

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

FEBRUARY 2021

PLANT QUESTIONS

I'm looking for a flowering plant that ducks won't eat. I planted begonias last year but the neighborhood ducks ate them the next day. I'll bet they won't eat vinca (periwinkle) if the location receives enough sunlight to make them bloom.

What is the trick to growing large onions?

Onions do best in full sun, but the key is to keep them well fertilized. Prepare the bed with 10 cups of "winterizer" (18-6-12) or slow-release (19-5-9) lawn fertilizer per 100 sq. ft. of bed. Every three weeks side dress the row with another half cup of the fertilizer through April.

Does it make sense to plant snapdragons or stocks this late in the winter?

Yes. Try to plant them by February. Your winter annuals including snapdragons, dianthus, stocks, sweet peas, and calendula will bloom into May in most years.

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.



Roses that are grown in containers can be positioned in areas where the sun is best, even if it is impossible to make a conventional rose bed at that spot. You can easily move roses to new locations at any time of year.

ROSE GARDENING OPTIONS

Container Roses on a Whim

You don't have to have a yard, ideal soil, or perfect drainage to raise roses. All you need is a sunny location and enough room for a large container. Transform a deck, terrace, patio, or balcony into a fragrant retreat with pots glowing with color. Movable roses should be the shorter-growing varieties of the modern-day hybrid roses because they are more compact and have great flourishes of flowers throughout the summer. Good selections are New Year, Showbiz, Impatient, Intrigue, Sun Flare, Mon Cheri, Marina, Charisma, First Edition, Cathedral, Bahia, Electron, Redgold, Gene Boerner, Angel Face, Europeana, Garden Party, Sarabande, or Ivory Fashion.

(MORE CONTAINER ROSES 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.

COMING OUT OF THE WINTER

Perk Up With Primula

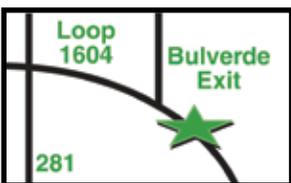
By Dr. Calvin Finch

If you want to perk up your freeze-killed landscape you still have lots of options. Many cold weather annuals will bloom from now until the end of April.

A plant that is really showy in winter is the primula—also called primrose. You can find the two versions of this cold-weather bloomer at Milberger’s Nursery. The **Acaulis** have always been a favorite because their bloom colors are unbelievably intense, no subtlety here. Reds, yellow, white and blue. Do you remember the clowns in the circus with their painted faces? Those are the colors of “Acaulis” primula blooms. The foliage is also attractive. The leaves are dark green and crinkly. This variety of primula grows just like pansies with the leaves and blooms close to the ground.

Another primula variety to consider is **Obonica**. It is relatively tall at eight to ten inches and is topped by a cluster of blooms in several pastel colors including blue, pink and white. I am using Obonica to replace impatiens in containers killed by the freezes this winter. They receive shade most of the day but receive direct sun for about two hours. They do not need direct sun but can tolerate some.

Primula remain blooming as long as temperatures remain cool. A key factor in primula care is to protect the plants from pill bugs, slugs and snails. Slug bait works well. My plants in large containers have not been bothered this year, but when temperatures stay mild for a while, the pests will find them.



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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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
February Features

SUPER BOWL WEEKEND

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Planning for a Water Garden?
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ROSE GARDENING OPTIONS

Container Roses

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

What kind of container?

Containers come in clay, stone, plastic, fiberglass, foam resin and wood. They can vary from a minimum of twelve inches in diameter all the way up to a whiskey barrel. The amount of soil the pot will hold is critical. This is determined by both the diameter and the height of the pot. Some people avoid black plastic pots on the theory that hot black plastic will cook the roots of the roses. However, many rosarians have successfully grown roses in the same black plastic pots that the roses come in from the nursery. Still, clay, stone and decorative plastic pots usually look better than black ones. Wood can also look attractive, but wood usually rots after a couple of years of use.

Do not use indoor potting mix for containerized roses. Potting mix is too porous for use outside, and



“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.”

~ Texas AgriLife Extension Service,
Texas A&M System

the roots will dry out and your roses will die. Most commercial rose soils are great for containerized roses, as they have a blend of ingredients that keeps roses from becoming too dry or too wet. Texas AgriLife Extension Service has had good results on containerized plants by adding 25% expanded shale to the rose soil mix. The easiest way to do that is to place three scoops of rose soil mix into a bucket, then one scoop of expanded shale. Mix. Continue alternating these doses until the bucket is full. Use this amended mix as needed in your containers.

