

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

DECEMBER 2017

PLANT QUESTIONS

What sort of low-growing plant will withstand traffic and the Texas heat around my flagstone walkway?

You might consider dichondra, creeping thyme, horseherb or zoysia turf grass.

My neighbor has nice ornamental pear trees. He asked me not to plant my junipers along our property line. Why is that?

Junipers can harbor such fungus diseases as Cedar Apple Rust which can damage or defoliate apple and pears.

Can't I just rake my leaves into a heap and leave it there for compost?

If improperly cultured (maintained) or mixed, organic material will rot rather than decompose.

Why is it best to prune in dry weather? It avoids the spreading of pathogens which might be present via the water medium. Also, who wants to prune in the rain?

If you have gardening or landscaping questions we have the answers. Just ask any of the friendly, knowledgeable, and experienced nursery staff at Milberger's Nursery.



Come winter when the **Possum Haw** hollies drop their leaves their tiny red berries add colorful interest to what might otherwise be a drab winter garden. Like other hollies, the leaves are thick and glossy during the growing season, and these turn yellow in the fall, before they are dropped. The berries are important winter food source for birds.

WINTER GARDENING EXPERTISE

The Versatility of Hollies

Hollies remind us of the Christmas season. The evergreen holly is considered by many landscape designers the most versatile of the landscape ornamentals. Texas native hollies are highly adaptable as home landscape plants in bush or tree form. In Texas you will find they are amazingly tolerant of our temperature and soil extremes. You may have noticed how often the most impressive displays you have seen were hollies used in open spaces. That's because crowded plants or plants that are severely fenced-in have less of a chance of being pollinated. Fortunately, hollies are somewhat promiscuous and do not insist on pollen from a member of their own species. Hollies are so common in our landscapes that a suitable male is probably already within bee range of your garden. If your berry-bearing, female holly grows in an isolated area you may need to plant a male holly nearby.

(MORE HOLLIES ON PAGE THREE)

Our web site and the email version of this newsletter contain many color photographs, how-to-do-it diagrams, more complete articles, links to many gardeners references and many more answers to your gardening and landscape questions. Visit www.MilbergerNursery.com to sign up. We respect your privacy and we will not share your address or information with anyone not associated with this newsletter.

HOLIDAY GARDENING EVENTS

Sat., Dec 2 – all day

Milberger's Annual Christmas Open House. Swing into the holiday season. Let the kids enjoy some fun activities while you pick the perfect Christmas tree, poinsettia, decorations or gift for the holiday. Photo with Santa. Ride the Little Red Choo-Choo. Caroling with the Sweet Adelines. Hot chocolate, wassail, candy canes. Fresh cut Christmas trees. Unique gifts for the gardeners on your list. (210) 497-3760

Sun. Dec 3 – all day

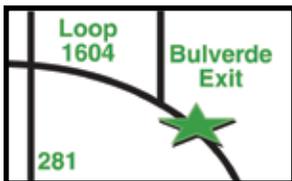
Milberger's Annual Cowboy Christmas. Cool Music and Hot Chili. Live music with the Texas Weather Band from 11am 'til 3pm. Chili will be served and donations to the Food Bank are matched by Milberger's. Hot chocolate, pop corn, wassail, Moon Bounce and Choo-choo rides in a Western-theme Holiday celebration at the nursery. (210) 497-3760

Mon. Dec 11 – 6:00pm

San Antonio Rose Society Christmas Dinner and Awards Presentation. San Antonio Garden Center, (210) 313-3371

Holiday Break: There is no **Kids Gardening Class** in November or December. Classes will resume in January and continue on the last Saturday of each month throughout the year.

Find more Gardening Events visit www.MilbergerNursery.com



To find us: Take the Bulverde Exit off of Loop 1604. The entrance to Milberger's is next to the Valero gas station.

