

# MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

JUNE 2021

## PLANT QUESTIONS

**Is there a trick to get bougainvillea to bloom? Ours are in full sun and we fertilize and water them.** One of the most important issues with bougainvillea is not to over-water. Let the soil dry out between watering. Some gardeners even let the plants wilt before they irrigate. It sounds like that excessive irrigation may be your problem.

**We used a long cane pole to rip open the webworm nest in our pecan trees. Right away wasps began carrying off the caterpillars. Can we use pressure sprayer to disrupt the other nests?**

Yes, the cane pole trick works well. It makes you appreciate the wasps. We should be less eager to destroy wasp nests. The pressure washer is a good tool as well.

**Can we mow down our poppies, larkspur, and blue curl now?** Your blue curl may not have matured its seed by now, but it starts dropping seed early in its bloom period, so there should be plenty on the ground. The poppies and larkspur should have distributed their seed and be ready to mow down.

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.



Perhaps the easiest herb to grow is **mint** and it is highly recommended for the beginning gardener. Other than regular water, it requires little care and is not particular about soil. It grows well in containers and window boxes. Outside mint can escape the bed and start growing like a weed throughout the garden.

## GARDENING EXPERTISE

### Summer Herbs

Herbs are great for filling out the gaps in your garden and are a nice bonus for your kitchen. Annual herbs can be colorful and low maintenance. We've all got them—those bare spots in the garden. Sometimes you can't decide what to plant or you are not ready to splurge on mature plants. Maybe you've put in a new garden and it's incomplete. Herb and annual seed packets are valuable tools for this dilemma. They also offer the opportunity to experiment with various color and textural schemes.

Herbs also do well in containers. The great advantage to container is access. You can have your fresh herbs growing outside your kitchen door. As well, different herbs have different moisture needs and growing them in pots is an easy way to control soil moisture. Of course, growing herbs in containers will also keep aggressive spreaders, like mint and lemon balm, under control and away from garden beds.

(MORE HERBS 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.

## BENEFICIAL BEES

# A Buzz Worthy Garden

By Molly Keck, Pest Management Specialist

We all know honeybees are extremely important, but many do not realize that there are over 2,000 species of native bees in America. Many of them are better at pollinating native plants like blueberries and tomatoes than honeybees. You don't need beekeeper skills to encourage bees to visit your landscape and pollinate your plants. Providing plants that attract pollinators is easier than you think.

Bees see the colors white, yellow, blue and purple better than any other color, so fill your landscape with some coreopsis, 'New Gold' lantana, beebalm and various Salvia. You'll also attract beneficial insects, including pollinators, by planting herbs and allowing them to flower. The tiny white and yellow flowers on dill and parsley, and purple flowers on anise hyssop are excellent nectar sources for beneficial pollinators. Blue flowers on rosemary are definitely bee magnets.

Bees are active during the day so be sure to take special care when spraying around bee-loving plants. While they won't be affected by liquid product applied to foliage once it's dry, spraying liquid pesticide on plants when bees are actively foraging for food is extremely harmful. The bees end up taking the pesticide back to their hive and spreading it around, possibly killing the whole group.

Bees play a special role in our environment and landscape. Let's do everything we can to care for and promote 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  
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3920 North Loop 1604  
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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 June Features

### Summer is here.

School is out. Days are longer. So it's time to pour yourself a **LONG GLASS OF ICED TEA** and enjoy your garden and landscape.



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## GARDENING EXPERTISE

### Your Herb Garden

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Having fresh herbs on hand from your own garden or patio brings more flavor to your food and is more economical than buying fresh herbs at the store. Here are some tips for harvesting and using herbs in the kitchen:

To harvest, cut off the herb branches that you want to use, without removing the entire plant. This way, the herb will continue to grow and produce.

Store cilantro and parsley in a container with water in the fridge, with a loose-fitting plastic bag over the container. It will last for at least a week stored this way.

Sage, oregano and thyme are all woody plants, and therefore their branches are not edible; be careful to remove all of their leaves when using them. If you are using a sprig of any of these herbs, say to

“When you first start out trying to grow fresh herbs, I recommend you begin by trying to grow from seedling or transplants rather than planting your own seeds.”

~ Skinnygourmet.blogspot.com

flavor a soup or a stew, you can remove the sprig (and branch) once the food is cooked.

Cilantro and parsley are not typically woody, and their stems can be eaten and taste the same as the leaves.

Dried herbs are more potent than fresh. Use 3 times as much of a fresh herb as a dried herb.

