

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

APRIL 2020

PLANT QUESTIONS

Can I top and shape a tree, which is presently 15 feet, to give it a more rounded appearance? Try not to top the tree. Rather, cut it back to a major limb which is growing laterally or spreading.

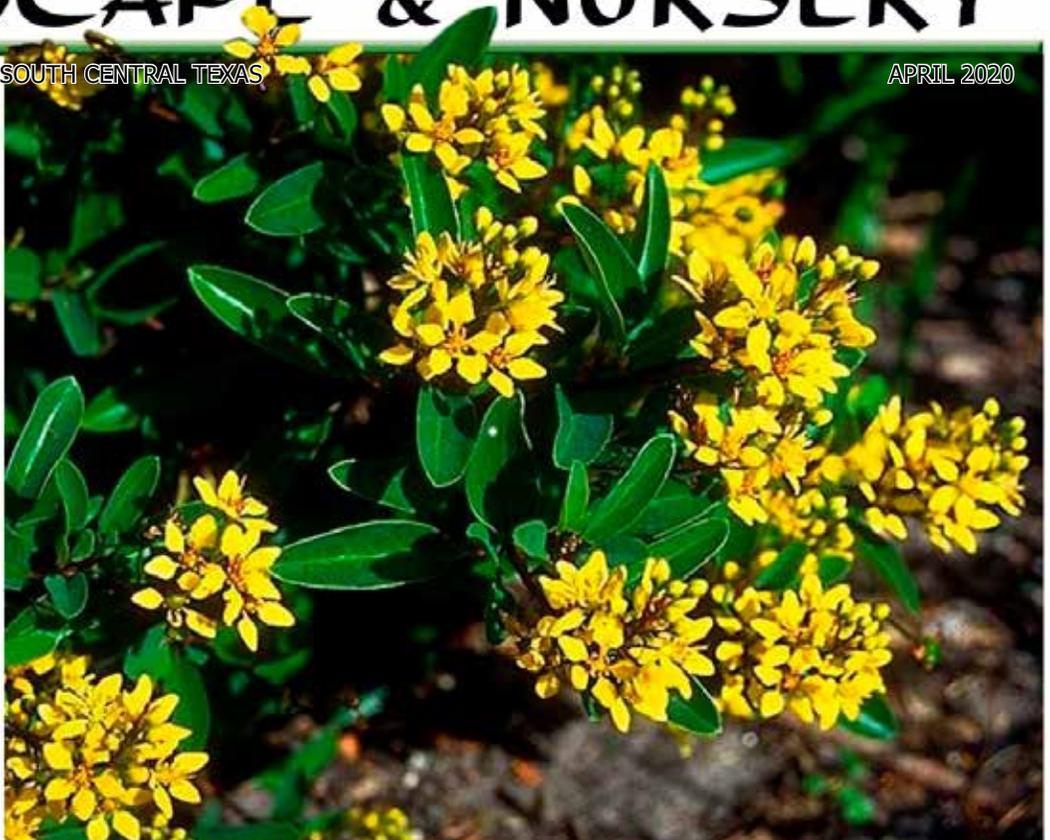
I have a lawn of St. Augustine grass. When is the best time to fertilize my lawn, and the best type of fertilizer for me to use?

St. Augustine should be fertilized twice per year. The first fertilization is done in the spring after you have cut green growing grass twice with a fertilizer that contains slow-release nitrogen and has a 4-1-2 ratio.

We have lots of aphids on our milkweed. Should we try to control them?

Just leave them be. The milkweed should survive fine despite the feeding aphids. Hopefully, lady bugs and other predatory insects will reduce the population.

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.



Thryallis is a yellow upright blooming shrub with the small blooms arranged around the upper part of the stems. It needs very little water to be happy and makes an ideal screen when mixed with accent flowers against purple-flowering shrubs like Duranta or Texas sage. You will find it just as deer proof as esperanza and pollinators visit the blooms for its nectar.

BATTLE OF THE FLOWERS

Top Hot-Weather Plants for Summer Color

South Texas heat can creep in as early as April and exit as late as November. Gardeners here rejoice at having this long gardening season. But if you haven't already learned, not just any plant can withstand a Texas summer. Before you run out and start your spring garden, you will want to consider whether or not you have drought-tolerant plants that can survive the hottest months of the year. There's nothing worse than creating the flowerbed of your dreams, only to walk out a month later to find scorched leaves, wilted stems, and utter sadness across your backyard. You have many colorful plants to choose from. The many plants that are drought tolerant will keep your landscape alive with color throughout the summer color.

