

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

AUGUST 2021

PLANT QUESTIONS

When can we plant snapdragons and stock for winter blooms? My zinnias are coming to the end of their bloom period. Begin planting the cool weather annuals in September. If the zinnias are declining, consider filling the gap with Cora vinca. They should keep a bloom until Thanksgiving.

Do plants benefit from coffee grinds? I've been told it stimulates growth. Coffee grinds acidify the soil and can have some of the same benefits as a mulch.

Are pentas annuals or perennials? We planted pentas next to lantana 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. They may have been permanently damaged by the deep freeze last February.

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.



The Iceberg Texas Shrub Rose makes a wonderful hedge rose in Texas. Unquestionably the standard against which white hybrid tea roses are measured, the Iceberg Texas Shrub Rose produces an endless abundance of snowy white flowers with a heavy fragrance all season long. A multi-stemmed deciduous shrub with an upright spreading habit of growth its texture will blend into your landscape, but can be balanced by one or two finer or coarser trees or shrubs for an effective composition.

IN YOUR ROSE GARDEN

Preparing Your Roses for Fall

By Dr Calvin Finch

It is hard to believe that it will ever cool down again, but it will and when it does this fall the roses will put on a flush of foliage and bloom again until the really cold weather arrives. To prepare your roses for the fall bloom requires that you take some action now. Usually, our extremely hot weather ends in September and cooler temperatures, especially at night, signal that the "second spring" of South Central Texas has begun. These cooler temperatures stimulate rose bush growth and intensify the color of the rose blooms. Many people do not prepare their roses for this second spring, so they miss the most spectacular, longest-lasting bloom period.

(MORE 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.

THE BASIS OF EVERYTHING

Crazy-Rich Soil

By Mark Peterson, Conservation Project Manager

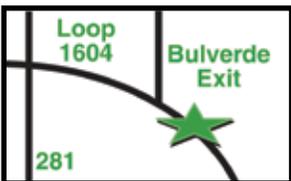
A healthy soil is the basis of everything in the landscape and garden. It creates robust plants that can resist pests and efficiently use the fertilizers that nature provides. Frequent applications of petroleum-based fertilizers and pesticides are unnecessary when your landscape is rooted in fertile ground.

So what exactly is healthy soil? It actually starts with an ideal soil mixture of 50% mineral solids (sand, silt or clay), 22% air, 22% water and 4% to 6% organic matter (compost, organisms). The components may vary slightly, but this is an ideal soil.

To take the soil from ideal to healthy, it must also have minimum compaction. The fastest way to minimize compaction is to core aerate every year and add ¼ to ½ inch of compost. Or, the slower but simpler way is to add the same amount of compost twice a year over a four- to five-year period. Do not add sand. If the soil is heavy clay, then incorporate into the soil half to 1 inch of expanded shale. Repeat as necessary.

To encourage all those wonderful micro and macroorganisms, incorporate directly to the soil copious amounts of compost and biochar. Compost supplies the building blocks of essential nutrients and carbon, while biochar houses all the nutrients and organisms.

And now for the secret sauce... Malcolm Beck, the late godfather of organic gardening in Texas, discovered a massive surge of organisms in his composting piles after adding Coca-Cola syrup. He realized the simple sugars in the syrup, aka simple carbon chains, benefited and increased the physiological activity of the microorganisms. Research has since proven him correct.



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 August Features



It isn't easy to become a

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FALL GARDEN MUMS AND ASTERS

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IN YOUR ROSE GARDEN

Your Fall Roses

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Begin your autumn preparations by pulling off any vines and cutting any hackberries (or other weeds) that have invaded your rose bed. Next, prune out all the dead and diseased wood. The roses can be opened up by removing stems growing towards the center of the plant. Wayward branches such as those that grow across paths or straight into the air can also be removed, but the pruning should not eliminate as much wood as you do in the spring.

Compliment the pruning by restoring your spray program, irrigation, and fertilization. Hybrid tea roses should be watered every week. The old-fashioned and modern roses bred for toughness may not need as much water, but even the toughest antique rose blooms better with an irrigation application every two to three weeks. It is best if the water is applied by drip irrigation or a hand hose. Most modern roses are prone to develop foliage diseases if water is applied by rain or sprinkler to the foliage.