Roses in containers will need more water than the same roses in the ground. Not only are all sides of the container subject to drying sun and winds, there is also no ground water to fall back on. Watch your planters carefully and water whenever the growing medium starts to dry out. Water until moisture runs from the bottom of the container. A layer of mulch on top of the planter will help keep the roots of the roses moist and cool.

All roses need at least six hours of sun each day. Ideally, place movable roses where they receive morning sun and some protection from the midday heat. Also, try to keep them out of drying winds. If the plants receive uneven sun and start growing in one direction to reach the light, rotate them often to keep their growth straight.

WATER GARDENING

Planning for Your Water Garden

By D. Hairlloyde, The Occasional Gardener

A water garden can be an elaborate planting in and around a pond, or something simple in a watertight container. A water garden opens up a new world of planting and landscaping possibilities. You can start small, with a hollowed-out stone that catches rainwater, a watertight, patio-sized container or jump right in with an in-ground pond with water lilies, fish and a fountain.

Before building your water garden, do a little homework to decide what size and design is best for you. A natural-looking water garden should have sloped sides with planting terraces that step down toward the deepest area of the pond. This allows you to plant a diversity of plant material and create different habitats. In northern areas, a depth of 24 to 36 inches is usually necessary to ensure that the pond will not freeze solid during the winter.

- 🌿 Place your pond in a location that receives at least 5 hours of sunlight a day.
- 🌿 Avoid low spots or areas that accumulate runoff.
- 🌿 Don't put the garden under large trees.
- 🌿 Provide easy access to electrical power and fresh water.

For something on a smaller, more manageable scale, consider a patio water garden. Many water plants can be grown in a tub of water on your deck, and you can even add fish or a fountain. Use an ordinary whiskey barrel lined with plastic, or purchase a plastic tub that is specially designed for

a water garden. Place your container where it will receive at least six hours of sun a day for best plant growth and flowering.



Water gardens transform an outdoor living space into a beautiful paradise where you can relax, unwind, and enjoy quality time with family and friends. Water features become the focal point of any garden with their melodious tunes and natural ability to attract a variety of birds and butterflies.

Aquatic Plants:

Water gardens can include a combination of floating plants, submerged plants and edge plants.

- 🌿 Hardy water lilies float on the surface of the water and will bloom from late spring until frost and will survive the winter in Texas.
- 🌿 Tropical water lilies look similar to the hardy varieties, but

the blooms are larger and held several inches above the water.

- 🌿 Lotuses bloom just above the water surface and leave behind large, distinctive seedpods.
- 🌿 Submerged plants spend their entire lives growing beneath the surface of the water. They are usually called oxygenators.
- 🌿 Edge plants grow in the moist soil next to the pond, providing shelter for fish, frogs and other plant life.

Adding Fish: Fish can be a fun addition to a water garden and help keep the mosquito population in check. Plus, their wastes are a good source of nutrients for plants. It's important to balance the number and size of the fish with the size of the water garden. Too many fish means too many nutrients and that leads to algae blooms. Fish require plenty of oxygen.

TEXAS NATIVES

The Agarita is in Bloom!

By Seth Patterson, Conservation Consultant for San Antonio Water System

Hiking along a high oak rimmed bluff on a cool, crisp February morning, I caught scent of something deliciously sweet. My mind immediately conjured the image of a warm, honey-drizzled sopapilla as I whipped around to seek out the source of this decadent aroma.

Nearby, covered in spectacular yellow blossoms, was a bushy shrub with formidable silvery-green foliage. Stepping next to it, and careful to avoid the thorny leaves, I inhaled deeply and let the honey-scented flowers envelop me. The agarita was in bloom!

As a native species that is highly drought-resilient and suited for our soil types, as well as immensely attractive and wonderful for pollinators and fruit foragers alike, it surprises me to see so few agarita plants in residential landscapes.



Agarita is a more-or-less rounded shrub that normally gets three or four feet high, but can grow a few feet taller. It has tough compound leaves with three leaflets, each of which has several sharp points. The sticky evergreen foliage makes this a good substitute for the red-berried Burford holly, an exotic so commonly planted in local landscapes.

“The earliest harbingers of spring are agarita bushes. They are the first shrubs to bloom, with tiny bright-yellow flowers. Soon after that, they are putting on small round fruit that by early summer have gradually turned from green to red. Those berries make great jelly.”

