



## **PLANT SWAPS: JUST NEED TO REMEMBER THE #1 RULE!**

by Mary Ellen Beaupre  
Galveston County Plant Swap Chair

PLANT SWAPS are for every person of all ages -- from "newbie" to the certified Master Gardener, and all levels in-between. Gardeners meet to swap their plants for someone else's plants. It can include seeds, potted plants, bulbs, cuttings and starters. It can range from annuals to perennials, from wildflowers to pond plants.

If you like butterflies and hummingbirds, you will find salvia and milkweed. You will find the most abundant to the most unusual and rare plants. Some swappers bring their garden crafts to swap. No money is ever exchanged.

This is a good way for gardeners to:

- clean out their garden beds by digging up and dividing plants.
- add variety to the garden bed.
- learn about plants and how to care for them.



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Swappers are genuinely eager to give advice and explain the care of the plants. Master Gardeners are almost always at plant swaps. It is a chance for them to earn their required hours, while helping out and giving advice and information. Some Master Gardeners will give demonstrations.

Most plant swaps will ask swappers to bring a dish and have a picnic lunch, while others offer breakfast items. We were known at one time during our 17 years, to have fed over 130 swappers with barbequed brisket, hotdogs and hamburgers. They were cooked on a trailer-sized barbeque pit, with all the fix'ins!

#### **SWAP ETIQUETTE:**

One of the bigger challenges has been trying to lessen the number of missing plants.

New swappers don't know the #1 rule: "You must always ask and not just take, and plants under tables are always off limits because those have been traded already."

Signs are posted everywhere to prevent this from happening. Most swappers are honest, and generous with their plants. If you haven't been to a plant swap, you are missing out.

I want to take this time to say thank you to all of my fabulous swappers and volunteer committee members who were true to the swap over the past several years. After 17 years, I must say goodbye. The spring swap will be my last in Texas, as I am trading my cowboy boots for winter boots I will need in Michigan. It will be full circle for me, since all of my family, including my son, and three beautiful granddaughters live up there. I will truly miss my swap family but I have faith that they will carry it on and do a great job.

So, onward to Michigan from zone 9/10 to zone 5b. I will have to pick up where I left off 35 years ago and re-learn all of the new plants, flowers and vegetables I can play with. Who knows, I may start another plant swap up there.