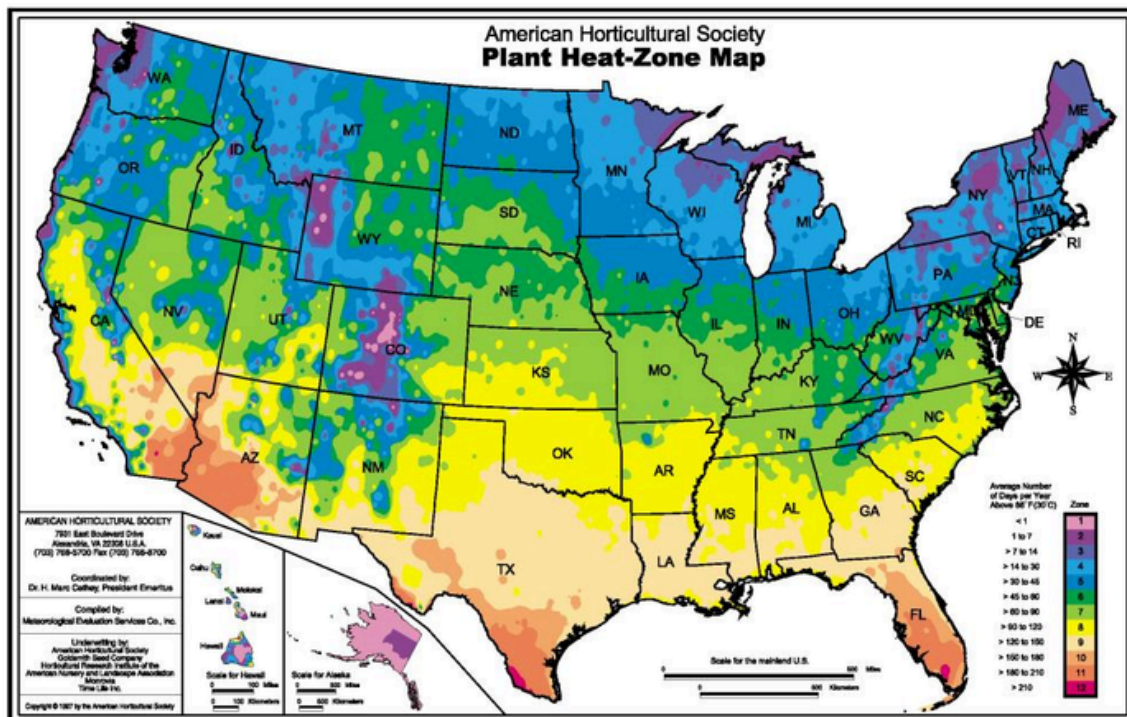
When selecting plants, check the plant tag for the USDA Hardiness Zone and whether the plant is an annual or perennial. Pay attention to sunlight requirements, water needs, and mature size.

AHS HEAT ZONE MAP

While USDA Hardiness Zones help gardeners understand how plants may handle our winter temperatures, the AHS Heat Zones provide another important piece of the puzzle by helping gardeners consider how plants respond to prolonged periods of high temperatures.

For gardeners in Brazoria County, Zone 9b tells us about the *minimum* winter temperatures, but it does not tell the whole story. Our summer *maximum* temperatures, intense sun, high humidity, and extended heat can be equally challenging for plants. New gardeners are encouraged to consider both ends of the temperature spectrum when selecting plants and to look for plants that are adapted to our combination of heat, humidity, and occasional freezes.

Selecting a heat-tolerant plant is only part of the equation. Proper planting location, soil preparation, irrigation, mulch, and protection from intense afternoon sun can all influence how well a plant performs during our hottest months. Understanding both cold hardiness and heat tolerance gives gardeners a better chance of choosing plants that can thrive in Brazoria County rather than simply survive here.



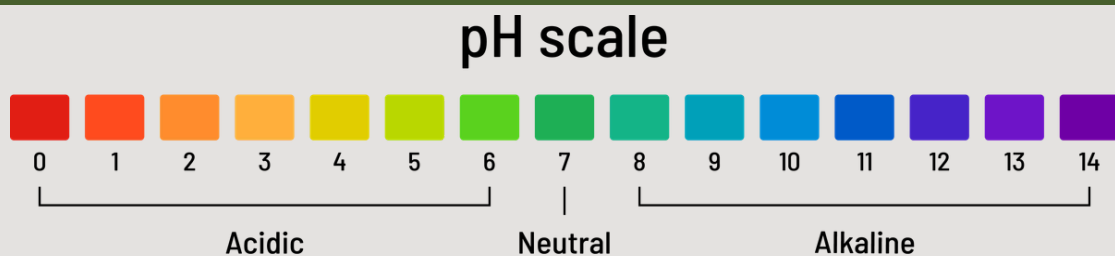
KNOW YOUR SOIL

Understanding Southeast Texas Soils

Healthy soil is the foundation of a successful Southeast Texas landscape and garden. What you see above ground is often a direct reflection of what is happening below the surface. Soil provides structural support for plant roots while supplying the water, air, and nutrients plants need to grow and thrive. By understanding and improving your soil, you can create healthier lawns, more productive vegetable gardens, and more resilient landscapes.

