

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

DECEMBER 2018

PLANT QUESTIONS

Is it too late to plant larkspur seed for blooms next spring? No, the seed can be planted in rows or as a wild flower by spreading it on the soil surface in sunny areas where the seed can reach the soil. It won't work in sod or areas where there is a thick weed cover.

Will tomatoes survive 35-degree weather, or should we just pick all the fruit and call it a season?

I would pick all the mature fruit, but the plant and immature fruit should survive 35 degrees without protection. The conservative path is to cover the plants and then you can take advantage of the mild temperatures that usually follow the first December cold spell.

I have a flagstone walkway. I would like to use some sort of low-growing plant that will withstand traffic and the Texas heat. You might consider dichondra, creeping thyme, horseherb or zoysia turf grass.

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.



HOLIDAY GARDENING EXPERTISE

Texas Herbs: Easy, Drought Tolerant and Tasty

Herbs are some of the best plants for Texas. Most herbs like it hot and dry, so they are a natural for Texas. Herbs are used not only for culinary purposes, but also for medicinal, cosmetic and craft purposes. The wide range of foliage, colors, textures and flowers contribute to their appeal. Herbs are often overlooked as landscape plants, but in truth, they make some of the very best, easiest to care for, and cheapest plants you can use for shrubs and groundcovers. Powis Castle Artemisa is a fine border shrub, and thyme a great small border shrub as well. Try using Salad burnet wherever you might want a plant that looks much like a fern. It is pretty, and it can take much more heat and sun than ferns.

(MORE HERBS 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.

DECEMBER GARDENING EVENTS

Sat., Dec 1 – All Day

Milberger's Christmas Traditions Open House. Bring the family and enjoy a day of fun Christmas activities: caroling, rides on our own Little Red Choo-Choo through the forest of living and fresh-cut Christmas Trees, Funnel Cakes and more. (210) 497-3760

Sun., Dec 2 – All day

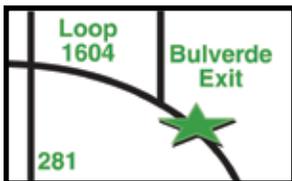
Milberger's Annual Cowboy Christmas. Hot chili and cool music. Live country music with the Texas Weather Band. Balloon artists. Roasted corn, popcorn, hot chocolate and Milberger's famous Christmas wassail. All day at the nursery. (210) 497-3760

A portion of all Christmas tree sale will be donated to the San Antonio Area Salvation Army.

Thurs., Dec 6 – 6:30pm 'til 8:30pm

Farm Fresh Flavors: San Antonio Botanical Garden Nutrition Educator Taylor Phelps, and Culinary/Wellness Program Specialist Chef Dave Terrazas, along with special guest chefs, growers, producers and purveyors, will showcase locally-grown produce and artisanal gourmet foods, and combine them into amazing seasonal culinary delights at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place. Fee: \$25.00 per class (\$22.50 members) 210-536-1400

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 Circle K 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 1**

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



- ~ FUNNEL CAKES ~ FACE PAINTING ~
 - ~ LITTLE RED CHOO-CHOO ~
 - ~ PICTURES with SANTA ~
 - ~ ROASTED CORN ~ HOT CHOCOLATE ~
- and Unique gifts for the gardeners on your list.
VISIT OUR WEB SITE FOR FULL DETAILS.

MILBERGER'S COWBOY CHRISTMAS Sun., Dec 2



COOL MUSIC AND HOT CHILI

Enjoy a bowl of delicious **HOT CHILI.**
FROM 11AM UNTIL THE POT RUNS OUT.
Music by **THE TEXAS WEATHER BAND**
11am 'til 3pm **SANTA CLAUS, Train Rides, Funnel Cakes, Balloon Artist, Popcorn, Hot Chocolate and 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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HOLIDAY GARDENING EXPERTISE

Herbs for Texas

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Herbs are a pleasure to care for; as you trim them, they fill the air with their delightful fragrance. Herbs need a sunny, well drained location in your landscape. They can be used in flower beds, borders, rock gardens or containers.

Herbs generally like hot, dry weather and are most fragrant if plants receive six to eight hours of sun per day. The cuttings can often be used in cooking. Herb seeds such as dill, anise, caraway or coriander can be used for flavorings. The leaves of many herbs such as parsley and chives can be harvested

“Herbs are some of the best plants for Texas.

Most herbs like it hot and dry, so they are a natural for Texas. So why not use them to add a little zing to your holiday cooking?”

for fresh seasonings. Don't remove all the foliage from the plant at one time. Only take the leaves as you need them. After harvesting, hang the herbs in loosely tied bundles in a well-ventilated room.