Dried herbs should be added at the beginning of the cooking process, whereas fresh herbs should be added at the end.



The most popular summer herb is **basil**. The plant is attractive, and it is available in many flavors. Sweet basil is the most popular selection, but lemon basil, Italian basil, Thai basil, purple basil, and other variations are available. All the many basil varieties have unique taste, fragrances, and appearance.



If you make your own salsa or cook Mexican dishes and have an herb garden, you probably grow **cilantro**. Cilantro is a cool weather herb that resembles parsley. The word “cilantro” is the Spanish name for coriander leaves. The dried seeds of the plant are called coriander.

## TEXAS NATIVES

# Cenizo: Colorful Camo for Caterpillars

By Seth Patterson, SAWS Conservation Consultant

When it comes to Bexar County native plants, few are as immediately recognized or appreciated as cenizo. Also known as Texas sage, cenizo's extreme drought-tolerance, soft, silvery green leaves, stunning fuchsia flowers, and surprising lack of sharp-pokey things (unlike so many other south Texas plants) make it a favorite addition to many San Antonio landscapes. But here's something few people realize about cenizo: it's a favorite host plant of the Calleta silkmoth. More than just a perfect hideaway, cenizo's stems and silvery-green leaves are also savory sustenance for these harmless, low-key larvae.

While seldom seen, these large, showy moths are quite common to our area and have a truly amazing life cycle. Eggs are laid in small groups on the stems and leaves of the cenizo. Once the caterpillars hatch they begin feeding gregariously for the first couple of weeks, but they eventually become more solitary as they grow larger. At this point, the soft green, yellow and blue-ish coloration of the caterpillars make for perfect camouflage against the similarly colored leaves of the cenizo.

Within a few weeks, the caterpillars grow impressively large and begin to search out a sturdy branch. Using special spinnerets located near their mandibles, the caterpillars anchor themselves and weave an intricate silken cocoon around their bodies. Once completely sealed inside this cocoon, the caterpillar undergoes its final molt and hardens into a dark pupa. Within this pupa, the caterpillar's body shifts and changes as it begins the incredible process of complete metamorphosis.

How long this process takes can vary greatly. Some moths emerge within a few months whereas others can take as long as two years to crawl from their silken cocoons.

Once emerged, it's imperative that males and females find each other as quickly as possible as they live

only a few days as adults. After emerging, the female begins wafting pheromones into the air. Males, with their large feather-like antenna, can detect these pheromones from miles away. Once mated, the female finds her way to a cenizo where she will lay her eggs and begin the entire process over again.

It's amazing to think that only a few weeks of these insect's lives is actually spent actively engaged in the world around them, whereas most of it is passively adrift in a state of metamorphosis. Luckily, the caterpillars pose no significant harm to our cenizo, so we can welcome them and enjoy the beauty and diversity they bring to our landscapes.



This **Cenizo** (aka **Texas Sage**) serves as an impressive backdrop to the leggy stalks of Red Yucca to create a variation of textures and hues in hedge. Cenizo is a fairly slow-growing plant taking up to two years to become fully established and bloom reliably. Once established it is extremely drought tolerant, requires very little supplemental water, and will bloom after a good rain storm. This plant can eventually grow to around six feet tall. The older it gets, the more intensely it blooms. Bees really like this plant when it's in bloom.

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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).

## SUMMER COLOR

# Summer Annuals For South Texas Gardens

Summer annuals are lovey and fragrant, a must-have for Texas gardens. Annuals are flowering plants that are grown for one season only. They are discarded and new ones planted the following year. Annuals must be planted and replanted through the year. No one species of flowers will last from spring through fall. In San Antonio we plant annuals four times: spring, summer, fall and winter and there are specific annuals that are best for each season. To get the most out of your summer annuals buy large transplants from Milberger's and you will get an instant effect in your landscape.

Begonia is one of the most popular annual bedding plant grown in Texas. Begonias flower



**Impatiens** are one of our most popular summer bedding plants due to their brightly colored blooms and their ability to grow in shady areas. Although technically tropical perennials, these plants are grown as annuals in South Texas. They provide continuous flowering from spring until fall. Almost all colors except blue are available in varieties ranging in height from six-inches to two- or three-feet. Impatiens generally do best in shade, but many varieties are sun tolerant if given adequate moisture

“Annuals must be planted in mass to make a strong statement in the landscape. Take one or two species of annuals and fill the flower bed. Don't plant one of this and two of that and expect to stop traffic with your landscape.”

