

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

AUGUST 2020

PLANT QUESTIONS

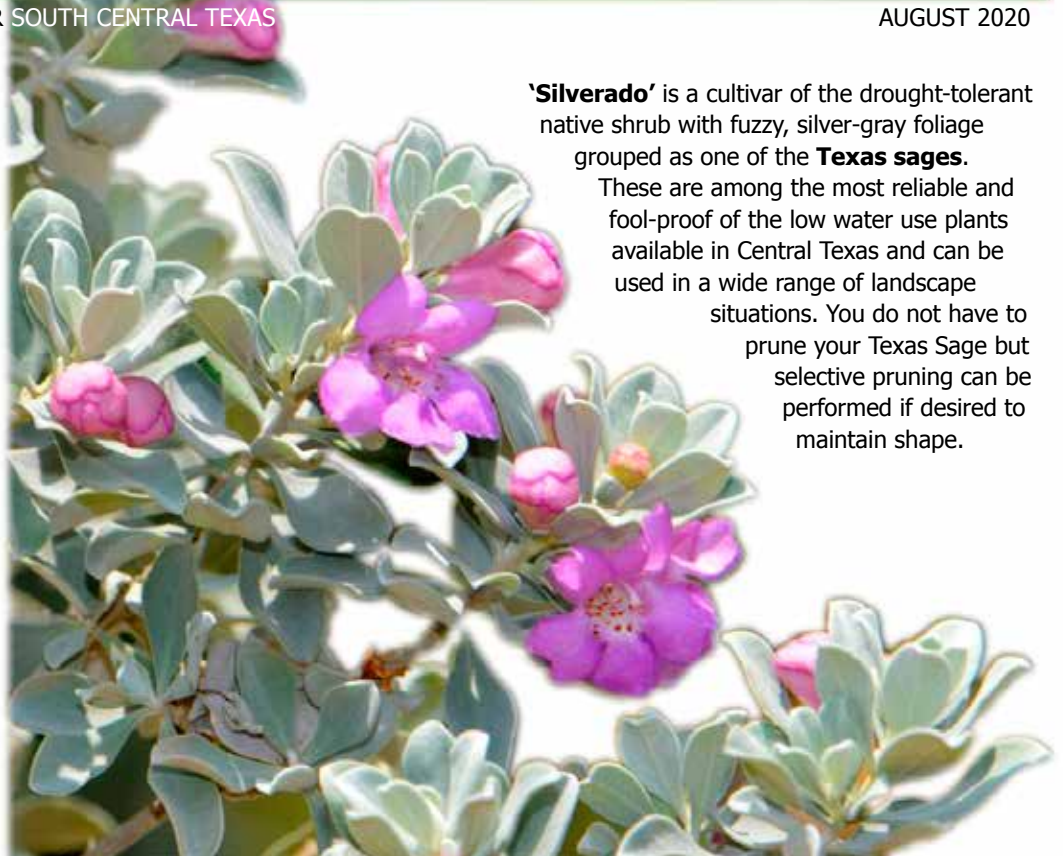
Are pentas annuals or perennials? We planted pentas next to lantana under a live oak last year. The lantana are now blooming, but the pentas have not come back.

Pentas are usually annuals; if we have a mild winter, they can be root-hardy perennials.

How can I keep my soaker hose from wasting water? Soaker hoses are pressure dependent so to keep them from wasting water only turn on the spigot a quarter of a turn.

Is it too early to plant fall tomatoes? Mid-August is a good time to get your tomato transplants in the ground. This will allow plenty of time before first frost in south Texas. You may want to shade the transplants from the summer sun and be sure to select the varieties that are recommended for the fall garden.

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.



'Silverado' is a cultivar of the drought-tolerant native shrub with fuzzy, silver-gray foliage grouped as one of the **Texas sages**.

These are among the most reliable and fool-proof of the low water use plants available in Central Texas and can be used in a wide range of landscape situations. You do not have to prune your Texas Sage but selective pruning can be performed if desired to maintain shape.

SUMMER LANDSCAPE OPTIONS

Texas Sages

By Bonnie L. Grant, Certified Urban Agriculturist

Texas sage is a classic in the American Southwest. It is also known as **Texas Ranger**, **cenizo**, and **silverleaf**. Blooming starts in spring and occurs in bursts every four to six weeks up until fall in most regions. As a native plant, it provides cover for wild animals and birds and helps stabilize loose desert soils. This adaptable plant is drought tolerant and useful in areas with high heat and cold desert temperatures. It is also a landscape surprise that produces profuse lavender flowers. The plant additionally has deer resistance and thrives in poor soil. Texas sage can achieve six feet in height with a similar spread. With grayish-green woolly leaves, the new wood on the plant produces copious lavender purple, magenta or white flowers. These have three fuzzy petals and a fused set below with conspicuous white anthers.