One of the most important soil characteristics is pH, which measures how acidic or alkaline a soil is on a scale from 0 to 14. A pH of 7 is neutral, values below 7 are acidic, and values above 7 are alkaline. Soil pH affects both nutrient availability and a plant's ability to absorb those nutrients.

Soils in Brazoria County and much of Southeast Texas vary considerably depending on location, ranging from sandy coastal soils to heavier clays. Most soils in the region are slightly acidic to slightly alkaline, generally falling between 6.0 and 8.0. Because soil conditions can vary from one property to the next, a soil test is the best way to determine your soil's pH and nutrient levels before making amendments.



Selecting plants that are adapted to your existing soil conditions is one of the simplest ways to ensure long-term success. Native and well-adapted plants typically require fewer inputs and experience fewer problems than plants that must be heavily managed to survive. If you wish to grow plants with specialized soil requirements, consider using containers or raised beds where soil conditions can be modified and maintained more easily. By working with your soil rather than against it, you can create a healthier, more sustainable landscape while reducing maintenance time and expense.

FERTILIZERS

Don't Guess, Soil Test!

Choosing the right soil amendments can seem overwhelming, but the best place to start is with a soil test. Whether you are planting a lawn, vegetable garden, flower bed, or landscape tree, understanding your soil's nutrient levels and pH will help you make informed decisions about fertilization and soil improvement.

A soil test is the most accurate way to determine which nutrients your soil needs and which are already present in sufficient quantities. Testing every one to three years can help you avoid unnecessary fertilizer applications, save money, and reduce the risk of nutrient runoff into local waterways. Soil sampling instructions and submission forms are available through the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Soil, Water and Forage Testing Laboratory at soiltesting.tamu.edu.

Fertilizer labels display three numbers that represent the primary plant nutrients:

N (Nitrogen) – promotes leafy growth and is essential for photosynthesis.

P (Phosphorus) – supports root development, flowering, and fruit production.

K (Potassium) – improves overall plant health, stress tolerance, and disease resistance.

The numbers on the fertilizer bag indicate the percentage by weight of each nutrient contained in the product. While these nutrients are essential for plant growth, more is not always better.



Excess fertilizer cannot be utilized by plants and may contribute to nutrient runoff during rainfall events. Overapplication can also interfere with the uptake of important micronutrients, resulting in reduced plant health and wasted resources. Following soil test recommendations and applying fertilizer according to label directions will help maintain healthy plants while protecting water quality and reducing unnecessary expenses.

Remember: Don't guess, soil test. A small investment in soil testing can lead to healthier plants, lower maintenance costs, and a more sustainable Southeast Texas landscape.

LAWN BASICS

A Healthy Lawn Starts With the Right Grass

Not every turfgrass performs equally well in every part of Texas. In Southeast Texas, St. Augustinegrass is particularly well adapted, while bermudagrass and zoysiagrass are also options depending on site conditions.

When selecting turf, consider:

- Sunlight and shade
- Soil and drainage
- Expected traffic
- Water availability
- Desired maintenance level
- Drought tolerance



Mow for the Grass You Have

Avoid scalping the lawn. A useful rule for warm-season turf is the one-third rule: don't remove more than one-third of the leaf blade at one mowing. For St. Augustinegrass, AgriLife guidance recommends maintaining lawns generally between 2 and 4 inches, depending on cultivar and mower capability.

The goal isn't the greenest lawn on the block.

A healthy lawn is one that is well adapted, properly mowed, appropriately watered, and fertilized according to need.



FERTILIZING FOR WARM SEASON LAWNS

A healthy lawn requires an adequate supply of nutrients, but more fertilizer does not always result in better turf. Grass obtains nutrients from both the soil and supplemental fertilizer applications. The best way to determine your lawn's nutrient needs is through a soil test. If test results indicate that phosphorus or potassium levels are already sufficient, select a fertilizer that provides only the nutrients your lawn requires. Applying nutrients that are not needed wastes money and can contribute to water quality concerns.

Most warm-season turfgrasses grown in Southeast Texas, including St. Augustinegrass, bermudagrass, zoysiagrass, and centipedegrass, perform best with low to moderate nitrogen applications during active growth.

Spring Fertilization

Apply the first fertilizer application after the lawn has fully greened up and has been mowed at least two or three times. In Brazoria County, this typically occurs between April and May, depending on weather conditions and turf species. Fertilizer applied before active growth begins cannot be effectively utilized by the grass and may be lost through runoff or leaching.



Fall Fertilization

A light fertilizer application in early fall may help improve turf density and overall vigor heading into winter. If a fall application is made, use moderate rates and avoid excessive nitrogen that can encourage tender growth. In Southeast Texas, fertilization is generally not recommended once turfgrass growth has slowed significantly due to cooler temperatures.

Applying fertilizer according to soil test recommendations and the needs of your specific turfgrass species will promote a healthier lawn, reduce maintenance requirements, and help protect local waterways from nutrient runoff.

Brazoria County Lawn Care Schedule

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

January

KEEP IT HEALTHY

- Turn off irrigation while turfgrass is dormant.
- Avoid fertilizing dormant or stressed turf.
- Apply fungicide only if there is a history of large (brown) patch.

LAWN CARE

- Mow only as needed to prevent annual weeds from flowering.
- Monitor for winter weeds.
- Submit a soil test if one is due.