~ Bill Ward, Native Plant Society of Texas

Perhaps it's the prickly leaves, but they're actually an asset when trying to avoid the insistent munching of our urban deer populations. Plus, they provide ideal shelter and protection for many birds and other small animals. Native Americans favored agarita for its medicinal properties, sweet red berries, and even the yellow dye made from its roots.

Many people, I among them, think that agarita berries make the best jelly in Texas. Gathering enough of the quarter-inch berries from among the sharp-pointed leaves is a little discouraging. Today, agarita jelly, made from the berries, is a delicious staple of the Hill Country.

Agarita is an evergreen holly-like shrub that looks good all year in a variety of landscape settings. Agarita is highly drought-tolerant. You will find it on dry flats and slopes in much of the western two-thirds of Texas as well as in New Mexico, Arizona, and northeastern Mexico. It is one of the most common bushes in the Hill Country, and so it usually does just fine in the dry calcareous soils of this area.

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 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 web site at milbergernursery.com.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Start Thinking About Shade



You may not be thinking about it in February but Texas summers are hot. This is the time to consider adding shade to your landscape. 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. Shade trees that are in containers or burlap bags can be planted at any time throughout the year if they are properly cared for. But the best time to plant deciduous trees is when they are dormant – late-fall to early spring.

When picking out a tree make sure the tree has a strong, single stem. Co-dominant stems create weak points for the tree. The junction point makes them more susceptible to failure or damage from gravity or wind events and allows moisture to gather, which can promote insects and diseases.

Inspect the roots. Make sure the root system appears healthy with numerous small, whitish roots. Roots that are brown throughout are exhibiting signs of inadequate water and other potential problems. Some root girdling can be expected and,

when planting, move or adjust the roots to where they point straight away from the base of the tree.

After determining where you want the shade, dig a hole that is at least twice the width of a shade tree's pot. The hole should be deep enough for the root collar – a distinct line where the tree's roots and stem meet – to be level with the ground. The tree's root collar should be no more than an inch below the soil when planted, but you also don't want roots to be exposed to the open air.

Mulch can be used on the surface, but only a thin layer to minimize weeds and the need to use string trimmers near the base of the tree.

Water with a soaker hose just beyond the root ball to begin. At each watering, run the soaker hose until moisture reaches 10-15 inches into the soil. No water should run off the soil. If it does then your soaker hose is on too high. Newly planted trees, with their small root system, will need watering every three to four days for the first summer. Sandy soils may need more frequent watering than loamy or clay soils.

FEBRUARY GARDENING TIPS

Get Ready for Spring Planting

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

February is the month to begin spring gardens and is the ideal month to prepare your rose beds; be sure to check all the antique and modern roses as they are freshly stocked at Milberger's from now through April.

Plant: Select ornamentals and trees for adaptability, permanence and durability, not just for fast growth. February is the month to begin spring gardens with crops such as asparagus, beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower (transplants only), Swiss chard, collards, kohlrabi, lettuce (leafy), mustard, onion plants, Irish potatoes, radish, spinach and turnip. A good method of getting the jump on the normal spring season is to grow portable transplants of recommended tomato and pepper varieties.

Prune: Finish the pruning you started in January. Do any major fruit or ornamental tree and shrub pruning. Spring pruning of roses in South Central Texas is normally done between the third week of February and the first week of March.

Lawncare: Mid-February to Mid-March is the time to apply pre-emergent herbicides. Don't apply fertilizer to your lawn until you have mowed it two times.

On the Lookout: Wait for a time period which will ensure temperatures above freezing for at least 48 hours to apply a dormant oil spray to euonymus, hollies, oaks, pines, pecans, and fruit trees which are prone to scale.

Odd Jobs: If you want to treat for ball moss, February is the ideal month. Ball moss does not kill trees. Divide summer and fall-blooming perennials, including cannas, mallows, fall asters, mums, coneflowers, lythrum and perennial salvias before growth begins.

Take advantage of CPS's Green Shade Rebate to save \$50 per shade tree for qualifying customers. Visit our web site www.milbergernursery.com for a list of recommended Small Trees. You can also download information sheets on the varieties that are available and ready to plant.

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

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Gerbera daisy flowers exhibit large (4") blooms with yellowish central disks surrounded by colorful rays. The rays are most commonly yellow, red or orange. Gerbera daisy flowers reach a little over one foot in height, with a width slightly less than that. In Texas they are popular in perennial beds. They like full to partial sun in well-drained soil. As houseplants they will bloom for six to eight weeks.