Milberger's Landscape Nursery

Open 9:00 to 6:00 Monday to Saturday
And 10:00 to 5:00 on Sundays

3920 North Loop 1604
San Antonio, TX 78247
(210) 497-3760

Or on the World Wide Web at www.milbergernursery.com
nursery@milbergersa.com

Milberger's Nursery December Features

You are invited to our **Annual Christmas Open House Weekend Saturday, Dec 2**

Come and get into the holiday season. Let the kids enjoy some fun activities while you pick the perfect Christmas tree, poinsettia, decorations or gift for the holiday.



**HOT CHOCOLATE ~ WASSAIL ~ CANDY CANES
FRESH CUT CHRISTMAS TREES ~ DECORATIONS
GARLANDS WREATHS ~ POINSETTIAS**

And Unique gifts for the gardeners on your list
Visit our web site for details, times and updates



MILBERGER'S COWBOY CHRISTMAS Sun., Dec 3



COOL MUSIC AND HOT CHILI

Enjoy a bowl of delicious **HOT CHILI**. NOON UNTIL THE POT RUNS OUT. A **donation** from food purchases, matched by MILBERGER'S goes directly to the **SAN ANTONIO FOOD BANK**. Music by **THE TEXAS WEATHER BAND** 11am 'til 3pm **SANTA CLAUS**, train rides, pop corn, and hot chocolate, hot wassail.

Watch for our weekly sale specials in **The San Antonio Express-News** or at www.MilbergerNursery.com

Gardening South Texas on the air at KLUP (am 930)

Saturday and Sunday 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

To have your gardening questions answered during show hours ONLY

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WINTER GARDENING EXPERTISE

Hollies

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Hollies come in a wide array of sizes and textures, and they are adaptable to a range of different sun exposures, making them truly a “go-to” plant for challenging areas where other plants may be difficult to grow. Here are some of the choices that you will find at Milberger’s Nursery.

Burford holly produces very glossy, dark green foliage. Generally, only one leaf spine is present,



The surest way to obtain a berry-bearing holly is to buy one in winter that has berries on it. Winter also is an excellent time to plant hollies and other woody shrubs and trees. There also are named varieties that all are female, so all plants of that variety produce berries.

“Not only are hollies indispensable shrubs and small trees for Texas landscapes in all seasons, but also they provide food and shelter for songbirds and, come Christmas, at-the-ready resources for holiday decorating.”

~ Michael Parkey, Landscape Architect

and this is at the tip of the leaf. This very popular and widely used landscape holly produces an excellent crop of berries each year. Burford grows quite large, often reaching 10 to 15 feet.

Dwarf Burford Holly has characteristics similar to Burford holly. The glossy dark green leaves are smaller, and growth rate is slower. The leaves, generally, have only one spine at the tip. Dwarf Burford will grow to a height of at least five to six feet if not pruned heavily.

‘Rotunda’ Chinese holly is one of the most satisfactory shrubs available. This variety is quite different from other Chinese hollies in that it has a dwarf habit of growth and a rounded shape. An important advantage is that little or no pruning is required to produce a compact plant. ‘Rotunda’ will tolerate hot, dry locations that would injure other shrubs. It is viciously thorny and sterile (no berries).

Dwarf Yaupon holly is one of the finest hollies available for low hedges. Unlike its parents, this selection is compact and slow-growing. You may want to ask for the Stokes or Shillings varieties. These produce small, fine-textured leaves and have a formal, rounded shape. They are very tough ornamentals that will tolerate hot, dry locations.

You will find winter blooming plants on sale at Milberger’s Nursery through the season. Watch for our weekly ads in the **San Antonio Express News** or you can keep an eye on our web site at www.milbergernursery.com. Our web site will also provide you with many tips and guidelines for gardening, lawn care, tree selection and water gardening in our part of Texas.

WINTER GARDENING

Winter Seasonal Stars

By Dana Nichols, SAWS Conservation Manager

Tender perennials turn brown after the first hard freeze. The plants that remain green are now appreciated in a new way. December is the flower gardener's most relaxed growing season. Without the green and growing jungle for competition, a simple splash of color goes a long way.