Society Garlic. This is a plant more known for its ornamental beauty than its culinary value, both variegated and non-variegated forms of society garlic pack a garlicky punch and, as lore goes, doesn't give the eater offensive breath. While in the same family as the aforementioned alliums, society garlic is not a true garlic. Their charming flowers, stems and leaves can be used similarly to onion or garlic chives (the roots aren't edible) while adding evergreen interest into your landscape beds, kitchen garden or containers



Mint is one of the most versatile herbs both in the garden and in the kitchen, mint is surprisingly cold hardy, dying back only during extreme cold spells. Mint can be very vigorous in part sun and part shade conditions, creating an aromatic edible groundcover that can be used in a number of holiday recipes both sweet and savory. With over 25 species, there are plenty to choose from. Peppermint has an almost spicy finish, perfect for holiday desserts and cocktails. Fresh mint can also be a bright addition to fruit salads, teas, or as a surprisingly refreshing addition to rich meat dishes. All are fun to grow and cook with.



Blood Sorrel is one of the most attractive herbs for its ornamental value. Blood sorrel may not be familiar to most Americans. Also referred to as "Bloody Dock" or red-veined sorrel, it's named after the crimson veins that contrast the large, deep-green leaves. Not only is this plant cold hardy and evergreen, providing landscape interest all winter long, it also pairs very well with cool-season soups and stews. While its tart young leaves are a welcomed addition to salads, the older, more lemony leaves are best cooked, incorporated into creamy or buttery sauces and paired with fatty fish, chicken or root vegetables.

A visit to Milberger's Nursery will help you find healthy plant stock that is selected to thrive in South Central Texas' cool weather. You will also find good advice and creative suggestions for your specific landscape and gardening needs. To see what is on sale each week visit our web site at www.milbergernursery.com or look for our ads in the **San Antonio Express News**.

WILDLIFE

Feeding Your Birds This Winter

Our birds in South Texas rarely face the harsh winters as those in the much colder northern portion of the country, but even Texas birds can use a handout now and then. And almost all birds will take advantage of opportunities to feed when given the right foods.

Seeds that attract the greatest number of bird species are black-oil sunflowers. These seeds have a high meat-to-shell ratio, they are nutritious and high in fat, and their small size and thin shells make them easy for small birds to handle and crack. Striped sunflower seeds are larger and have a thicker seed coat.

In addition to the above seeds, a few of our wintering birds prefer thistle seeds. These tiny seeds require a different type of feeder, also readily available in most stores. But goldfinches and siskins rarely take any other type of seed. And suet is another feed that is worthwhile during the winter, although it can become rancid in warm weather. Suet can often be purchased in plastic mesh bags (the kind onions come in), or you can cut fat off



Water, especially dripping water, attracts more birds than any of the feeders. All birds must drink. Providing bird food and water throughout the winter will attract the largest number and variety of species into your yard.

beef and place it in a mesh bag or a wire basket and hang it in a location where raccoons can not steal the food. Premade suet cakes, often containing a seed mixture, are also available in stores that sell pet supplies.

I have found over the years that I can fix a high energy bird food by mixing peanut butter with a smaller portion of corn meal or oatmeal. This combination is necessary so that the small birds do not choke on the sticky peanut butter. I then place gobs of this mixture into pre-drilled holes in a small log that can be hung from a wire attached to a tree or pole. Even birds that usually feed only on

seeds will often take advantage of the peanut butter mix.

Birds such as robins, thrushes, bluebirds, and waxwings usually don't show up at feeders because seeds are not a major component of their diet. But you can still tempt them to dinner with an offering of fruit. Soften dried raisins and currants by soaking them in water, then offer them at a feeding station. Mockingbirds and catbirds will also find sliced fresh fruit attractive.

IN YOUR WINTER GARDEN

A Winter Garden Review

Winter in Texas is a good time of year to look at your landscape, and imagine what evergreen plants can be added to enhance the view. In winter, evergreen plants that change very little throughout the year are the showstoppers of your landscape. Winter is the best time of year to determine where you might want to add some of these plants come spring, and how they'll integrate into your landscape.



Perennials are reliable, resilient staples of a water-saving landscape. Perennials live more than one year. Through careful selection and proper care, perennials will keep your garden looking great year round – and for a long time. The key to a perennial's true resilience and value is its life cycle: After germinating, a perennial establishes itself, first through the roots and then the stems and leaves. Firmly established in the second year, most perennials will flower and set seed. Others may take a few more years before blooming.

“Consider the placement of perennials in your garden beds. Your perennials can be highly useful and attractive in the home landscape. They not only persist for many years but usually require less maintenance than annuals.”