(MORE HOT-WEATHER COLOR 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.

MANAGING PESTS

Good Insects/ Bad Insects

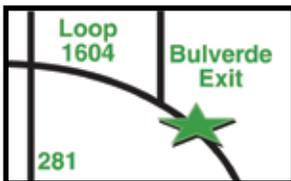
More than 98% of the insects in your landscape are either beneficial or benign. For the remaining two percent, there are ways to manage these pests without harming the rest. A widely-accepted method of dealing with insect pests is called integrated pest management or IPM. Integrated pest management is a way to control pests by using a variety of approaches that don't focus solely on pesticides. They include:

Biological control: using beneficial insects or organisms to control pests and develop a natural pest/predator balance, like releasing ladybugs in your garden.

Mechanical control: physically removing the pest by hand or selecting plants that are insect or disease resistant and/or drought tolerant.

Monitoring: checking your landscape periodically for the presence of unwelcome plants or insects instead of regular treatments, and watering only when the landscape needs it.

Responsible pesticide use: sometimes using a pesticide is necessary to reduce pest populations. When it comes to insecticides, more is not better.



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

Our Writers have the answers: **Dr. Jerry Parsons** is a well renown Horticulture Specialist who is retired from the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in San Antonio; **Dr. Calvin Finch** is the retired Director of Water Conservation and Technology at the Texas A&M University System. The Gardening Newsletter for South Central Texas is edited by Marc Hess at mhess@hctc.coop.

Milberger's Nursery April Features

APRIL is one of our most colorful months.

Trucks arrive *almost every day* with **BLOOMING ANNUALS** and **PERENNIALS** in *every imaginable color*. Milberger's puts different plants **on sale** every week.

APRIL IS THE LAST MONTH to Get Paid to PLANT with CPS Green Shade rebates A TREE \$50 PER TREE

UP TO FIVE TREES REBATES PROGRAM EXPIRES APRIL 30 Just ask one of the **South Texas Tree Experts at Milberger's**



Keeping a green lawn in San Antonio is a lot easier with turf grass from Milberger's.
St Augustine, Bermuda Grass, Zoysia and Buffalo Grass.

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

Follow us call 210-308-8867 or 1-866-308-8867



BATTLE OF THE FLOWERS

Hot-Weather Color

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

The hot days and warm nights leading into summer have begun. For summer color there is a long list of blooming shrubs that prosper in South Texas. They are available in bloom at Milberger's Nursery and can be planted now.



Duranta is a late summer bloomer. The flowers are a lavender/blue or white and are followed by bright yellow berries. Duranta is a showy plant. Queen butterflies use it as a nectar source in the late fall – they often will cover the plant. The berries look like they should be just as attractive to the berry-eating birds such as mockingbirds and cardinals, but if they eat them, it is not until late winter.

“We can have blooms twelve months of the year in South Texas. To accomplish this desirable goal we need to select the right plants. It will be seriously hot for the next four months so your plant selection has to include plants that thrive in the heat.”

~ Dr. Calvin Finch



Firebush has small red tubular blooms and maroon/green foliage. It begins its bloom period a little later than the esperanza and pride of Barbados, but the colorful foliage is showy from the day it emerges for the spring. Grown in the ground, firebush will grow to six or seven feet tall and nearly as wide. I like it best, however, grown in containers of at least five gallons on the patio. It forms a compact three-foot globe covered with the tubular flowers. Use Firebush on a sunny patio to provide nectar for the hummingbirds. In the fall it will be the motivation for many aerial dogfights with the toughest migrating hummingbirds taking possession while they rest on their way south.

A visit to Milberger's Nursery will help you get your spring garden going. You will find healthy plant stock that is selected to thrive throughout our South Central Texas summers. You will also find the good advice and creative suggestions for your specific landscape and gardening needs. To see what is on sale each week, visit our website at www.MilbergerNursery.com.