~ Dr. Jerry Parsons, Bexar County Horticulture Specialist

from spring until frost. Colors range from white to pink to vivid red. Some varieties have bronze foliage and some green variegated with white. Some varieties are more sun tolerant than others.

Caladiums grow from tubers and will give you bright foliage throughout the summer. Strap leafed varieties are used in sunny locations. For shaded areas use the Fancy Leaf type.

Coleus is grown for its colorful foliage, and it's an excellent plant for shady locations. Heights range from one- to three-feet depending on variety and growing conditions.

Zinnias are one of the easiest annuals to grow, they grow quickly, and bloom heavily. They will make a massive burst of color in your garden. Zinnias have bright, solitary, daisy-like flower-heads on a single, erect stem. The most common zinnia is “dahlia-flowered” and grows up to three-feet.

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## LAWNCARE



## Which Grass is for You?

By Dr Calvin Finch, retired Director of Water Conservation, Texas A&M

Choosing a turfgrass is not easy in San Antonio, none of the varieties are overwhelmingly better than the other. A lawn can be attractive and a great place for your pets and children to play but if you are intent on keeping it green all summer, it requires lots of water and work. Reduce the lawn area as much as possible with hardscape (preferably pervious), groundcover, and perennials. We have four choices for a permanent lawn: St. Augustine, Bermudagrass, zoysia, and buffalo grass.

**St. Augustine** is the most popular grass. It is attractive with wide kelly-green blades. St. Augustine is easy to mow and has the best shade tolerance. Sod is relatively inexpensive and easy to obtain. St. Augustine, evolved, however, in a high rainfall area with acidic soil. In San Antonio it requires heavy irrigation and is stressed to the point that it requires attention for insects, diseases, and iron chlorosis. St. Augustine does not have very good traffic tolerance. If it turns brown in a drought, it is dead. To keep it green requires about .75 inches of water per week.

**Bermuda grass** requires full sun. Mowed low a Bermuda lawn can look like a golf course. It is the grass used for golf courses and athletic fields in our area. Bermuda has the most traffic tolerance of the lawn grasses available, and will go dormant if water is not available. When the rains start again, it

greens up quickly. Bermuda is relatively insect and disease free but is not as thick as St. Augustine, so can support weeds, especially in the winter. The Bermuda grasses require about .5 inches of irrigation or rain in the summer to stay green.

**Zoysia grass** has some of the best characteristics of both St. Augustine and Bermuda grass. It has shade tolerance (not as much as St. Augustine) and forms a thick weed free sod. Zoysia has good traffic tolerance, is pest resistant, and can go dormant in a drought. Zoysia is the most difficult grass to mow. Emerald, a fine blade beautiful selection, has a texture like steel wool. It mows best with a reel mower. Jamur and El Toro are two good selections of zoysia that are easier to care for. Mow them with a regular rotary mower.

Because of its slow growth characteristic, zoysia sod is often more expensive than St. Augustine. Although zoysia grass has drought tolerance and can go dormant, to stay green it requires the same amount of water as St. Augustine.

Select the lawn grass that best suits the availability of light in your yard, your aesthetic preferences, your interest in lawn work, and your tolerance for water bills. Six inches of soil is best for a good lawn. If you have less, add some, or use groundcovers instead.

## JUNE GARDENING TIPS

# Planting for Summer Color

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

June is the time to pour yourself a long glass of ice tea and enjoy your garden and landscape. For color, firebush is a favorite hummingbird plant and lantanas are a great butterfly bush. Lantanas are deer resistant.

**Plant** vincas in full sun. Shade plants include coleus, caladiums, firespike and begonias. Leave the bougainvilleas in full sun and fertilize them regularly with hibiscus food or soluble fertilizer. Moss rose and purslane are showy all month long in full sun. Remove spent flowers from perennials for more blooms. Don't let the weeds get ahead of you.

**Shade Trees and Shrubs.** Your established trees and bushes should do well without supplemental watering. Newly planted trees, however, need deep watering by hand when the soil dries to one inch. Remember to mulch 4 inches deep around new trees so that they don't have to compete with grass. There are a large number of salvias available. Most species are deer resistant in some neighborhoods and drought tolerant. Keep them compact by shearing. Crape myrtles reach full bloom in June. Deadhead spent flowers for more bloom.

**Vegetables.** Harvest your vegetables on a regular basis to keep quality high. You can still plant southern peas, eggplant, and okra for mid-summer vegetables.

**Lawncare:** Irrigate the lawn with 1" of water every week in the absence of significant rain fall on all types of sod. You might also need to hand water "hot spots" in your yard and areas next to cement. Keep your mower blade sharp.

