

Soil temperature important factor for gardening

The question among gardeners in the spring is when to start putting out vegetable plants. If you start too early, a late frost might get your tomato plants, but starting too late could mean a shorter growing season before summer heat slows down production.



TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE

Kate Whitney-Hajda

There are a lot of interesting tips for planting vegetables by the signs of the moon or counting the weeks from Groundhog Day to predict the last day of winter. One of the best kept secrets of good gardening is knowing the value of checking soil temperature. Use a soil thermometer, or even a kitchen thermometer, to test the temperature of your soil. Test the top one or two inches for planting seed, and test four to six inches for planting vegetable transplants.

Soil temperature is the most important factor to consider for good seed germination and seedling growth. Soil temperature for vegetable seed growth is classified into four categories: the minimum temperature for seed growth; the optimum temperature; a realistic temperature; and the maximum temperature for germination to occur.

The minimum soil temperature is the lowest temperature the soil can be for seed germination. Some cold season crops like beets, cabbage, chard, radish, and turnip have a minimum soil temperature of 40 degrees F. If we plant at the minimum soil temperature, we might have slow germination and weak seedlings. The maximum soil temperature is the highest temperature at which the seeds will germinate. Seeds planted at the maximum soil temperature or higher will not be likely to germinate.

The optimum soil temperature is the best temperature for seed germination. The optimum temperature for seed germination of cucumber, okra, and watermelon is 95 degrees. At this temperature, we will get the best germination. Unfortunately, if we plant those seeds when the soil temperature is 95 degrees, the summer heat will stress the plant and reduce plant vigor and yield.

Gardeners want to hit the sweet spot of the realistic soil temperature. This is somewhere between the minimum and optimum temperature so the seeds will germinate and have the best chance for growth. For example, the optimum soil temperature for seed germination of lettuce is 75 degrees, and the minimum soil temperature is 35 degrees. The realistic soil temperature to plant lettuce is 45 degrees F so the lettuce has a good chance to germinate, and the plant will have plenty of time to grow before the weather gets too warm.

Soil temperature affects more than just vegetable plants. Our warm season turf grasses like Bermuda, St. Augustine and Zoysia need soil temperatures of 65 degrees Fahrenheit for significant growth of rhizomes, roots, and stolons. The optimum soil temperature is around 80 degrees.

Soil temperature helps us to know when we might start to see grass start to actively grow in the spring. You can hold off on fertilizing your lawn until you get good, active grass growth. You can also wait to begin watering your lawn until temperatures get much warmer and the rain stops coming.

For more information about lawns and gardens, contact Kate Hajda at the Williamson County Agrilife Extension Office at 512-943-3300.



Vice President Maria Tolleson, Blue Star Mothers President Laura McClain and Blue Star Mothers Past President Susan Lutz.

Wilco Blue Star Mothers supports veterans

The Women Helping Others ladies were honored to have as their guest speaker Laura McClain, who is the president of Wilco Blue Star Mothers, a nonprofit Veterans Service Organization.

Their mission is to "honor our military sons and daughters through their service and commitment to one another; their military communities, veterans and families of fallen service members, in the Capital of Texas area through volunteerism and monetary donations."

Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc. was reported on the Congressional record on February 6, 1942. In June of 1960, the organization was chartered by congress. On March 7, 2023, Texas Blue Star Mothers were honored at the Texas State Capitol with Governor Gregg Abbott for Blue Star Mothers Day in Tex-

WOMEN HELPING OTHERS

Anne Marshall

as. Wilco represents the group's 15th chapter, and was chartered on July 4, 2011.

Mothers volunteered throughout the tough times of World War II. They worked in hospitals and train stations, and packed care packages for soldiers. The organization waned in size over the years, but has been held together by mothers showing pride in both their children and country. In recent times the organization has started to grow again.

Mothers hang flags in their windows at home proclaiming pride in the fact that they have children protecting our freedom during time of war.

Mothers volunteer in the community in different ways. They place Easter Lilies and holiday wreaths on the headstones of our local fallen at the Veterans Cemetery in Killeen and other area cemeteries. Service organizations in

the area, such as Breakfast with Santa for military families, the Heroes Night Out BBQ, Field of Honor; their annual Gold Star Mothers and Family Day luncheon and more.

