

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

MARCH 2021

PLANT QUESTIONS

Is there any deadline to harvesting our carrots before they decline? You can count on the quality to stay high through March and even well into April if the temperatures stay mild. At some point pests will begin gnawing on the roots in addition to the roots becoming tough and gnarly.

Our cyclamen took a hit in the last freeze. All our blooms were knocked off. The foliage looks great but there are no flowers showing. Will they put out new blooms? Check under the foliage for reserve blooms. If they made it through the cold weather, you can expect new blooms in a few days. If the cold was severe enough to kill the buds along with the flowers, there isn't much chance that new flowers will be produced before the hot weather arrives in April and the cyclamen starts to decline.

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.



Few plants are as rugged, widely adapted, or versatile as **daylilies**. They require little care, multiply freely and tolerate a variety of conditions—full sun to light shade, dry or poor soil. The colors are myriad. Daylilies can be planted at almost any time of the year but preferably March is the perfect time.

Daylily Basics

By Lucia Hansen, Harris County Master Gardener

What makes a daylily a daylily is the fact that each flower lasts only a single day. Although each flower lasts only one day, a typical plant will have many buds on each scape (stem) and will produce several scapes during the blooming season. The blooms themselves come in many shapes and colors. The daylily is a hardy perennial; one plant may live for years. Daylilies are among the easiest perennials to grow, typically blooming in early summer. When not in bloom, a daylily looks like a clump of tall, thick-bladed grass, much like liriop or monkey grass.

(MORE DAYLILIES 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.

PLANT NOW FOR YOUR SUMMER SIZZLE

Spring Into Action for Summer Survival

Donna Fossom, SAWS Conservation Planner

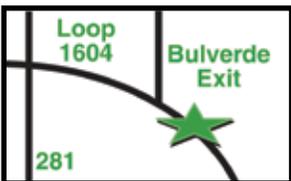
How fierce is your flora? Pick party hearty plants and your landscape will sizzle in the summer scorch. Feel the heat! Though spring has just sprung, it's not too early to think ahead to summer and how your landscape will fare in what will likely be a hot, dry season. I know what you're thinking. What can you possibly plant in your landscape that won't need much water or maintenance?

Believe it or not, there are plenty of plants that will bloom all summer long with very little to no watering at all. In fact, I have several in my landscape that aren't just surviving, they're thriving.

Here are a few of my favorites. in hopes of inspiring you to add a little sizzle to your summer landscape. March is the perfect time to pick some plants and get them in the ground before summer settles in.

- Knockout Rose (Rosa x Knockout)
- Tropical Milkweed (Asclepias curassavica)
- Bulbine (Bulbine frutescens)
- Coreopsis (Coreopsis lanceolata)
- Four Nerve Daisy (Tetranneuris scapose)
- Firecracker Plant (Russelia equisetiformis)
- Plumbago (Plumbago auriculata)
- Salvia 'Mystic Spires' (Salvia farinacea x longispicata 'Mystic Spires')
- Fringe Flower (Loropetalum Chinese var. rubrum)

All of the plants listed here are drought-hardy and some are even included on the SAWS WaterSaver Coupon approved plant list.



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
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Milberger's Nursery March Features

Milberger's Landscape Nursery

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To have your gardening questions answered during show hours ONLY

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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.

GARDENING EXPERTISE

Daylily Basics

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Daylilies thrive in locations receiving six hours of sun each day. A bit of shade is fine and, in fact, may be an advantage during our hot summer afternoons. They will grow in most soil types, with a fairly wide pH range, but they will do best in a rich humus soil that is either neutral or slightly acid. Be certain your location has good drainage and that the daylily won't have to compete with roots of larger plants, such as shrubs or trees. A daylily can be planted at any time in Texas, although it may be best to avoid planting during the hot summer, when the plant not only must become established but also has to cope with intense heat.