**On the Lookout:** Aphids on tender, young foliage; lacebugs on pyracantha, lantana and sycamore; bagworms on junipers; stinkbugs on fruit and vegetable plants; webworms on pecan trees. Chinch bugs can appear in St. Augustine lawns anytime from now through late summer.

**Odd Jobs:** Use mulch generously around (but not piled on the trunks) trees, shrubs and landscape and garden plants. Apply sufficient moisture to soak the soil to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. Watering early in the day is preferred to early evening. Never water in the middle of the day.

For more detailed and complete Gardening Tips from Jerry Parsons go to [PlantAnswers.com](http://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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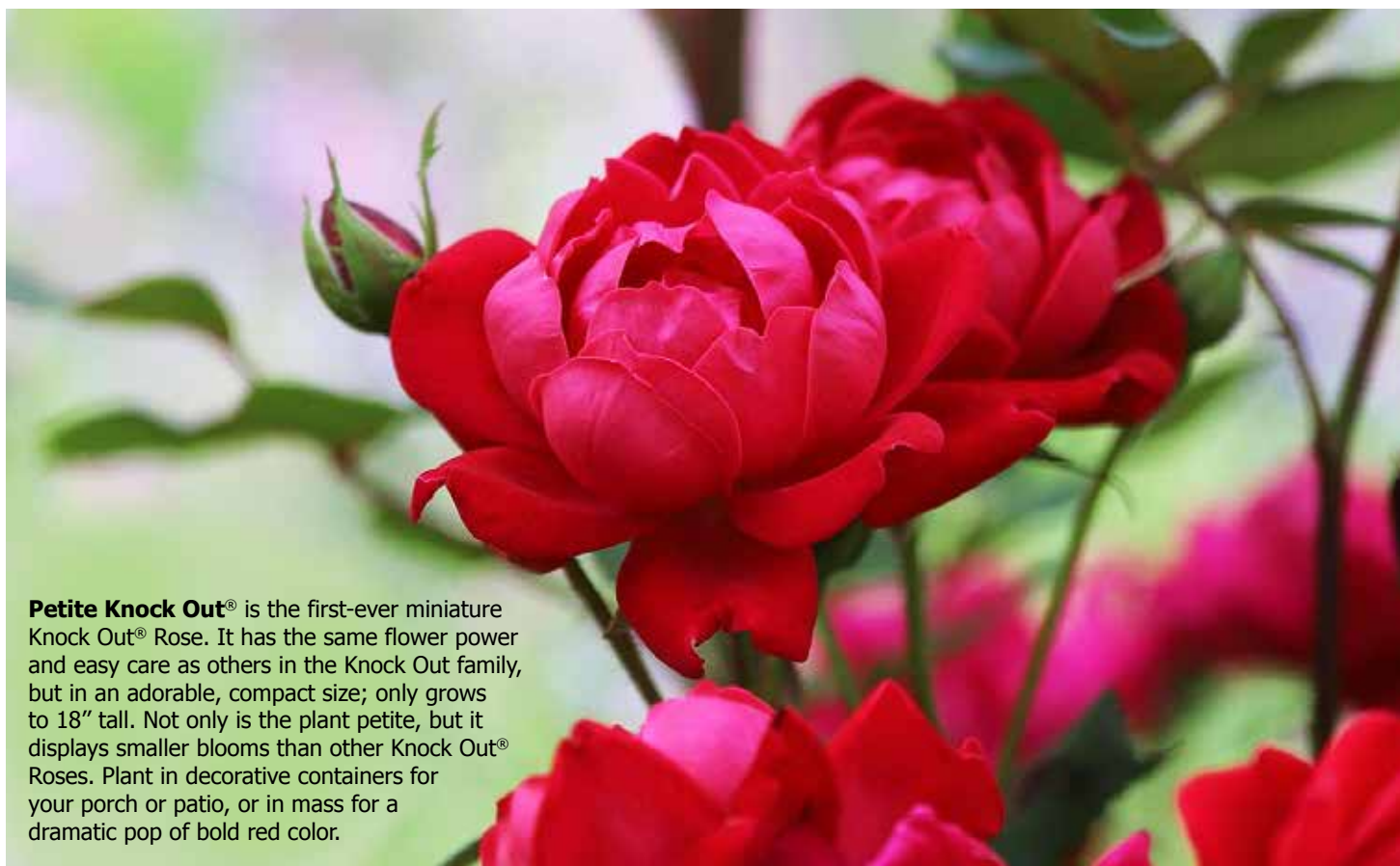
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