

# MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

MAY 2020

## PLANT QUESTIONS

**What blooming plants can be used in beds that are open to deer?** Vinca is a summer annual that prospers in the full sun and is not eaten by deer. The perennials salvia, lantana, esperanza, milkweed, thyralis, and iris also seem to be deer-resistant.

**Can I transplant my bougainvillea now? It has been in the ground for awhile.** You should be able to relocate your bougainvillea at this time. It may be necessary to cut back some of the new growth. When you dig up the plant get as big a root ball as you can handle, keeping the soil intact around the roots. The plant should do fine.

**My neighbor's larkspur attracts butterflies and hummingbirds. How do I establish it in my garden?**

Obtain some of the seed from your neighbor's plants and spread it where you want it to grow next fall. If you want the larkspur to naturalize, grow it in full sun in a location where the seed will make contact with the soil.

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.



**Caladiums** play well with other plants in your garden. Don't be afraid to place them in the landscape with established plantings or other annual color plants like begonias — or in containers by themselves.

## GARDENING EXPERTISE

### Got Shade? Consider Caladiums

Few annuals can offer the impacting color impression of caladiums. Their fanciful foliage livens up even the deepest shade with soothing pops of textural interest. They're easy to grow; even one tuber added to a shady container planting will send up a summer's worth of delightfully interesting leaves. We conveniently refer to them as 'bulbs' when our huge selection arrives, but caladiums are planted two ways – from the shaggy, warty little tubers they produce (the most economical means) and as actively growing plants, after a grower has raised them in a greenhouse. Either way, they fill a difficult garden niche with gusto and will make you glad you added them to yours.

(MORE CALADIUMS 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](http://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.

LETTER TO OUR CUSTOMERS

The Spring of COVID-19

We want to thank our customers for continuing to shop at Milberger's during this difficult time. Gardeners are essential to the economy. We appreciate everyone coming in and following social distancing guidelines and using the hand sanitation stations that we have mounted around the nursery. We also have a police officer here everyday during peak hours to help ensure the compliance and safety of Milberger's customers and employees so we can all go home safely to our families at the end of the day.

Lawns and landscapes around town are in remarkably better trim this spring. People respecting calls to shelter-in-place have found more time to tend to their gardens and in doing so they have found a positive way to get through this strange spring. Gardening is a stress reliever as well as a healthy physical activity; the peace and quiet you find when pulling weeds, the physical workout you get when pushing a lawn mower, and the sense of accomplishment when the results show.

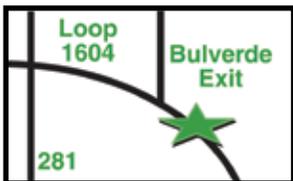
Your garden is a great place to go when you want some time to yourself. Also, your landscape invites full blown family projects with everyone working together. The gardening you do now will not only add beauty to your property but bring a pleasant calmness to your home. That is why Milberger's stays open for you.

Trace Hazlett

Trace Hazlett
Nursery Manager

Stacy Dramis

Stacy Dramis
Administrative Assistant



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

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MAY is One of the most COLORFUL TIMES OF THE YEAR
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Look for weekly specials on BOUGAINVILLEA HIBISCUS OTHER BLOOMING BEAUTIES that thrive in our hot South Texas sun.
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)
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To have your gardening questions answered during show hours ONLY

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## GARDENING EXPERTISE

## Caladiums

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

### When should you plant your caladiums?

Our rule of thumb is Mother's Day—around mid-May. Our soil temperatures have typically warmed sufficiently and they'll hit the ground running. Tubers are best planted in rich soil that's been well-amended with plenty of organic matter. Excellent drainage – never any standing water – is absolutely necessary.



Caladium 'eyes' on the tubers – these are the sprouts — like eyes on a seed potato, that are often removed. Opinions vary as to the effectiveness of 'de-eyeing' your tubers, but most caladium enthusiasts recommend snapping off any sprouting eyes to encourage more eyes to develop when active growth begins, leading to a fuller, bushy plant.

“Late April or early May is caladium planting time. Whether in pots or shaded garden beds, caladiums add a vivid richness to any summer garden. Even though Caladiums like warm temperatures, they prefer cool, moist, well-drained soils in the landscape.”

~ William D. Adams, AgriLIFE Extension Horticulturist

### Caladiums are divided into two broad categories.

At the simplest level, fancy leaf types have a broader leaf and prefer full shade. Some sun early in the morning, or dappled sun filtered through shade trees, is usually okay.