(MORE TEXAS SAGE 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.

EFFECTIVE SUMMER WATERING

Make Sure Your Sprinklers Sprinkle

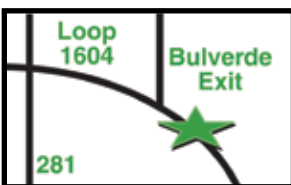
Have you noticed a ghostly mist lingering over your landscape? It's the in-ground sprinklers screaming they are under pressure. The problem is your sprinklers are watering the air instead of your actual landscape.

You'd think higher pressure would be better. But unfortunately, pushing more water through a pinhole doesn't necessarily result in better coverage. It results in mist, instead of large drops that reach the ground. This ends up degrading irrigation efficiency, despite the increase in volume. In addition to the telltale fog and wind drift, it leaves behind visible dry spots meaning longer run times and even more water waste.

One of the simplest fixes for high pressure is regulating it at the heads by replacing every single internal body on an entire irrigation zone. The result is better distribution uniformity and sometimes considerable water savings.

Pressure-regulated sprinkler heads are typically labeled with "PRS" on the top collar. We maintain a list of qualifying products and a licensed irrigator will be familiar with the correct equipment, especially in cases of very high pressure which call for specific products.

A water saving tip from Brad Wier, SAWS Conservation Consultant



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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Milberger's Nursery August Features

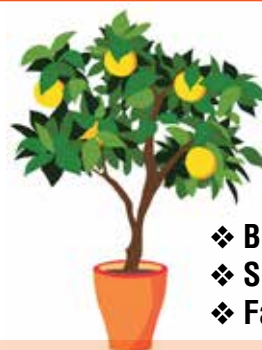


It isn't easy to become a

Texas Superstar™

Every plant earning the **Texas Superstar** designation undergoes years of extensive field trials. They must prove to be **SUPERIOR PERFORMING PLANTS** under **Texas** growing conditions. You can find selected varieties **on sale at Milberger's.**

THIS MONTH look for fresh shipments of your favorite varieties including **GOLD STAR ESPERANZA, NEW GOLD LANTANA, FIREBUSH, BLUE PLUMBAGO, DWARF MEXICAN PETUNIA** and more.



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- ❖ Sensuously perfumed flowers
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Planning for a Water Garden?

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To have your gardening questions answered during show hours ONLY

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SUMMER LANDSCAPE OPTIONS

Texas Sage

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Plants are easy to propagate either through seed or softwood cuttings. In most regions, the leaves are evergreen but occasionally the plant may be deciduous. Texas sage information wouldn't be complete without a list of its other common names. One of the more interesting is barometer shrub, as it blooms after monsoon rains. Blooming starts in spring and occurs in bursts every four to six weeks up until fall in most regions.

“Don't try to trick Texas sage into blooming by watering heavily—it won't work. But it will bloom naturally after a good rain. The blooms will fall after a week or two but the silver gray-green leaves stay year-round. The older it gets, the more intensely it blooms. Bees really like this plant when it's in bloom.”

~ Texas SmartScape

Growing Texas sage is quite easy in well-drained soil. It is not a nutrient hog and can survive in soils where other plants will fail, although it prefers

alkaline soil. In the wild, it grows on rocky slopes and calcareous soils. The plant is known to be drought and heat tolerant and performs best in full sun.

Shearing these plants is common, although the best natural appearance and production of flowers will occur if you prune in early spring. Initially, when growing Texas sage, young plants should be given supplemental irrigation.

Most pests steer clear of this native plant and it has few disease issues. One thing that will cause it trauma is boggy soil that doesn't drain. Texas sage care is minimal and it is an excellent plant for a novice.



Lowrey's Legacy Cenizo is sometimes called "Lynn's Ever-blooming" Texas sage, because of the reliable and continuous profusion of flowers displayed throughout much of the year. This cultivar distinguishes itself from other Texas sages because it is not only extremely colorful, but it cycles in and out of bloom much better than others. Lowrey's Legacy Cenizo is a Texas Superstar™ plant.

To spice up your summer landscape with dramatic summer color visit our nursery where you will find Texas SuperStars™ plants that will thrive in your summer landscape. Talk to the South Central Texas gardening experts at the nursery or take a look at our web site www.milbergenursery.com to find which plants are on sale this week.