After working up the soil, dig a 12-inch hole. Make a mound of soil in the center of the hole and spread the daylily roots over the mound. Cover the roots with soil up to but not above the crown of the plant, working the soil around and between the roots. Firm the soil and water well. Prune the foliage back to a length of 6-8 inches. Mulch well.

“Daylilies qualify as xeriscape plants and make an excellent groundcover after their summer bloom show. The upright foliage is lush and attractive in its own right.”

~ Dr Calvin Finch

Individual plants should be placed about 18 inches apart. Fertilize in moderation with a balanced formula (13-13-13) at least twice a year (spring and fall).

Daylilies that have good drainage, good soil and good aeration usually exhibit no problems at all. Occasionally, daylilies may be bothered by aphids, spider mites, thrips, slugs and snails. When determining the best course of action for these pests, it is important first to determine the source of the problem. Choose the least toxic control method first. Aphid populations can be knocked off with a strong stream of water. If insects are present in threatening numbers and a spray seems necessary, try horticultural soap or citrus oil spray. Crown rot can be caused by excess watering. Daylily rust may occur but normally doesn't kill a daylily. Leaf streak makes foliage unattractive; overhead watering will spread the disease.

If you really want to start off right, take a sample of your soil and have it tested.



May is the peak bloom season for daylilies in South Texas. Like many hardy perennials, daylilies slowly grow and expand until it is advantageous to divide them and spread them out. Then you have plants to sell, share with friends, or plant in other places in your own garden.

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 web site at www.milbergernursery.com.

CONTAINER VEGETABLES

Get Your Tomatoes and Peppers in Early

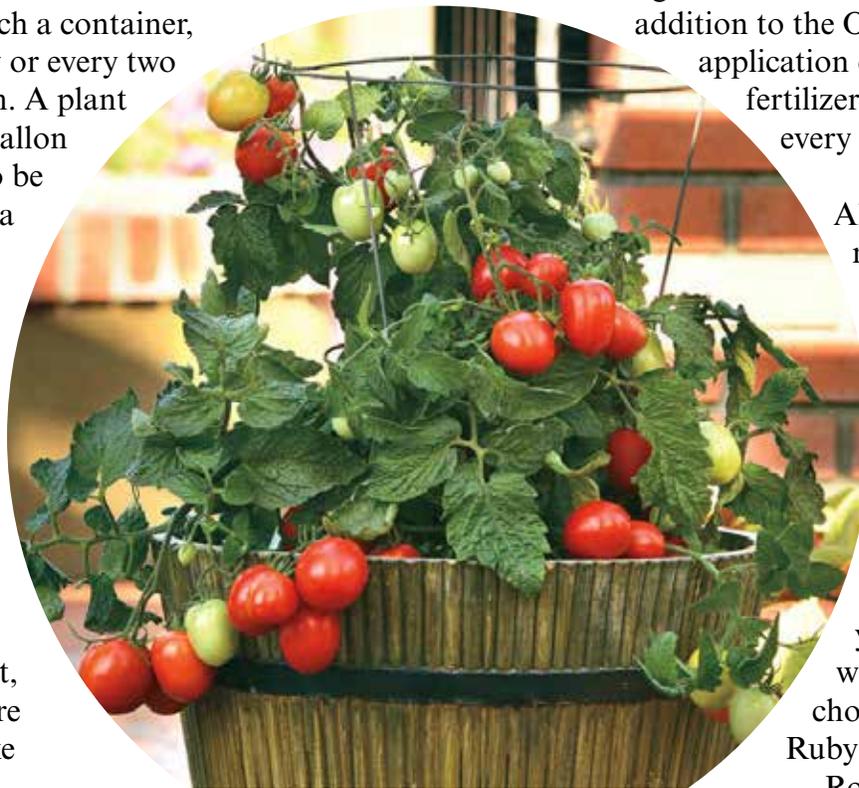
With the change in the weather, gardeners start thinking tomatoes. Most of us think of growing them in raised beds or enriched native soil, but they also do very well in containers. Although you can successfully grow a tomato plant in a five-gallon container, it is easier if the container is larger. A container of the size of a half-whiskey barrel works better because there is more soil reservoir for the root system. In such a container, watering once per day or every two days is usually enough. A plant full of fruit in a five-gallon container may have to be watered several times a day to avoid stressing the plant. A tomato plant in a small container is also top heavy and prone to blow over.