February

KEEP IT HEALTHY

- Keep irrigation off while turfgrass is dormant.
- Apply fungicide if there is a history of large (brown) patch.
- Apply nutrients according to soil-test recommendations.

LAWN CARE

- Mow as needed to prevent annual weeds from flowering.
- Watch for warming soil temperatures.
- Prepare for spring lawn growth.

March

KEEP IT HEALTHY

- Turn irrigation back on.
- Make the first fertilizer application.
- Apply 0.5-1 lb. nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. per application.

LAWN CARE

- Apply pre-emergence herbicide.
- Begin regular mowing as needed.
- Mow at 2-4" and never remove more than 1/3 of the leaf tissue.

April

KEEP IT HEALTHY

- Fertilize only when turfgrass is actively growing.
- Irrigate only when necessary to prevent wilting or replace at least 60% evapotranspiration.
- Do not fertilize stressed grass.

LAWN CARE

- Mow weekly or as frequently as necessary to prevent scalping.
- Apply post-emergence herbicides as needed for summer annual and perennial weeds.
- Continue monitoring lawn density and thatch.

May

KEEP IT HEALTHY

- Apply the next nitrogen application if needed.
- Do not exceed 4 lbs. nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. per year.
- Irrigate only as needed.

LAWN CARE

- Mow at 2-4".
- Never remove more than 1/3 of the leaf tissue.
- Aerate or address excessive thatch if needed.
- Establish warm-season turf during active growth.

June

KEEP IT HEALTHY

- Irrigate only when necessary.
- Avoid excessive nitrogen and frequent watering to minimize large (brown) patch.
- Do not fertilize stressed grass.

LAWN CARE

- Scout for chinch bugs and sod webworms.
- Scout for take-all root rot and gray leaf spot.
- Apply insecticide if pests are present and treatment is necessary.

July

KEEP IT HEALTHY

- Continue irrigation only as needed to prevent wilting.
- Avoid excessive nitrogen.

LAWN CARE

- Scout for chinch bugs and sod webworms.
- Scout for take-all root rot and gray leaf spot.
- Treat pests only when necessary.
- Mow regularly at 2-4" without removing more than 1/3 of the leaf tissue.

August

KEEP IT HEALTHY

- Irrigate only when necessary.
- Do not fertilize stressed grass.
- Begin planning for the final nitrogen application of the growing season.

LAWN CARE

- Continue scouting for chinch bugs and sod webworms.
- Treat older grubs if present.
- Scout for fall armyworms.
- Continue mowing at 2-4".

September

KEEP IT HEALTHY

- Make the last nitrogen application 4-6 weeks before the first historic frost.
- Apply other nutrients according to soil-test results.

LAWN CARE

- Scout for fall armyworms.
- Treat chinch bugs or older grubs if necessary.
- Apply post-emergence herbicides as needed.
- Watch for signs of disease.

October

KEEP IT HEALTHY

- Do not apply nitrogen after the appropriate fall cutoff.
- Reduce irrigation as turfgrass growth slows.
- Apply preventative fungicide for large patch in areas with a history of disease.

LAWN CARE

- Apply pre-emergence herbicide when soil temperatures reach approximately 70°F for 4-5 consecutive days to prevent winter annual weeds.

November

KEEP IT HEALTHY

- Turn off irrigation once turfgrass is no longer actively growing.
- Avoid unnecessary fertilization as the lawn enters dormancy.

LAWN CARE

- Apply post-emergence herbicides as needed for winter weeds.
- Continue mowing as needed.

December

KEEP IT HEALTHY

- Keep irrigation off while turfgrass is dormant.
- Apply fungicide only if there is a history of large patch.
- No routine nitrogen applications.

LAWN CARE

- Mow only as needed to prevent weeds from flowering.
- Monitor for winter annual weeds.

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Brazoria County Horticulture Agent
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The use of brand names and/or any mention of listing of specific commercial products or services herein is solely for educational purposes and does not imply endorsement by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension or our partners, nor discrimination against similar brands, products or services not mentioned.

Brazoria County Lawn Care Schedule

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

Options for Pre-Emergence Herbicides

Synthetic Options:

Prodiamine
Dithiopyr
Pendimethalin
Soxaben

Organic Options:

Corn gluten meal

Options for Post-Emergence Herbicides

Synthetic Options: Celsius, Bonide Weed Beater Ultra, Fertilome Weed Free Zone

Organic Options: Captain Jack's Lawnweed Brew, AgraLawn Organic Crabgrass Killer, hand pulling after watering to soften the soil.

Options for Slow Release Fertilizers

Nelson's Turfstar Slow 'n Easy 22-2-10
Nitro-Phos Super Turf
19-4-10
Southwest Premium Gold
15-5-10

Options for Fall Fertilizers

Nelson's Turfstar Slow 'n Easy 22-2-10
Nitro-Phos Super Turf
19-4-10
Southwest Premium Gold
15-5-10

Options for Insecticides

For chinch bugs and sod webworms:

Nitro-Phos Bug Out Max, Cyonara
Grubs: (June) Imidacloprid, (July and August) BloodAdvanced 24 hour Grub Killer Plus, carbaryl (sevin)

Organic Options:

Sod webworms- B.t, spinosad, azadirachtin

Options for Fungicides

Large (Brown) Patch:

Pentachloronitrobenzene, Nitro-Phos Total Brown Patch Control, Nitro-Phos Eagle

Gray Leaf Spot: Myclobutyl, Nitro-Phos Eagle

Take-All Root Rot: azoxystrobin, Nitro-Phos Eagle, propiconazole

Organic Options: aeration, compost topdressing and microbially enriched fertilizers over time.