Cinco de Mayo is often called the Work Horse of the Texas Garden because it will remain a prolific bloomer through the hottest of summers. A floribunda, the color is an amazing blend of smoked lavender and rusty red-orange and it carries a light, sweet fragrance. Compact and bushy, this rounded shrub rose is terrific for beds, borders and is a great option for a flowering hedge. It's a pretty little rose as well. Photo by Allen Owings.

“I am a firm believer in allowing shrubs and roses to grow to their natural shape and height. Pruning and trimming shrubs is redundant and non-productive work. I would so much rather enrich the soil, study a new plant, do anything but prune.”

~ Lee Ann Torrans, Texas Gardening

Roses are heavy feeders. Slow-release lawn fertilizer (19-5-9) work well at the rate of one cup for a small plant, and two cups for a large plant spread under the canopy and at the drip line.

Mulch is an essential part of rose culture. The mulch keeps the shallow roots cool and moist plus reduces weed growth. Oak leaves, pecan shells, shredded brush, and most organic mulches do the job admirably. Place three to four inches of mulch over the root system of every rose.



Antique Roses (Heirloom roses or “old garden roses”) are roses that have been around since before 1867. That’s when hybridizers developed the hybrid tea roses with their long, straight stems and perfect flowers. Antique roses are disease resistant, sometimes everblooming, and richly scented. Their graceful forms, which range from low, mounding shrubs to vigorous climbers and eight-foot-high hedgerows, fit easily into a variety of landscapes.

You can find excellent quality mulches at Milberger’s Nursery for all of your landscape and flower beds. It won’t float away and when you apply at least 2” of mulch to all your landscape and around trees it will help protect your plant investment during our hot and dry South Texas summers.

FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING

South Texas' Best Season for Growing

Fall's milder temperatures bring out the best flavors in home vegetable gardens. Insects and disease are less bothersome. You usually have more pleasant days to work in your garden. We can grow warm- and cool-season crops at this time of year and the combination of these factors give your vegetables their best opportunity for success.

Proper timing is one of the most important factors in successful fall gardening. Regardless of variety selected or cultural practices used, if a gardener does not do the right thing at the right time, any chances of success can be diminished. Fall vegetable crops are categorized as long-term and short-term crops. Duration of these crops is dependent upon when the first killing frost occurs and the cold tolerance of the vegetables.

You should plant long-term, frost-tolerant vegetables together. **Frost-tolerant vegetables include beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, chard, collards, garlic, kale, lettuce, mustard, onions, parsley, spinach and turnips.**

Plant short-term, frost-susceptible vegetables together so that they can be removed after being killed by frost. Frost protection and the planting of a cereal

rye cover crop are facilitated if such a grouping system is used. **Frost-susceptible vegetables include beans, cantaloupes, corn, cucumbers, eggplants, okra, peas, peppers, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, squash, tomatoes and watermelons.**

Success in the garden begins with a plan. Be sure to select the garden location and decide how large it will be. Next, make sure you have convenient fresh water and six to eight hours a day of sunlight. Involve your family in deciding what to plant. If no one likes asparagus, don't devote a lot of space to it.



Fall produces top quality **spinach** and allows you to harvest during cool weather. In south Texas and with some protection you can carry the fall plants on through winter and into spring. Spinach is quite cold hardy and established plants can take temperatures below freezing.

Ask the gardening experts at Milberger's Nursery for more suggestions that will help get your garden into full bloom. You will find healthy plant stock, good advice and creative suggestions for your summer landscape and gardening needs from the experienced nursery staff. To see what is on sale each week visit our web site at www.milbergernursery.com or look for our ads in the *San Antonio Express News*.

When growing tomatoes and peppers, it is easier to use transplants. However, the use of transplants alone does not insure bountiful, precocious fall production. What must be accomplished is rapid establishment of fall

“As hot and dry as the weather has been, some people think that transplanting is risky. Transplants will survive hot temperatures and full sun if adequate moisture is available to the plant.”