A second good vegetable for summer container culture is the pepper. They are more drought-tolerant, more attractive, require less fertilizer and make more compact plants than tomatoes, but will do very well with the same basic care.

Peppers also produce over a longer season than tomatoes. In most cases, your pepper will make a good show and produce until late fall while your tomatoes should be replanted in July.

You will need to find a spot in full sun for your container. It also helps if it is out of the wind, but

that is not always possible. Fill your container with high quality potting soil. Water the transplant immediately at soil level using a watering can. Keep the soil moist at all times, especially during the hot dry summers of Texas. Spread a two-inch layer of mulch over the soil to retain moisture. Support your container tomato with an aluminum tomato cage. Tomatoes are heavy feeders. In addition to the Osmocote, provide an application of a soluble container fertilizer dissolved in water every two weeks.



Grow tomatoes and peppers in containers to overcome the hot dry summer, cool winter, poor soil conditions or lack of garden space. Container gardening provides the advantage of growing vegetables almost any time of the year.

Almost any recommended variety that is recommended for this area will work as a container tomato. Ask one of the gardening experts at Milberger's for the variety that will work best in your situation. You will have many to choose from including Ruby Crush, the 2021 Rodeo Tomato. You can also choose "patio tomatoes" that are developed for their ornamental features.

Their foliage is very lush and attractive but the fruit quality is not very high.

A favorite pepper for containers are the mild bananas because they are wonderful to eat fresh, in salads, or cooked and they are showy; but there is a very large choice of varieties.

WILDLIFE

Bird Action in Your Landscape

By Dr. Calvin Finch

If you make an effort to attract birds to your yard this has been an exciting winter, and the action will continue into this spring.

The American goldfinches are in town in large numbers. Earlier in the winter they joined the flocks of lesser goldfinches in salvaging the remnants of the seeds in the sunflower patches and zinnia gardens. Now they are taking advantage of feeding stations that offer sunflower seeds and Niger thistle.

Around March 1st groups of purple martins show up in large enough numbers for most martin house landlords to rush out to raise their houses. They have revisited my neighborhood several times since to check out the houses and do battle with the English sparrows. In my experience

““The Spring Migration begins in late March as large flocks depart the Yucatan. San Antonio is one of the last critical stopovers grounds for 98.5% of long-distance migratory species before they head out across the continent, toward the arctic, or across the open ocean.””

~ Michell Lake Audubon Center

the martins and sparrows will end up sharing the houses but if your martin house is not difficult to lower and raise, you may want to assist the purple martins by removing the English sparrow nests once the martins move in.

Providing water with a birdbath or several is very effective in attracting large numbers of individual birds and species to your landscape for easy observation. With our high evaporation rates and inclination for drought spells, the water source meets an essential need for the birds. Lots of birds will utilize your birdbaths for water in the summer but the water will attract some special birds now. Migrating species such as orioles, warblers, robins, and buntings will stop for a drink if you have cover and water available. Include a simple recirculating system to provide running water, and the water source will be especially effective. It is one of the best ways to attract painted and indigo buntings to your landscape during the migration season. Have your camera ready for great pictures.



Another species of birds that will take advantage of a reliable water source is the **cedar waxwings**. Flocks of the beautiful birds are moving through neighborhoods stripping the berries from ligustrum, pyracantha, hollies, and other plants. The flocks move in synchronization from the berry sources to the water sources.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Did Your Trees Get Damaged?

By D. Hairlloyde, the Occasional Gardener

The coldest air to blow through Central Texas since 1989 left us a tableau of ice-covered trees looking like there could be no recovery. Major limbs have been broken, ornamental trees bent to the ground, shrubs crushed and bark stripped or gouged by the ice. But what at first glance may look like mortal wounds to your trees are not necessarily fatal. Trees have an amazing ability to make a comeback.