Fertilizers at a Glance

- Soil test every 3 years.
- Apply 0.5-1 lb. nitrogen/1,000 sq. ft. per application.
- Apply nitrogen 1-4 times during the growing season as needed.
- Do not exceed 4 lbs. nitrogen/1,000 sq. ft. per year.
- Make the final nitrogen application 4-6 weeks before the first historic frost.
- Apply other nutrients according to soil-test recommendations.

Options for Organic Fertilizers

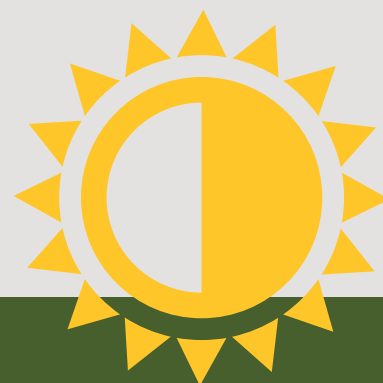
Microlife 6-2-4
Milorganite 6-4-0
Nelson's NatureStart Organic Tree and Turf
Nitro-Phos Sweet Green 11-0-4
Southwest Fertilizer Earth Essentials 5-1-3

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SUN & SHADE



Understanding Light Requirements

After selecting native and adapted plants for your landscape, one of the most important factors influencing their success is the amount of sunlight they receive each day. Fortunately, there are native and adapted plants suited for nearly every lighting condition found in Southeast Texas, from open, sun-drenched landscapes to heavily shaded areas beneath mature trees.

Understanding the light conditions on your property will help you choose plants that are better adapted to their growing environment. Common light categories include full sun, part sun, part shade, full shade, and dense shade. Observe how sunlight moves across your landscape throughout the day, paying close attention to the effects of trees, buildings, fences, and other structures that cast shade.



As a general rule, most warm-season turfgrasses require at least 5 to 6 hours of direct sunlight daily to perform well. Areas receiving less sunlight are often better suited for shade-tolerant groundcovers, shrubs, perennials, or mulched planting beds.

Choosing the right plant for the available light is one of the easiest ways to reduce maintenance, conserve resources, and create a healthier, more sustainable Southeast Texas landscape.

NATIVE VS. ADAPTED PLANTS



NATIVE PLANTS

Native plants occur naturally in a region and have adapted over time to its climate, soils, insects, wildlife, and other environmental conditions. In Southeast Texas, native plants can be particularly valuable because they are adapted to our heat, humidity, rainfall patterns, and periodic drought.

ADAPTED PLANTS

Adapted plants are not native to Southeast Texas, but they have demonstrated that they can perform well under local growing conditions. A good adapted plant can tolerate our heat, humidity, rainfall, and Zone 9b conditions without requiring excessive maintenance.

The bottom line

Native doesn't automatically mean "best," and adapted doesn't mean "bad."

The goal is to choose the right plant for the right place. Consider sunlight, soil, drainage, mature size, water requirements, and the amount of maintenance you are willing to provide.

TREES FOR SOUTHEAST TEXAS

Plant a Tree With the Future in Mind

Trees are long-term investments in your landscape. Before planting, consider the tree's mature size, available sunlight, soil conditions, drainage, proximity to structures and utilities, and the purpose you want the tree to serve.

Are you looking for:

- Shade for your home or patio?
- A specimen tree for visual interest?
- Privacy or screening?
- Habitat for birds and wildlife?
- A tree that fits a smaller space?

Planting Matters

Choosing the right tree is only the first step. Proper planting and establishment are critical to long-term tree health. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's Texas Tree Planting Guide provides tools for selecting trees and information on planting and care.

Brazoria County Tip: Don't choose a tree based solely on how large it looks at the nursery. Check the mature height and width before you plant. A little planning now can prevent a lot of pruning later.

TREES FOR SOUTHEAST TEXAS

Right Tree. Right Place.

Use this quick guide to choose trees that thrive in Brazoria County and match your site conditions and goals.