IN YOUR ROSE GARDEN

Rose Gardening in Containers

From Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M System

Rose gardening in tubs, barrels, planters, or other containers reflect the movable and changeable ways and whims of today's society. Portable rose plantings are not only a decorative addition to any part of the outdoor living area, they are also a perfect way to change the look of the landscape from month to month or year to year.

Roses in pots extend the scope and possibilities of gardening. Wide walkways can be highlighted with tubs of roses spotted here and there. The beauty and fragrance of container roses can grace the steps to your front or back door. Miniature roses can dress up window boxes in the summer, and then be brought indoors in winter to perk up the house.

Patios, decks, and terraces have become favorite spots for entertaining and relaxing on warm summer days and evenings. Add to the pleasure of these moments with planters teeming with the color and fragrance of the world's favorite flower.

In an area used at night, select a white or pastel rose, such as Calwell Pink, Garden Party Shirley's Bouquet. You can ask the rose experts at Milberger's for other suggestions that will thrive in your landscape.



Knock Out® Roses have the most flower power of any shrub on the market. More than other roses. More than hydrangeas. More than anything else. No other flowering shrub blooms as long or as often! With so many great colors to choose from, you'll want to add these easy-to-grow roses to your garden for blooms year after year.

If you have a spot to hang a basket, fill it with miniature roses for a continuous display of summer color, then move the basket indoors for the winter. Select a trailing variety and let the flowers cascade from tree limbs, overhangs, and brackets.

Containers make it possible to grow roses on balconies, terraces, and roof tops high above city streets. The limited gardening space that comes with condos, town houses, and brownstones can be multiplied with portable planters.

All roses need to be grown in full sun. They like to be in soil that is well-amended with organic matter and has good soil drainage. A raised flower bed with additional compost is a great place for a rose. Starting with healthy soil will prevent you from needing to fertilize much later on.

Newly-planted roses will appreciate being watered about twice a week throughout the first growing season, and a two- to three-inch layer of mulch helps quite a bit. Shrub roses can be pruned way back, leaving nothing but four to six-inch stubs. Pruning back in February helps to clean out any deadwood that may be on your plant and prevents disease. Climbing roses should be pruned after they have finished flowering.

LAWNCARE

Know Whatcha Got in Your Yard

By Katie Kuchta, San Antonio Gardening Guru for Texas Home & Garden

Texas heat can be pretty intense and difficult to manage. Proper care for a lush lawn in San Antonio takes a little bit of understanding. First step is to know your turf. There are many types of grass. In order to maintain your lawn properly you should know what type you have. The most popular grass types in the San Antonio area include, St. Augustine, Zoysia, Bermuda, and Buffalo.

“In late April to early May establish an irrigation program for your lawn. You will need an inch a week and its best to split that up into two half inch applications. This watering schedule will continue through summer and into late fall.”

~ Dr. Jerry Parsons



An infestation of insects can leave parts of your lawn looking deteriorated. In the San Antonio area, grass-damaging insects can include, grubs, chinch bugs, snails, and slugs. If you notice this, contact your San Antonio lawncare experts at Milberger's Nursery. To keep your lawn at its best you should be mowing regularly and watering accordingly. Water in the early morning or late evening when the temperature is cooler to help the soil contain the water.

Augustine grass is easily the more common of the bunch. It grows fast, requiring extra maintenance. It loves the heat and it doesn't do well in cooler temperatures. However, it goes dormant after very hard winters. It also tolerates interaction and is fine in the shade

Zoysia grass is a deep lush green and has a thicker turf. Similar to St. Augustine, it maintains well in the heat. It grows slower, requires less mowing, and has a low drought tolerance.

Bermuda grass is a more textured type and is frequently used on golf courses. It works well in the heat and does not tolerate shade, making it very common and native to the south. It grows fast, requiring fertilization upkeep and mowing more frequently.

Buffalo grass is not as appealing with its thinner or tufted blades. It is, however, very low maintenance and requires less irrigation. It is drought tolerant and maintains well in the heat. Similar to Bermuda grass, it does not tolerate the shade and is the best in sunny locations.

Looking for turf grass? Visit Milberger's sample lawn areas. You are invited to examine and walk on these sample lawn areas to help you determine the look and feel of the turf you prefer. We also have information and specification sheets on the different sods. Visit www.milbergernursery.com.