~ Dr. Jerry Parsons, Bexar County Horticulturist



For success with fall tomatoes you will find that Celebrity, Tycoon, HM1823 and Valley Girl are the best, highest quality varieties available, but they also require proper watering, periodic fertilization, and pest control. The **Dwarf Cherry Surprise** tomato (shown above) is the most naturally disease-resistant cherry tomato ever sold in Texas.

transplants. As hot and dry as the weather has been, some people think that transplanting is risky. Transplants will survive hot temperatures and full sun if adequate moisture is available to the plant. “To the plant!” is the key phrase. Transplants in peat pots or cell packs with restricted root zones require at least two weeks to sufficiently enlarge their root systems so that active growth can begin. Until that time, gardeners must provide adequate, daily moisture or the transplants will either die or stunt to the point that fruit maturity will be delayed. Delayed maturity is what we need to avoid.

Daily moisture should be provided on an individual basis to transplants. Depressions or basins around each transplant can be filled daily – or as needed depending on the soil type – with water to provide the necessary wetting or a drip irrigation system can be installed. Too much water, i.e., keeping roots soaking wet instead of moist, will cause root rotting and subsequent transplant stunting or death.

Although the temperature is sweltering, now is the time to start planting your fall vegetable garden. Delay in planting some vegetables could result in less produce on the table later. Nothing tastes better than vegetables from your own garden.

For the ideal planting dates for your fall vegetables visit our web site: www.milbergernursery.com. You will find transplants ready to give you a bumper crop of fall vegetables as well as the varieties that thrive in our area as well as the tools and advice you may need at Milberger’s Nursery.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Crepe Myrtle Freeze Damage

We were asked to be patient and wait until summer to see how our trees fared. Like other trees and shrubs, crape myrtles are not adapted to hard freezes like the one we had this past February. However, crape myrtles have proven themselves to be hardier than many other area plants. For the most part crape myrtles in South Central Texas bloomed out later than usual. Many have brown in sections that may never recover and the tips of many branches remain bare and will eventually die off. But as a whole, area crape myrtles have put out new growth and will recover completely.

Still some of the area's crape myrtles are looking sort of anemic right now. While the branches of many crape myrtles do indeed look dead, many have started putting out new shoots. Even though the large stems might be dead your best bet is to continue to wait before doing any drastic pruning on your crape myrtles. It is wise to wait another year and let them re-grow from the crown of the plant or think about replacing them with a larger plant.

Many people have suggested that to determine if your shrub is still alive, you should scrape the bark to see if any there is any green under the bark. The green under the bark remains because the roots were not damaged and are still moving water up through the dead cells of the xylem, thus protecting the damaged outer bark from dehydrating. For this reason, scraping the bark to look for green has not been a reliable way to determine plant health.

As this year's freeze has shown us, crape myrtles are very durable, they grow fast, and you can count on dramatic flowers for four months per summer. The color of the crape myrtle is what most folks look for first. They come in a wonderful selection of white, lavender, pink, purple, red, and variation on these colors. Some types are even bi-color—two colors on the same blossom, typically pink and white.

The shape of your crape myrtle is another consideration. "Upright" or "vase" shaped crape myrtles are taller than they are wide. "Rounded" or "globose" types are as wide at the top as they are tall, and you should plan for this accordingly. "Spreading" types are wider than they are tall. "Weeping" types are generally miniature, and are left alone to develop their natural form. Most crapes used in residential landscapes are upright or rounded.



This **crape myrtle** in a midtown yard is slowly recovering from February's freeze and will eventually shed its damaged branches and produce the beautiful blooms that make crape myrtles one of the most popular blooming shrubs in South Central Texas.

AUGUST GARDENING TIPS

Time To Prepare for Your Fall Garden

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 new "Tomato 444" 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.

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 – in a week or 10 days.

Trees: Windmill palm, Mediterranean 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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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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Planning for a Water Garden?



Milberger's has pumps for your water garden, water plants and expert advice.



The **Yellow Bird of Paradise** is a beautiful and bold structural plant that forms large clumps of stiff foliage growing up from the base; stunning flowers of orange and blue rise high above the foliage, giving the appearance of a bird's head; great cut flower; shelter from frost. A hardy perennial from Argentina, the Yellow Bird of Paradise has naturalized in Texas. The plant offers exotic blooms of long, 5- to 7- inch, yellow petals accented by longer protruding bright red stamens. The blooms take up to 4 hours to open and begin in the afternoon. Once open, that flower only lasts for one day.