One of the few flowers that can take it down to single digit temperatures, fall-planted **pansies** make a spectacular show the following spring. Bedding **dianthus** or "pinks" are practical choices for winter color.

Though they tend to bloom only in the warmer spells, dianthus will last well into the spring and summer eliminating the need to replant until the next fall. Tiny **violas**, like "johnny jump ups," and wood violets are the tough, enduring grandparents of the pansy family. While common purple and yellow "johnny jump ups" are good reseeding annuals; yellow, purple, and white flowered violets are perennials here in Texas.

Look to foliage for another source of winter color. Hardy, old fashioned "purple heart" lives on and



Artemesia stays evergreen during most winters in San Antonio. The Powis Castle variety has delicate foliage that provides texture and color contrast to other plants. The sweet smell makes it a nice addition to cut flowers brought into the house. Plant only in areas with good drainage to prevent rot during wet winter months.

makes a colorful border plant. Anything evergreen, like rosemary, whether it has bloom or not, will give structure to your beds in winter and should be included in your winter garden.

Many rosemary varieties that thrive in San Antonio. **Upright rosemary** is so tough and evergreen that it is sometimes used as a small foundation shrub. Trailing rosemary cascades beautifully down retaining walls and rocky slopes. It is rare to have challenges with pests or disease, so long as rosemary is given sunlight and good drainage.

INDOOR PLANT CARE

Bring Them In

Preparing Plants for Indoors

The arrival of winter turns gardeners' attention indoors. You may be bringing your plants in from the outside or finding new plants to make your house more delightful this winter. Make sure that you put your plants in an area where you have plenty of light. If it's a place where you're comfortable reading that should be sufficient. If not, consider using artificial lights. Incandescent light sources are not particularly good for use with plants, but fluorescents, and especially wide-spectrum fluorescents, are excellent.

“Container-grown plants are more susceptible to cold damage because their roots are more exposed. Many plants popular with South Central Texas residents, such as bougainvillea and hibiscus, as well as other tropical or semi-tropical plants, can still be damaged by above-freezing temperatures.”

~ David Rodriguez, Bexar County Extension Agent

Weekly watering is sufficient for most plants. It is a good idea to put your inside potted plant in a saucer filled with pebbles any excess water that drains through won't soak back up into the pot and cause the roots to drown.

Plants flourish best in their natural temperature. Every house has a wide differences in temperatures between rooms, and even between areas of the same rooms. A plant sitting on a window sill, for instance, is almost always cooler at night than the center of the room.

Humidity is important when bringing your growing plants indoors. The air in most homes is usually too dry in winter to support many types of plants with the exception of succulents. You must provide the correct humidity for your inside plants.



Phalaenopsis (moth orchids) make excellent houseplants with their magnificent, long-lasting white, pink, red, purple, lavender, or yellow flowers. You can put them in elegant vases to emphasize their exotic form and place them in front of a mirror to double the impact.

You can find excellent quality mulches at Milberger's Nursery for all of your landscape and flower beds. It won't float away and when you apply at least 2" of mulch to all your landscape and around trees it will help protect your plant investment over the winter.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Use Shade Trees to Cut Your Energy Bill

If your air-conditioning bills were high last summer and you used an outrageous amount of water to keep your lawn green, planting one or more shade trees might help trim your utility use. Trees help to modify local climate by lowering air temperature, increasing humidity, influencing wind speeds and reducing glare. These trees provide shade and evaporation of water through the transpiration process. The evaporation from a single large tree can produce the cooling effect of 10 room-sized air conditioners operating 24 hours a day.

When a shade tree is properly placed in your landscape you can benefit from savings on daytime air conditioning.

For example, three or more large trees strategically placed on the sunny sides of a house will provide enough shade to reduce air-conditioning costs by as much as 30 percent. Trees also help with energy costs in the winter by blocking cold winds thereby reducing the strain on heating units.