**Strap leaf varieties** have a narrower, more pointed leaf, are usually a bit more compact in stature, and can tolerate more sun. The leaves of your caladiums can be scorching in the heat of the summer if they're exposed to hot afternoon sun. For strap leaf varieties, sunrise until about 1 pm works well for sun exposure.

Another detail to consider with your caladium investment is the way the tubers are sold. Like eggs, caladium bulbs are graded by size; (1) #1 grade bulbs are smaller, with fewer eyes. (2) Jumbo is the next size up, and then (3) Mammoth tubers, the largest grade with the most eyes. It's all matter of your desired investment and instant gratification.

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](http://www.MilbergerNursery.com).

## IN YOUR ROSE GARDEN

# Finding The Right Spot for Your Water Garden

By Larry J. Shoemake, Michael A. Arnold, and William C. Welch with the AgriLife Extension Service

In selecting the site for the garden, consider the plants that you intend to grow in the pond, the soils on the site, how level the grade of the site is, surface drainage of the site, the view of the pond site from the house, the overall fit of the pond in the existing landscape, and anticipated maintenance requirements.

If you want any flowering aquatic plants such as water lilies in your pond you will need to select a site that has full sun for optimum flowering. For the best growth and establishment of all of your water garden plants, a minimum of 5 to 6 hours of direct sunlight each day is recommended.

For the best results and ease of construction, a site with a well-drained surface and subsoil is best. A sandy loam textured soil will prevent soil saturation from floating the pond liner. If the area has good surface drainage there will be fewer problems with runoff of chemical pesticides and fertilizers into the pond from the surrounding land. The more level the site the less work in constructing the pond.



Locate your water feature where the water can reflect the beauty of the surrounding landscape. A water garden should be located: in full sun, or as much as is available; at the most level site available with easy access to water and electricity and where it can be appropriately viewed from the house.

When deciding where to place the pond, consider the place from which you will most often view it. If this is a deck or patio, be sure that this view is not obstructed by hedges or other tall landscape features. Remember that the pond is in the ground and even tall grass or ground covers can completely obscure the view.

Once the exposure, soils, drainage, and views have been worked out, consider how the pond will fit into your existing landscape. Look out for nearby tree roots from shallow rooted plants (such as elms and willows) or trees that do not tolerate root disturbances (like post oaks). Remember that leaves, fruit or twigs may present a maintenance problem. The

site of the pond should facilitate its management. If the pond is sited too close for its size to a wall or other obstructions, this could cause a problem reaching all of the pond's surface for cleaning and removal of dead leaves.

Thanks to modern plastics, the building of beautiful water gardens have become a weekend job with only a minimum of easily learned skills.

## LAWNCARE

# Healthy, Green and Not Too Much Water

By Mark Peterson, Conservation Project Coordinator for San Antonio Water System

Follow these simple rules and you should have a healthy green lawn that uses minimal water.

## Select the correct grass type.

Abandon the idea that you can have any grass species you want. The amount of sunlight determines your species. Ten hours or more of direct sunlight dictates Bermuda grass. Less than ten hours and you're limited to zoysia and St. Augustine. If you have less than five hours of direct sunlight, then forget about a lawn. It's not going to happen, period.

**Mow weekly.** Select one day a week as your mowing day and stick to it. Mowing weekly improves grass health and reduces weeds. Always mow at a single

“Winter weeds can be an issue now; dandelions, rescue grass, winter rye, bedstraw, henbit, and thistles. Any winter weeds will stress your lawn. Mowing them is effective but pulling them by hand is very effective if you have the time. It can be satisfying because most of the winter weeds are easy to pull. It is also good exercise.” ~ Dr. Calvin Finch

height — 2.5 inches for St. Augustine, 2 inches for Zoysia and 1 ½ inches for Bermuda grass. I personally just adhere to a single height of 2 inches.

**Compost and aerate.** Second to mowing, composting and aeration are the most important activities you can do for your lawn. Of the two, composting should be done annually, once or twice a year in early spring and fall. Aeration can be done annually or every other year. Both increase the soil's ability to absorb water and oxygen, each crucial for strong root development.

## Leave the clippings on the lawn.

Grass is a “heavy feeder,” meaning it requires more nutrients than other plants. Leaving the clippings and adding compost in spring and fall eliminates the need for additional fertilizer most of the time.