A healthy mature shade tree can recover even when several major limbs are severely damaged. If at least 50-percent of your tree's crown is still intact your tree will most likely survive. The best thing for you to do is cut away the damaged branches that are still attached to the tree but don't try to prune away the foliage. Missing branches may cause your trees to look unbalanced or naked but you'll be surprised



“Trees are amazingly resilient and many recover with proper care and time. My advice is simple: if you're unsure about its condition, keep the tree for now.”

~ John Rosenow, President of
The Arbor Day Foundation

at how fast the wounds will close, grow new foliage and return to their natural beauty.

Younger trees and smaller ornamentals have a remarkable ability to sustain significant damage and still recover quickly if the leader, or main upright stem, is intact and the structure for future branching remains. With these smaller trees remove the broken branches and let the tree close over the wounds and recover by itself.

With both the larger mature trees and your young ornamentals, clean up the torn bark right away by cutting it back to a point where the bark has solid contact with the trunk. This will minimize the risk of decay, helps the wound close faster and eliminates hiding places for insects.

Don't top your damaged trees. It is important to leave the undamaged foliage in place. Even the odd and unbalanced foliage brings your trees the nourishment it needs for regrowth.

And don't try to use spring fertilizer to jump start new growth. Keep an eye on your tree. In many cases damaged trees, because of a loss of foliage will not have the capacity to benefit from fertilizers or other nutrient applications. Trust your tree and allow it to recover on its own.

MARCH GARDENING TIPS

The Gardeners Favorite Time for Planting

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

South Texas gardeners are ready to get those transplants into their places in the garden. The last frost of spring may have occurred but even if it doesn't freeze, the wind will blow. Protect tender transplants and seedlings with a plant guard or windshield. Windshields help repel insects and unexpected cold (4 degree cold protection).

Plant: Plant hibiscus, bougainvillea, mandevilla and allamanda vines in containers for tropical landscape color. Impatiens, fibrous begonias and coleus are summertime favorites for shade. Perennials which can be planted now include perennial phlox such as 'John Fanick' and 'Victoria,' iris and daylilies. Roses can still be planted. March is a month to plant the gardener's favorite vegetables such as tomatoes. Put the containerized tomatoes in the ground towards the end of the month. Save some for April planting and a few for May in case of weather problems. In areas where space is limited you can plant your favorite flowers and vegetables in containers or hanging baskets.

Lawn Care: Establish or renovate the lawn as needed. Re-sod or replant with turfgrasses adapted

to this part of Texas and suited to the planting location (shade or sun). In areas which receive shade where grass is difficult to grow, consider planting a dependable groundcover such as English ivy, Asian jasmine, vinca, or one of the prostrate junipers.

Fertilize: Use a pre-plant application of a slow-release fertilizer analysis such as 19 - 5 - 9 at the rate of 3 pounds per 100 square feet of garden planting area. Early March is the ideal time to fertilize landscape plants because you give them food just before the spring growing season starts.

On the Lookout: Be on the lookout for a spectacular spring wildflower display. The spring months in South central Texas are perhaps best known for their Indian paintbrush, mountain laurel, winecup, pink evening primrose, prairie verbena, horsemint and, of course, the bluebonnets. Bluebonnets are actually "winter weeds," so to rid the lawn area of unwanted wildflowers, use a broad-leaved weed-killer spray or simply mow them. If a weed-killer is used, follow label directions carefully to avoid damage to desirable plants.

For more detailed and complete Gardening Tips from Jerry Parsons go to PlantAnswers.com where you can find answers to all of your questions about gardening, lawncare, and tree care in South Central Texas.

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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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Native **purple coneflower** is a popular perennial with smooth stems and long-lasting, lavender flowers. Rough, scattered leaves become small toward the top of the stem. Flowers occur singly atop the stems and have domed, purplish-brown, spiny centers and drooping, lavender rays. Purple coneflower can become very aggressive.