LARGE SHADE For big spaces and long-term shade 	SMALL ORNAMENTAL For beauty, color, and manageable size 	WET SITE For low areas and poor drainage 	WILDLIFE FRIENDLY Food and habitat for birds, bees & butterflies 	COASTAL EXPOSURE Salt, wind & heat tolerant choices 	SMALL LOT & URBAN Fits spaces under 20-25 feet wide
 Live Oak <i>Quercus virginiana</i>	 Crape Myrtle <i>Lagerstroemia indica</i>	 Bald Cypress <i>Taxodium distichum</i>	 Southern Sugarberry <i>Celtis laevigata</i>	 Live Oak <i>Quercus virginiana</i>	 Dwarf Yaupon Holly <i>Ilex vomitoria 'Nana'</i>
 Shumard Oak <i>Quercus shumardii</i>	 Desert Willow <i>Chilopsis linearis</i>	 Water Oak <i>Quercus nigra</i>	 Yaupon Holly <i>Ilex vomitoria</i>	 Texas Mountain Laurel <i>Sophora secundiflora</i>	 Cedar Elm <i>Ulmus crassifolia</i>
 Bald Cypress <i>Taxodium distichum</i>	 Redbud <i>Cercis canadensis var. texensis</i>	 Sweetgum <i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	 American Beautyberry <i>Callicarpa americana</i>	 Wax Myrtle <i>Morella cerifera</i>	 Japanese Blueberry Tree <i>Elaeocarpus decipiens</i>
 Pecan <i>Carya illinoensis</i>	 Vitex (Chaste Tree) <i>Vitex agnus-castus</i>	 Willow Oak <i>Quercus phellos</i>	 Persimmon <i>Diospyros virginiana</i>	 Lacebark Elm <i>Ulmus parvifolia</i>	 Anacua <i>Ehretia anacua</i>
 Plan for mature size. These trees provide cooling shade and increase property value.	 Great for smaller yards, street plantings, and seasonal color.	 Tolerates standing water and clay soils when established.	 Provides food, shelter and nesting sites for local wildlife.	 More tolerant of salt spray, wind and heat once established.	 Good for patios, tight spaces, and under power lines.

REMEMBER: Right tree, right place, right care. Water deeply, mulch well, and give trees room to grow.

SHRUBS & PERENNIALS

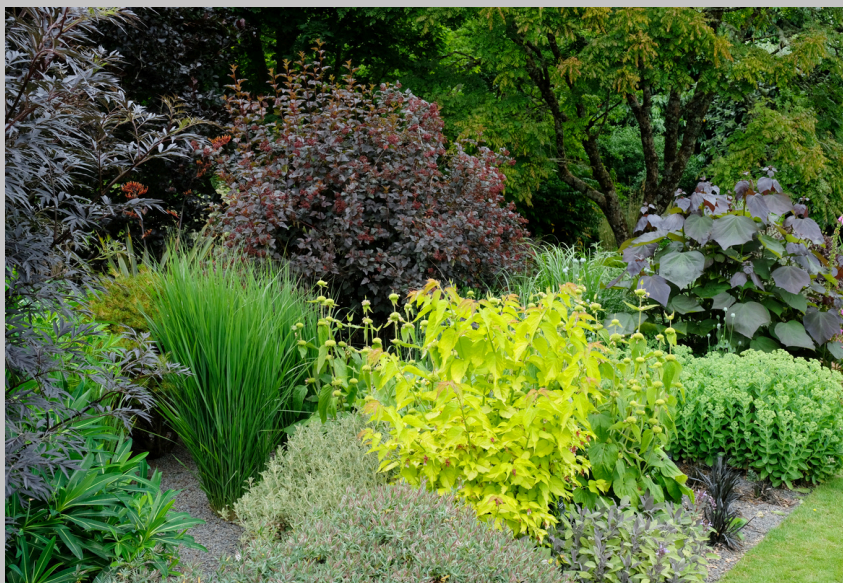
A successful landscape isn't just a collection of pretty plants. Shrubs and perennials provide the structure, texture, seasonal color, and wildlife value that make a garden feel established.

Shrubs provide structure

Use shrubs to define spaces, create screening, frame entrances, and provide year-round foliage.

Perennials provide seasonal interest

Perennials can add flowers, foliage, texture, and habitat while returning year after year.



Right plant. Right place.

Before purchasing a plant, check:

SUN — How many hours of direct light does the site receive?

WATER — Is the area naturally dry, consistently moist, or prone to standing water?

SIZE — What will the plant's mature height and width be?

SOIL — Does the plant tolerate your existing soil?

PURPOSE — Are you looking for screening, flowers, pollinator habitat, erosion control, or simply something beautiful?

POLLINATOR GARDENING

Gardening With Pollinators in Mind

A pollinator garden doesn't have to be large, wild, or difficult to maintain. Even a small planting area can provide valuable resources for bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects.

The key is to think beyond a single flowering plant. Choose a variety of plants that provide flowers and other resources throughout the growing season.

Start With These Simple Steps

1. Plant for diversity.

Use a variety of flowering plants rather than relying on a single species.

2. Choose plants suited to your site.

Plants that are adapted to local conditions are more likely to thrive with fewer inputs.

3. Keep something blooming.

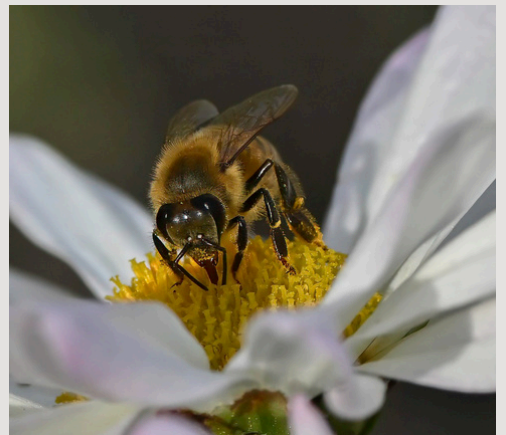
A variety of plants with different bloom periods can provide host and nectar resources over a longer portion of the year.

4. Think about insects as part of the garden.

Not every insect you see is a pest. Many insects are beneficial or important parts of the ecosystem.