Chinquapin Oak
Quercus muehlenbergii



Copyright © Robert O'Brien

The **chinquapin oak** is a good shade tree for Central and South Texas. With its strong branches and interesting leaves, the chinquapin oak makes a beautiful statement. This conversation piece of a tree is worthy of a prominent place in any large lawn.

Communities in which homeowners utilize trees in their landscaping also benefit. These energy savings, when spread over many houses, neighborhoods and urban areas, can reduce the demand for power production by utility plants, which also reduce the amount of air pollutants produced by these power plants.

Placement of a tree is the key to energy savings. Shade trees do affect summertime electricity use, but the amount of the savings depends on the location of the tree.

Trees planted within 40 feet of the south side or within 60 feet of the west side of the house will generate about the same amount of energy savings. This is because of the way shadows fall at different times of the day.

This is one of the best times to plant trees in Central Texas. Trees and shrubs planted in the winter will be able to have their roots well established in time to withstand the stress of our long hot and dry summers, when you will need their shade.

DECEMBER GARDENING AND LAWCARE TIPS

Winter is an Ideal Planting Time

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

December is an ideal time to plant trees and shrubs. Planting now gives the plant time to establish its root system before the shoot growth develops in the spring. Less supplemental watering is required through the winter.

It is also an ideal time to prepare planting areas for spring planting. Temperate weather means that there is still time to plant or continue planting some of the cool-season vegetable crops depending on where you live.

Planting: It is not too late to plant pansies, the premier color plant for the winter here in South Texas. They're hardy, will bloom over a long season, and come in a wide array of colors. The old-fashioned face varieties have been steadily improved for better garden performance, and many new varieties with solid or bi-colors without a face are now available. You can get anything from bold orange, yellow and red, to pale pastels. You can also plant flowering kale, Dianthus, calendula, viola, Johnny jump-ups, alyssum, and snapdragons.

Lantana, mallow hibiscus, Esperanza and other cold sensitive plants will freeze back to the ground

when it gets cold enough. After that cut them back and they'll bloom again when the warm weather returns. Most container plants react to the season by reducing growth rates.

Prune: This is the ideal pruning time for many trees and shrubs. If you have oak trees in need of pruning, begin now. It is especially critical in areas where the oak wilt fungus is a problem. Apply horticultural tree wound dressing on all oak cuts. Prune out dead, damaged or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Avoid topping or dehorning.

On the lookout: Watch for pillbugs (sowbugs, rollie-pollies) eating seedlings and young transplants of flowering annuals such as bluebonnets, pansies, etc. Scale and other hard-to-kill insect pests may be overwintering on your trees or shrubs.

Odd Jobs: Do not allow heavy accumulations of leaves to pile up on the lawn area. If they get wet and pack together, the grass can be damaged. It is best to rake leaves or pick them up with a mower and bagger and place them in a compost pile.

For more detailed and complete Gardening Tips from Jerry Parsons go to our newly redesigned website: **www.MilbergerNursery.com** and follow the newsletter link that reads "**Monthly Gardening Tips.**"

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE FREE

Subscriptions to Milberger's Gardening Newsletter for South Central Texas are free, compliments of Milberger's Landscaping and Nursery. The newsletter is published at the beginning of each month.

TO RECEIVE this free newsletter, complete this form and return it to **Milberger's Nursery** or by calling (210) 497-3760. You can sign up on-line at **www.milbergernursery.com**.

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Christmas Trees

Milberger's offers the most reliable selection of Christmas Trees. Fresh cut, displayed and kept in water

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Cyclamen are noted for their distinctive flower forms and patterned foliage. Cyclamen plants have an opposite growing season than most houseplants. They are a winter flowering plant, which means that they grow and bloom during the cooler winter months, and go dormant during the heat of the summer. That's why they're such popular gift plants around the holidays, and throughout the winter.