Membership is open to any mother currently living in the U.S. who has a son or daughter in the military or an honorably discharged veteran. Associate members and Blue Star Dads are welcome to join as well and there is no membership fee for these categories.

The WHO ladies presented the Blue Star Mothers with donations, filling two large vehicles with items that will be distributed to individuals who are currently deployed.

WHO is already looking ahead at future opportunities to give back. The organization is having a car show on November 19 that will benefit Hounds for Heroes. Watch for more information coming soon.

208th Eagle Scout honored by Troop 405

Owen Massey, age 16, completed his Eagle Scout Board of Review at Christ Lutheran Church on March 25. He is Boy Scout Troop 405's 208th Eagle Scout.

Owen went through the Cub Scout Program and earned his Arrow of Light Award. He joined Troop 405 on January 21, 2019. During his tenure as a scout, Owen earned 54 merit badges, logged 75 days/nights of camping, provided 163 service hours and hiked 157 miles.

Owen's positions of responsibility have included patrol leader (twice), assistant senior patrol leader, Order of the Arrow troop representative and historian. Currently, he serves as chief of the San Gabriel Chapter, Order of the Arrow.

Owen attended summer camps at the Kia Kima Scout Reservation in Arkansas in 2019, Camp Strake in 2021 and the Bear Creek Scout Reservation in 2022.

He completed the Capitol Area Council's National Youth Leadership Train-



PHOTO COURTESY CALVIN GRAY

Owen Massey waits at his Eagle Scout Board of Review March 25.

ing Conference in 2023.

Owen attended winter camp at the Lost Pines Scout Reservation in 2019.

Owen's high adventure trips included a 105 mile backpacking expedition at New Mexico's Philmont Scout Ranch in 2022 and the Out Island Adventure at

the Florida Sea Base in 2023.

He will take part in an upcoming canoeing adventure at the Northern Tier Base in Minnesota this summer.

Owen is a member of the Georgetown Church of Christ, where he volunteers with the children's ministry. On two occasions, he attended the Hermann Sons Life Camp to train to be a summer camp counselor. He also attended a summer mission trip with his church to support an orphanage.

Owen is a sophomore at Founders Classical Academy in Leander where he participates in orchestra (cello), track and cross country. Owen also participates in piano recitals. He is a member of the National Honor Society. During his 154 hour Eagle Service Project, Owen provided leadership to scouts and adults in constructing six benches for his school.

As far as the future is concerned, Owen is considering a career in aerospace or engineering.

— Nicholas Cicale

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City council backtracks, changes design choice for Austin Avenue pedestrian bridge

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from council for Option 2," Mr. Woolery said. "What we presented at the time was there wasn't really funding available, especially on the debt side, to support moving to Option 2, so we went back to the drawing board."

According to Mr. Woolery, debt funding is not available due to other projects the city is pursuing.

Coming from two different places, \$1.3 million will freed up if the proposed San Gabriel Boulevard roundabout is funded through the Georgetown Transportation Enhancement Corp. According to the city website, GTEC awards funds to finance infrastructure improvements.

By using GTEC money for the

roundabout, some money will be pulled off the vehicular Austin Avenue bridge rehab project. That money can then shift over to the pedestrian bridges.

An additional \$2.4 million is available through Master Development Fees. These funds come from developments in the extraterritorial jurisdiction and Municipal Utility Developments to support in-city capital projects.

When MUDs issue debt, the city receives between 8 and 12 percent of the amount of debt issued and those funds go into the Master Developer Fee monetary pool.

"Last presentation, I was inclined to consider Option 1 because we do have a lot of funding needs and that

is just the reality," Council Member Amanda Parr said. "I am aware of that, but I also concur that this is a once in our lifetime opportunity... I know there will have to be compromises made in other places, but if we could do Option 2, I would support that option."

The only person on city council not in support of the idea was District 3 Council Member Mike Triggs.

"I think it's very irresponsible to take money for a better bridge when Option 1 is sufficient," he said. "We're in tough economic times. We can see tightening in sales tax. We can see tightening in real estate tax. I just can't support Option 2."

"I think we should stick with Option 1. We can't even afford that."