5. Use pesticides thoughtfully.

Avoid unnecessary pesticide applications and take pollinators into consideration when pest management is needed.



POLLINATOR HABITAT

A Pollinator Garden Is More Than Flowers

A healthy pollinator habitat provides the resources insects need to complete their life cycles. Think beyond the flower bed and consider the entire landscape.

FOOD

Provide a variety of flowering plants and host plants appropriate for the pollinators you want to support.

WATER

Provide a safe source of water, such as a shallow dish or other small water feature, and keep it clean.

SHELTER

Leave some areas of the landscape less disturbed. Plants, leaf litter, stems, and other natural materials can provide shelter for insects.

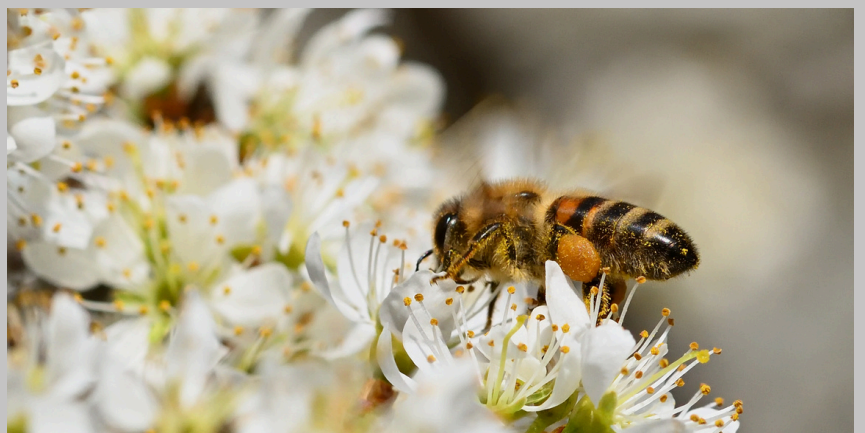
FEWER CHEMICALS

Healthy gardens don't need to be perfectly insect-free. Before reaching for a pesticide, identify the insect and determine whether treatment is actually necessary.

Make It Look Intentional

Pollinator habitat can be beautiful and designed. Group plants in repeating drifts, vary plant heights, include evergreen structure, and define the edges of the planting area.

Brazoria County Tip: Start small. A single sunny planting bed can become a pollinator "stepping stone" in an otherwise conventional landscape.



WATER WISELY

Water Deeply. Water Intentionally.

More water doesn't necessarily mean healthier plants.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension recommends watering according to plant needs, soil conditions, weather, and irrigation efficiency rather than following a rigid schedule.

Before you turn on the sprinkler:

CHECK THE SOIL

Is the soil actually dry where the roots are growing?

CHECK THE WEATHER

Rainfall can provide much of the water your landscape needs.

CHECK YOUR IRRIGATION

Broken heads, leaks, overspray, and runoff waste water.

CHECK YOUR PLANTS

Newly planted plants need more frequent attention than established landscapes.



Cycle and Soak

If water begins running off before it can soak into the soil, divide the irrigation time into shorter cycles with a break between them. This allows water to infiltrate instead of running down the street or sidewalk.



A Great Local Resource

The Water My Yard app uses weather data and science-based recommendations to help homeowners determine how much water their landscape needs. AgriLife reports that more than half of landscape water can be wasted through overwatering, inefficient watering, and poorly maintained irrigation systems.

TOO MUCH WATER



Brazoria County Tip: Our rainfall can do the watering for you. After a good rain, let your irrigation system take the day off.



Sometimes the Problem Isn't Too Little Water

In Southeast Texas, heavy rainfall and frequent irrigation can create a completely different problem: waterlogged soil. When soil stays saturated, roots have less access to oxygen. Poor drainage and excessive moisture can contribute to root problems, disease, weak growth, and plant decline.

Signs You May Be Overwatering

- Yellowing leaves- Especially when the soil remains consistently wet.
- Wilting in wet soil - A wilted plant isn't automatically thirsty.
- Standing water - Water remaining on the surface after irrigation or rainfall can indicate drainage problems.
- Root or crown problems - Saturated soils can create conditions favorable for root diseases.
- Mold or disease symptoms - Excess moisture can increase disease pressure.

Check the soil several inches below the surface. If it is still moist, your plant may not need more water. For vegetable gardens, AgriLife Extension recommends watering deeply and infrequently.

VEGETABLE GARDENING BASICS

Yes, You Can Garden Almost Year-Round

One of the great things about gardening in Southeast Texas is our long growing season. But successful vegetable gardening depends on planting the right crop at the right time.

Start With the Site

Choose a location that receives full or nearly full sun and has good drainage. Keep the garden away from competing tree and shrub roots when possible.

Prepare the Soil

A soil test can help determine pH and nutrient needs. Raised beds can be especially useful in areas with heavy or poorly drained soils.



Plant for the Season

Texas gardeners can grow vegetables during both cool and warm seasons. Your spring and fall planting calendars in this guide are a great starting point. Brazoria County Tip: If your soil is heavy clay or drains poorly, consider raised beds rather than fighting the soil every growing season.