TREES AND SHRUBS

The Best Shade Trees for South Texas

It gets hot down here in South Texas. Planting large shade trees not only adds value to your home, but it can also offer respite from the heat, shade your home to reduce energy costs, provide a home for habitat, and add beauty to your landscape.

When you live in an urban environment, it's even more important to provide shade to homes and surrounding areas – all that extra concrete from roadways, sidewalks and buildings significantly increases temperatures in the city. Shade trees are a great way to cool things off.

While there are many other great shade trees for Texas, here are a few of our Texas-tough favorites:

Cedar Elm is highly drought tolerant once established.

This large, native tree

sports small, deep green leaves in spring that turn to a golden hue in autumn. It grows large, up to 90 feet tall and to offer a wonderful amount of shade.

Shumard Red Oak – This gorgeous Oak has rich green leaves that turn fiery red in fall. It has a

beautiful, open canopy and thick branches. Leave lots of room as it can grow upwards of 120 feet. Enjoy acorns through summer.

Chinese Pistache – These easy-to-maintain trees are not only beautiful, but also pest and heat tolerant.

In fall, leaves turn magnificent, bright orange to red. They grow 40'-50' tall and 30' wide. Perfect for shading a one story house.

Monterrey Oak – Looking for a medium, gorgeous oak that is tolerant to Oak Wilt? Monterrey Oak is for you! It has wonderfully textural, dark to light gray bark and oblong, deep green leaves, except in spring when new leaves are a lovely peach color. Grows to 40'. Great for urban landscapes.



To plant your new shade tree, dig the hole to the same depth as the root ball and two or three times as wide. There is no long-term advantage to adding growth stimulator or organic material to the planting hole. Your tree will be perfectly capable of growing in our native soils and must become established as quickly as possible. Put mulch over the root ball on the surface of the ground to keep sod from encroaching on the tree. Water the tree every time the soil dries under the mulch.

Live Oak - This evergreen tree is an area favorite for many reasons. It has a dense, wide canopy, offering wonderful shade in summer; is very long-lived; has adapted to our clay soil; and has unique branches that over time drape the ground beneath.

APRIL GARDENING TIPS

April Gardens Are Blooming

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

April is usually the best month of the year for snapdragons. Keep them well watered. Resist the urge to cutback the wildflowers, larkspurs, columbine, and other naturalized flowers too early. The seeds must mature if you want a regrowth next year. Roses should be blooming now. Old-fashioned roses benefit by sprays and irrigation, but it is less necessary.

Plant: In the vegetable garden, plant tomatoes and peppers by transplants; and okra, southern peas, and melons by seed. The spinach, Brussel's sprouts, carrots, and beets are still producing. If you planted potatoes, you can begin harvesting them when the flowers appear. There is nothing better than a mess of new potatoes boiled and buttered. The onions will be ready to harvest when the leaves fall over. It will probably occur in May.

April is a good month to plant esperanza, lantana, the blue salvias, and Pride of Barbados for hot weather blooms. They require full sun. Crepe myrtles are available in every form from miniatures to 40' trees.

Plant caladium tubers after mid-month.

Lawncare: If you have been anxious for action on the lawn, this is your month. Our grasses respond to the warm weather, and begin serious growth in April. Fertilize with slow release lawn fertilizer late in the month. Keep the grass mowed to help the lawn grass compete with the winter weeds that want to form seed heads. It is not too late to aerate and top dress the lawn.

Prune: Prune pillar or climbing roses, wisteria, and Carolina jessamine as soon as they have finished flowering. Vigorous landscape shrubs will need frequent pruning.

Fertilize: April is the ideal time to fertilize lawn grasses after the lawn grass has been mowed twice.

Be on the lookout for: Weeds, snails, fireants and aphids.

Odd Jobs: Thinning vegetables is one of the most important follow-up activities in gardening .

For more details 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.

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Planning for a Water Garden?



Milberger's has Pumps for your water garden, Koi, Water Plants and expert advice.



In addition to being a blooming machine, the **Gold Star esperanza** is a top xeriscape selection and is not eaten by deer in most situations. If you are into pollinators, esperanza is a favorite nectar source for hummingbirds and butterflies. It is also the egg-laying site for the gray hairstreak butterfly. It is important that you select the "Gold Star" variety because of its superior blooming characteristics. Look for the name on the label but also look for the plants, even the smaller transplants, to be in bloom.