By following these guidelines you can dramatically reduce water use to once a week, and most of the time to no more than twice a month.



Mow high and mow often. If you can't get around to it you can hire it to be done. This photo is from [www.uglystickturnarounds.com](http://www.uglystickturnarounds.com) who takes care of lawn and gardens.

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](http://www.milbergernursery.com).

## TREES AND SHRUBS

# Growing Citrus Trees in Containers

By Kathy Finigan, My Productive Backyard

Citrus trees are one of those plants that I think are a must for your landscape. They have beautiful dark green foliage all year, sensuously perfumed flowers at various times of the year and then produce fabulously colorful edible fruit.

They really are the most perfect garden specimen. Citrus grow well in containers which gives you the ability to move them to different places in your landscape or your deck. Potted up citrus can be moved to protected areas to avoid freezes.

Like all other plants, citrus trees grown in containers need more watering than in-ground plants because of their restricted root run and although citrus like a hot and sunny position, they also require good soil moisture levels to stay healthy and produce well.

You will need to feed your potted citrus; they are prone to micro nutrient deficiencies, which is exacerbated by the constant watering, so you need to ensure that you apply a

fertilizer with a variety of trace elements especially iron manganese and zinc. For citrus in containers I like to apply the rule "A little often." In spring and early autumn I apply slow-release organic pellets and then supplement this with regular liquid feeds from early spring through late autumn.

The type of liquid feed I use is dependent on the growth stage of the plant.

When the plant is young, I use a high nitrogen ratio fertilizer to encourage plenty of growth which will develop into a strong branch structure.

High nitrogen ratio fertilizers also discourage flower and fruiting which is necessary until the tree is large and strong enough to hold full sized fruit.

Unless you are espaliering or standardizing your citrus trees they will require very little pruning.

All I do is Tip Pruning in spring to encourage bushiness. Prune to shape by removing wayward growth. Remove any dead or diseased wood.



Attractive and productive, no other plant has a more pleasing perfume than the fresh blossom fragrance of citrus. Due to fragrant flowers, tasty fruit and beautiful glossy, evergreen foliage, citrus trees make fantastic patio, garage-in-winter plant.

## MAY GARDENING TIPS

# Planting Before the Summer's Heat

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

**Plant:** Fruit set of many vegetables are sensitive to high temperatures, so plant okra, Southern peas, peanuts, sweet corn, watermelons, cucumbers, squash, cantaloupes and eggplant during the first part of May for best results. High temperatures, both day and night, interfere with pollination and fruit set in many vegetables. Caladiums prefer a loose, well-drained soil with plenty of organic matter.

Plant sun-loving, heat tolerant annual flowers such as portulaca, purslane, copper plants, lantanas, and ornamental peppers.

**Prune** pillar or climbing roses as soon as they have finished their major bloom to allow time for the development of new canes for next spring's blooms. Prune storm-damaged tree branches immediately after damage occurs.

**Fertilize:** If you have not applied fertilizer to the lawn, May is a good month to fertilize lawn grasses after the lawn grass has been mowed twice. Slow release fertilizers are best because they feed throughout the growing season and do not leach (wash) into the ground.

**Odd Jobs:** After spring bulbs have finished flowering, wait until the foliage turns brown before cutting it off. Food is being manufactured and stored for next year's blooms. Mulch plants to reduce watering requirements, suppress weed growth and minimize soil temperature changes. Peach fruit should be thinned to six to eight inches apart along the fruiting branches which generally leaves about 600 fruit per mature tree; apples and pears should be thinned to one fruit per spur or cluster.

**On the Lookout:** To encourage more rapid re-blooming, pinch off old flowers on bedding plants after their first flower cycle is completed. Roses may encounter insect problems. Watch for aphids on tender new growth, thrips on flowers and cucumber beetles on foliage. Beetles are especially a problem if a vegetable garden is nearby. Fear not, this is the normal season of leaf shed for photinias, gardenias, ligustrums, pittosporums and magnolias.

For more details and complete Gardening Tips for this month visit [www.milbergernursery.com](http://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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**Spicy Jatropha** is a large multiple stemmed tropical shrub or small tree with dark glossy green lobed leaves and clusters of lipstick red to pink flowers held above the foliage. Flowering occurs throughout the summer and this species is very drought tolerant. Spicy Jatropha is an outstanding tropical annual for use in full sun to partly shady locations and that is why it is a Texas Superstar™.