Water the Root Zone

Water thoroughly enough to wet the soil to approximately 6 inches, then allow the soil to begin drying before watering again. Drip irrigation is especially useful because it delivers water directly to the root zone and keeps foliage drier.

Scout, Don't Panic

Insects and diseases are part of gardening. Check plants regularly so problems can be identified early.



 Spring Vegetable Garden Planting Dates for Brazoria County Zone 9a and 9b Average Last Freeze Date: Feb. 15 						
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
Asparagus, Crowns	1/15-2/15					
Beans, Snap and Wax Bush		2/10-4/15				
Beans, Snap Pole		2/10-3/15				
Beans, Lima Bush and Pole		3/1-4/1				
Beets	1/15-4/15					
Broccoli, Transplants	1/15-2/25					
Brussels Sprouts, Transplants	1/15-2/10					
Cabbage, Transplants	1/15-2/10					
Cantaloupe (Muskmelon)		2/20-4/15				
Carrots	1/15-2/10					
Cauliflower, Transplants	1/15-2/15					
Chard, Swiss	1/15-4/1					
Collards	1/15-3/15					
Corn, Sweet		2/15-3/15				
Cucumber		2/1-4/10				
Eggplant, Transplants		2/20-4/1				
Kale	1/15-3/1					
Kohlrabi	1/15-2/15					
Lettuce	1/15-3/15					
Mustard	1/15-3/15					
Okra				4/1-7/1		
Onion (Plants)	1/15-2/10					
Parsley	1/15-2/10					
Peas, English and Snap	1/15-3/1					
Peas, Southern			3/15-4/15			
Pepper, Transplants		2/20-3/10				
Potato, Irish	1/15-2/15					
Potato, Sweet (Slips)			3/15-5/10			
Pumpkin			3/15-5/1			
Radish	1/15-4/15					
Spinach	1/1-2/15					
Squash, Summer		2/10-4/10				
Squash, Winter		2/10-4/10				
Tomato, Transplants		2/20-3/15				
Turnip	1/15-4/15					
Watermelon		2/20-4/1				

 Fall Vegetable Garden Planting Dates for Brazoria County Zone 9a and 9b Average First Freeze Date: Dec. 5 						
	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Beans, Snap and Wax Bush		8/1-9/1				
Beans, Snap Pole		7/15-9/1				
Beans, Lima Bush and Pole		7/15-9/1				
Beets				9/15-11/15		
Broccoli, Transplants				10/1-11/15		
Brussels Sprouts, Transplants				10/1-11/15		
Cabbage, Transplants				10/1-11/15		
Carrots				10/15-11/20		
Cauliflower, Transplants				10/1-11/15		
Chard, Swiss				10/15-11/15		
Chinese Cabbage				10/1-12/1		
Collards				10/15-11/15		
Corn, Sweet		8/1-9/15				
Cucumber			8/15-10/1			
Eggplant, Transplants	7/1-8/1					
Garlic, Cloves				10/15-11/15		
Kale				10/1-11/15		
Kohlrabi				10/1-11/1		
Leeks				9/15-11/15		
Lettuce				10/15-12/1		
Mustard				10/1-12/1		
Okra	7/1-8/1					
Onion (Seed)					11/1-12/15	
Parsley				10/1-12/1		
Peas, English and Snap				10/1-12/15		
Peas, Southern		8/15-9/15				
Pepper, Transplants		7/15-9/1				
Potato, Irish		8/1-9/1				
Pumpkin		8/10-9/15				
Radish				10/15-12/15		
Spinach				10/15-12/15		
Squash, Summer			9/1-10/1			
Squash, Winter		8/1-9/1				
Tomato, Transplants		8/1-9/1				
Turnip				10/15-12/1		

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FRUIT FOR SOUTHEAST TEXAS

Fruit Trees: A Little More Work, A Lot of Reward

Growing your own fruit can be incredibly rewarding, but fruit plants generally require more planning and management than ornamental plants.

Before planting, consider:

- Sunlight
- Drainage
- Soil conditions
- Mature size
- Pollination requirements
- Chill requirements
- Pest and disease pressure
- Irrigation needs



Good Fruits to Explore

FIGS

Figs are among the more problem-free fruits for areas with mild winters. They can be grown as small dooryard trees, but they are relatively sensitive to drought stress.

BLACKBERRIES

Blackberries can be grown successfully in Texas home gardens, tolerate Texas summer heat, and produce fruit in spring and early summer.

BLUEBERRIES

Blueberries can perform well in Texas, but they require acidic soil. Because the ideal pH is much lower than many Texas soils, container culture can be a practical option.

PECANS

Pecans can be beautiful landscape trees as well as productive nut trees, but variety selection, soil moisture, fertility, and pest management all affect production.

Brazoria County Tip

Fruit trees are not "plant it and forget it" plants. Start with one or two crops that fit your site and learn their seasonal needs before expanding your home orchard.

PESTS & DISEASES

THE IPM APPROACH

1. IDENTIFY

What insect, disease, weed, or environmental problem are you seeing?

2. INSPECT

Look at the whole plant and the surrounding conditions.

3. PREVENT

Choose adapted plants, improve growing conditions, and maintain healthy soil.

4. MONITOR

Check plants regularly so problems are caught early.

5. TREAT ONLY WHEN NEEDED

Use the least disruptive effective control method first.