~ Dr. Jerry Parsons, Bexar County horticultural expert

Things to consider when integrating evergreen backbone plants into your landscape:

- 🌿 Determine their function – screening, backdrop, turfgrass replacement, wildlife habitat, architectural focus, or all of the above.
- 🌿 Be thoughtful about placement – keep structural plants such as yucca or cactus away from walkways.
- 🌿 Consider your soil type – deep (central and east Bexar County), shallow (northern Bexar County) or sandy (south Bexar County).

Year-round gardening is one of the great perks to living in South Central Texas. Planning for the season and selecting the plant varieties that thrive here can give you a beautiful garden experience twelve months of the year.

Visit our nursery to find the winter blooming plants that will thrive in your landscape. Take a look at our web site www.milbergernursery.com or look for our ads in the San Antonio Express-News. Visit us for your holiday shopping where you will find wreaths, garland, holiday decorations and the perfect gift for the gardeners on your shopping list.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Pruning Your Live Oaks

by Daphne Richards, Extension Agent and Horticulturist

Live oak trees seem to take off overnight when they have plenty of rain. They also have the annoying habit of growing branches in all different directions, including straight down. This isn't that much of a problem in the tree's native habitat, but in a landscape, it usually leads to a few problems: too many smaller branches, taking energy that the tree would use to produce larger branches; too little air circulation in the canopy, leading to an increased chance for insect and disease infestation; too much weight, causing branches to droop and possibly break; branches rubbing against each other; and conflicts with homeowner's heads, among other issues.

Live oaks really benefit from regular pruning, and the younger the tree is when you start your regimen, the better. The branches that need pruning are usually fairly obvious, and if the tree is young enough, you can do the pruning yourself.

Be mindful of oak wilt. To avoid the chances of being infected with this deadly disease, do not prune

between February and June, when the insects that vector this disease are most active.

And when pruning any tree, always clean your pruning equipment when moving from one tree to another.

Make smooth pruning cuts, at the proper place on the tree, so that healing is encouraged (don't cut too close, but also don't leave a stub). Never remove more than one-third of the canopy at a time, and allow the tree time to recover and put on new growth before pruning again (about a year is good). Removing the branch all the way back to the source is usually best when shaping a tree.

Pruning in the winter, when most trees are dormant or at least not growing much, is best. Because pruning stimulates the tree to grow and replace the tissue removed, pruning during hot, dry times of year usually should be avoided. But if you are removing the branch all the way

back to the source, growth is not encouraged as much, and pruning can be done in summer, especially if temperatures are relatively "normal" and you are able to irrigate the tree.



This is the ideal pruning time for many trees and shrubs. If you have oak trees in need of pruning, begin now. Prune out dead, damaged or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Avoid topping or dehorning.

DECEMBER GARDENING TIPS

Pruning and Planting In December

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

In Your Garden Beds: 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. You can also plant flowering kale, Dianthus, calendula, viola, Johnny jump-ups, alyssum, and snapdragons.

Plant: December is a good month to plant trees and shrubs. This is a good time to move trees and shrubs as well. Planting now gives the plant time to establish its root system before the shoot growth develops in the spring. Also, usually little supplemental watering is required through the winter. Look around at the fall color and see which plants you would like to add to your landscape. Make certain your final choices are from the list of recommended trees and shrubs for this area found on our web site.

Prune: Lantana, mallow hibiscus, Esperanza and other cold-sensitive plants. Cut them back severely – to the ground. Over-plant the cut-back perennial area with winter annuals such as pansies, Johnny-jump-ups and dianthus (pinks), larkspur or bluebonnets rather than looking at

the barren bed all winter. The lantana will come back next spring in May to provide beauty during the hottest part of the summer. Most container plants react to the season by reducing growth rates. Cut back on the water and fertilizer until next spring.

Prune your 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.

Lawn Care: If you have procrastinated the application of the most important lawn fertilization of the year – the application of a “Winterizer” fertilizer to condition the grass for winter survival – do it now.

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 or spread them over the garden area and work them into the soil. Add additional fertilizer to assist in decomposition.

For more detailed and complete Gardening Tips for this month visit www.MilbergerNursery.com.

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.

We respect your privacy. Your name will not be shared with anyone not associated with Milberger Nursery.

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Christmas Trees

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

Noble Firs

Nordmann Firs

Frazer Firs

A portion of all Christmas Tree sales will be donated to the San Antonio Area Salvation Army.



Loropetalum is a beautiful plant for its burgundy and deep green leaves. New leaves emerge burgundy later turning to a nice dark green. In late summer, it blossoms with bright fuchsia flowers. It wants full sun. If you plant in clay soil, amend it to improve the drainage. Loropetalum generally gets about 6' tall and wide. If you want it to remain a shrub, you don't even need to prune it very much.