



Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article August 15, 2016

Secrets to Fruitful Fruit Growing in East Texas

by Lydia Holley

Would you like to grow your own fruit? In East Texas, there are many fruits you can grow.

Most gardeners know that blueberries can be grown successfully in East Texas. If you are wanting to grow blueberries, you need to have a soil test done to ensure that your soil is acidic. Blueberries like a soil pH of 4.0 to 5.5.



Rabbiteye varieties of blueberries are best in Texas. You will need two types of rabbiteye blueberries to ensure adequate pollination, and they need to bloom around the same time. You will also need to research the varieties which fall within 150 chill hours of your area. In Henderson County, we have an average of 800 chill hours.

The lack of necessary chill hours is the reason most people believe apples can not be grown successfully in East Texas, as most apples need over 1000 chill hours to fruit well. However, there are a few varieties that have lower chill hour requirements. If you have an experimental nature, you may want to try growing a 'Fuji' or 'Royal Gala'. Apple trees like a soil pH of 6.5 to 7.0.

One of the easiest fruits to grow in East Texas is the fig. However, one must remember that a fig tree can grow up to 20 ft tall, and plan its site accordingly. Ideally, it should be placed where it is protected from cold north winds.

Grapes are another fruit many try to grow in East Texas. The idea of a grape vineyard or even a small grape arbor, which you can sit under shaded by grape leaves, picking fruit to be eaten fresh from the vine, or drinking wine produced from these vines, seems very romantic and enticing. Unfortunately, grape growing has become more difficult in recent years.

In the 1970's, it was thought that Pierce's Disease, caused by bacteria, only affected areas with less than 800 chill hours. However, in the 1990's, it became clear that that assumption was incorrect. If you grow grapes in Henderson County, there is an extremely high probability that your grapes will acquire Pierce's Disease. In addition to growing resistant varieties, there are some other methods you can employ in order to help combat Pierce's Disease.

To learn more about this disease and grape growing in East Texas, come to the Henderson County Master Gardener Association's Summer Series 3 on Growing Grapes with Dr. Justin Scheiner on Thursday, August 18, 6:00 to 7:00 p.m., Cedar Creek Library, 410 E Cedar Creek Parkway, Seven Points.

Applications will also be available there to become a Henderson County Master Gardener. The application deadline is August 19.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com or visit www.henderson-co-tx-mg.org.