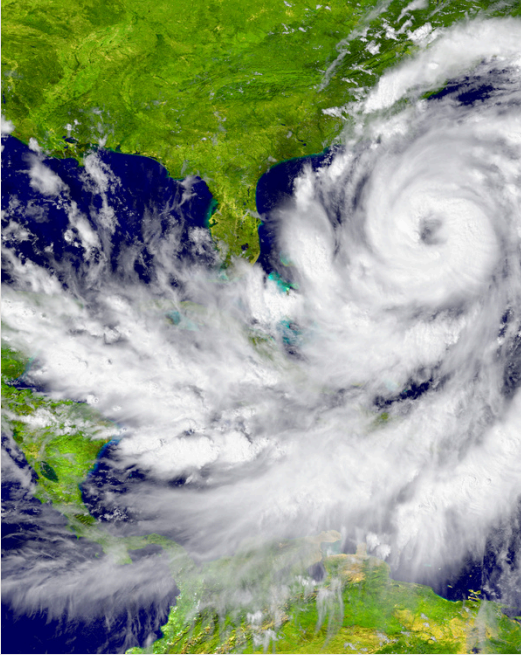
Need Help Identifying a Problem?

Brazoria County residents can start with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Brazoria County office. AgriLife also provides an Ask an Entomologist service for insect identification.

For suspected plant diseases, the Texas Plant Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in College Station accepts samples from trees, shrubs, turfgrass, vegetables, fruits, flowers, houseplants, and other plants.



GARDENING THROUGH HURRICANES



PREPARE BEFORE THE STORM

SECURE THE LANDSCAPE

Bring containers, hanging baskets, tools, furniture, and décor indoors or secure them.

CHECK TREES

Address dead, broken, or hazardous limbs before storm season. Large or hazardous trees should be evaluated by a qualified professional.

PROTECT YOUNG PLANTS

Newly planted trees and shrubs may need additional support.

TURN OFF IRRIGATION

If significant rainfall is expected, shut down automatic irrigation.

AFTER THE STORM

SAFETY FIRST

Stay away from downed power lines and unstable trees or limbs. Don't begin cleanup until conditions are safe.

CHECK FOR FLOODING

Floodwater and saltwater can affect soil and plant health.

DON'T OVERCORRECT

Some storm-damaged plants may recover. Remove hazardous or clearly dead material, but give living plants time to respond before making drastic decisions.

BRAZORIA COUNTY TIP

Hurricane preparation isn't just about protecting your house. A few minutes spent securing your landscape can prevent damaged plants, flying debris, and unnecessary cleanup later.

WHEN IN DOUBT, WAIT IT OUT.

Safety comes before landscape cleanup.

HELPFUL RESOURCES



Interested in Learning More?

If you enjoy gardening, learning new things, and giving back to the community, you may want to consider becoming a Brazoria County Master Gardener. Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who work alongside Texas A&M AgriLife Extension to share research-based gardening information, support educational programs, answer gardening questions, and help maintain demonstration gardens throughout the county.

No prior gardening experience is required, just a willingness to learn and serve. Whether you're new to gardening or have years of experience, the program offers a unique opportunity to expand your horticultural knowledge while connecting with fellow gardening enthusiasts and making a positive impact in your community.

For more information about the Brazoria County Master Gardener program, upcoming intern training classes, or how to get involved, contact the Brazoria County Extension Office or visit the Brazoria County Master Gardeners website.



BRAZORIA COUNTY AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Local horticulture information and assistance

Get research-based gardening advice, publications, educational programs, and contact information for Brazoria County Extension staff.

<https://agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/counties/brazoria-county/>



BRAZORIA COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

Classes, demonstrations, events, and gardening resources

Connect with Master Gardeners for educational programs, gardening workshops, plant clinics, and volunteer opportunities.

<https://txmg.org/brazoria/>

FINAL THOUGHTS

Gardening in Brazoria County is both rewarding and an ongoing learning experience. Our unique combination of Gulf Coast weather, diverse soils, abundant rainfall, and occasional challenges creates opportunities to grow an incredible range of plants while connecting with the natural beauty of our area. Whatever your gardening goals may be, from growing your first vegetables to creating a thriving pollinator habitat or enhancing your landscape with native plants, I hope this guide helps you get started with confidence.

The goal is not perfection, but finding enjoyment in the process and creating outdoor spaces that are beautiful, functional, and sustainable for years to come. This guide was developed to help new residents understand our local growing conditions and connect with resources available throughout Brazoria County.

As your Brazoria County Horticulture Agent with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, I am here to help. If you have questions about gardening, lawns, trees, vegetables, insects, plant diseases, or any other horticulture topic, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Welcome to Brazoria County. I wish you success in your garden and hope you discover the many rewards of gardening in the community you now call home.

Kimberly Mayer



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THIS GUIDE WAS DEVELOPED USING RESEARCH-BASED HORTICULTURAL INFORMATION AND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES FROM TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION. SPECIAL THANKS TO THE BRAZORIA COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS AND THE MANY EXTENSION SPECIALISTS, EDUCATORS, AND VOLUNTEERS WHOSE WORK HELPS BRAZORIA COUNTY RESIDENTS CREATE HEALTHIER, MORE SUCCESSFUL LANDSCAPES AND GARDENS.

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Published 2026

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