PREPARING FOR TEXAS' "SECOND SPRING"

Cutback Now To Ensure Fall Blooms

By Dr Jerry Parsons, Bexar County Horticulture Specialist

Blooms may last longer in climates that are cooler than ours, but cooler climates do not have the potential for two spectacular bloom periods each year like we do in South Texas. We expect our flowering perennials to bloom well in the spring but we overlook the best possible season for bloom—fall. Plants do not flower to make us happy; they are flowering to produce seed and complete the reproductive stage of their life cycle. If the old flower stalks are cut off and not allowed to mature seeds, the plant will attempt to make more seeds. Then we get to enjoy another bloom cycle.

Hot weather greatly shortens the life and beauty of blooms. During the spring bloom season, Texas weather makes the transition from winter to summer—Texas temperatures rapidly change from frosty to scorchy. The fall weather conditions, in comparison, are ideal for blooms. Usually the extremely hot weather ends in September and the cooler temperatures, especially at night, signal

that the South Central Texas “second spring” has begun. These cooler temperatures stimulate plant growth and intensify the color and duration of the blooms. Many people do not prepare their plants for this second spring so they miss really the most spectacular bloom period.

August is the time to act. Shrubs that bloom after June usually do so from buds that are formed on shoots that grow the same year. These shrubs should be pruned in late winter to promote vigorous shoot-growth in spring. Examples of shrubs that bloom on current season’s growth include: Vitex, Butterfly Bush, and Hibiscus. Fall-blooming perennials, such as Salvia, Mexican Marigold Mint and Chrysanthemum should have been pruned periodically during the summer to keep them compact—if you didn’t do that pruning, cut them back by one-third as soon as possible. Perennial or Summer Phlox should be cut to the ground and allowed to resprout with new stems.



All of the **Esperanzas** and especially 'Gold Star' should also be cut back. You can cut large plants of 'Gold Star' Esperanza in August and have them blooming even more profusely as a multi-trunked perennial in October. The hotter the temperature when it is growing back, the faster it grows. Remember, after the cutback and/or seed pod removal, water and fertilize your Esperanzas.



To cut back your **Crape Myrtles** remove as many seed pods as possible by cutting off the entire stalks on which the pods are borne. This gets dozens of seed pods at a time rather than trying to remove them pod-by-pod. Cut the entire stalk of seed balls. Flower buds can be distinguished from seed balls since seed balls are hard and flower buds are soft.

Fall’s milder temperatures bring out the best flavors in home vegetable gardens. Healthy transplants are the key to a successful fall garden in South Texas.

MOWING YOUR LAWN

The Long and Short of Lawncare

By Brad Wier, SAWS Conservation Consultant

It's not often you hear that mowing your grass can save water. So here's the long and short of mowing, blade height and watering.

Frequency: With warm soil temperatures and recent rains, grass grows quickly in early summer — much more quickly than in winter. As a rule of thumb during the South Texas growing season, keep Bermuda grass one inch high, zoysia a bit longer at two inches and St. Augustine grass at three inches. St. Augustine, always a little thirstier than the others, uses that extra height to support deeper roots. Mowing height doesn't make that much difference to Bermuda grass beyond appearance, but recent studies suggest that, unlike Bermuda grass and fine-blade zoysia, 'Emerald' zoysia's water requirements actually increased with blade height.

“As a rule of thumb, it's best to wait until the surface of the soil is dry to the touch before applying more water.”

Blade height: When the grass is growing quickly — especially after May and June rains — raising the blades is a mechanism to keep it dense without having to increase the mowing frequency. Here's why: it's important when mowing not to cut off more than 30 percent of the leaf surface at any one time. Otherwise the turf, having lost so much of its photosynthesizing surface area, will spend more time and effort trying to rebuild its leaves. If your St. Augustine has grown to 5 inches and you cut it down to 2 inches (60 percent), prepare for weeds to begin to penetrate and spread in the newly exposed

areas around the soil surface. Remember, though, if you raise the blades too high, the grass can start growing really, really long, reaching for light — alarming your neighbors, and resulting in even more damage and weed penetration the next time it's cut. Don't overdo it when raising the blades; one or two notches should be sufficient. Depending on the mower, there's often no better way to tell than just measuring the grass blade after cutting.



How often you mow and how short you cut the grass can determine how much water you save — or waste. Raising the lawnmower blades means the grass needs less water. For best results mow high and mow frequently.

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

Large Shrubs for Area Landscapes

By Dr. Calvin Finch

Landscapes are better balanced and make better habitats for the birds if they not only include tall shade trees and groundcovers, but everything in between, including perennials, small and large shrubs and small trees.

A tough old-fashioned rose, such as the **butterfly rose**, (aka mutabilis) is a great choice to be a transition plant in a landscape. Butterfly rose qualifies as a xeriscape plant because it will survive without any supplemental irrigation. Despite blooming eight to nine months of the year, butterfly rose is not bothered by diseases or insects. It will grow to fill a space 10 feet tall at 15 feet in diameter if planted in full sun. The thorns make it more desirable as a wildlife plant, but do make it hard to prune or shape. Select butterfly rose if you have enough space to let it grow to full size and glory.

Primrose jasmine is an evergreen

shrub with a weeping shape. The foliage is very dark green. It shows off the glossy yellow flowers that appear in later winter. Primrose jasmine does not seem to have any insect or disease pests. Even the deer do not eat it. It grows to eight feet around and 8ft high. It can be planted in full sun or in partial shade, such as under deciduous trees.

Pyracantha is one of my favorite plants to fill the role of large shrub in the landscape. Related to apples, they produce a crop of red or orange berries every winter that are very showy until the birds eat them in late winter. Pyracantha makes an airy shrub 10 feet wide and 20 feet tall if left on its own, but it can also be pruned to any shape to suit the landscape. Birds love to build nests in its thorny branches.

In addition to the thorns that turn off some gardeners, pyracantha is a non-native plant that

some folks have labeled as invasive.

Standard yaupon holly has many of the same characteristics of pyracantha. It has berries for the birds, grows to the same dimensions, can be pruned to any size or shape, and is drought-tolerant.

However,

standard yaupon does not have thorns, is not eaten by deer, has more shade tolerance than pyracantha and is native to Texas.

Whichever large shrubs you select they can be planted now and will contribute to a balanced landscape.



Newly planted shrubs should be watered frequently until they are well rooted, which may take two growing seasons. Once established, plants should be watered less frequently so they will develop deep roots and be better able to withstand drought.

AUGUST GARDENING TIPS

Clear Out Your Garden and Prepare for Fall

by Dr. Jerry Parsons

What you do in your garden and landscape in August will make a big difference in how things come up in the fall. When you are out there working, be sure to drink plenty of water, use sunscreen, and work in the gardens early in the morning or late in the evening. Take plenty of breaks and don't get overheated. Just relax and enjoy the fruits of your labor.

Plant: For summer color and fall beauty, plant Texas' tough annuals and heat-loving tropicals in beds and containers. To brighten a landscape in the heat of the summer, plant lantana, bougainvillea, mandevilla vine, allamanda, hibiscus, salvia, periwinkle, marigold, zinnia, portulaca, purslane, copper plant, and bush morning glory. Start over in the vegetable garden. The "Valley Cat" tomato can be used but is not technically a heat-setting variety so some late cold protection may be required to produce vine-ripened fruit if unusual weather conditions occur. Other popular vegetable crops to plant in August for fall production are beans, sweet corn, cucumber, eggplant, lima beans, black-eye peas, peppers, and squash. A complete listing of what to plant for fall and when to plant it can be found on the website: PlantAnswers.com.

Lawncare: Remember when laying new sod, roll the turf to insure good soil-root contact and water thoroughly on a daily basis until the grass is established.

Trees: Windmill palm, Mexican fan palm and Sabal palm are especially well adapted to this area, and now is a good time to plant them. Palms require warm soil to establish their root systems.

On the Lookout: Insects to watch for include white flies, spider mites, webworms, tent caterpillars, aphids and grasshoppers. Symptoms of chinch bug damage can appear anytime in healthy St. Augustine lawns. Trees and shrubs may experience some leaf drop this time of year, caused by summer's heat and dry weather stress. There is nothing which can be done except mulch and hope for cooler weather.

Odd Jobs: Mulch throughout your landscape and gardens to reduce water needs and eliminate weeding. Water (soak) thoroughly rather than applying frequent light sprinklings.

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

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Planning for a Water Garden?



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



The Mexican Bird of Paradise (also The Pride of Barbados) stands out as a large tropical shrub which can be pruned back as a great addition to large patios or decks, low-maintenance medians, and compact urban lots. Known for its electric orange blooms and finely textured dark green foliage it stands out in any landscape or garden. Extremely heat and drought tolerant once established. It attracts hummingbirds and butterflies. It thrives in our area which is why it is a Texas SuperStar™.