

# MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

SEPTEMBER 2021

## PLANT QUESTIONS

**We have a wonderful bed of oxblood lilies that are now hidden under our peach trees. What can we do?** You could prune the lower part of your peach trees early so the lily blooms would be visible, and some sun would reach them. You may also want start transplanting oxblood lilies to other locations in the landscape.

**You were right about the brown patches in my lawn, they greened up with all the rain we received.** It is not easy growing a lawn in Central and South Texas. We have a shallow soil that is often compacted or poorly drained with the result that it has a limited reservoir for growing roots and storing water. Do not celebrate too soon, the lawn can dry out again before the cool weather settles in.

**Should we apply mulch when seeding our wildflowers to conserve water and reduce weeds?** Wildflowers perform exactly like weeds. The mulch is just as likely to prevent germination of the wildflowers as it is the weeds.

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.



Fall is the best season for growing tomatoes in South Central Texas. Your tomato should be set by now but if you pick up starter plants now you still have time for your tomatoes to produce before the first freeze, which usually hits in mid-November.

## GARDENING EXPERTISE

### Maintaining a Fall Vegetable Garden in South Central Texas

Growing plants and veggies in autumn requires a different approach than spring and summer. Fall grown lettuce and leafy greens are sweeter and more tender. Lettuce, collards, spinach, broccoli, Brussels sprouts and Swiss chard will continue to grow to be a fresh-from-the garden part of your Thanksgiving and, maybe even, your Christmas feast. But which vegetables can grow in Texas in late autumn? A fall garden requires careful planning. Planting must be timed to allow frost-sensitive vegetables to mature and to be harvested before frost. Those that will tolerate frost can be planted so that harvesting can continue after the first fall frost.

(MORE FALL GARDENING 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.

**GARDEN EVENTS AT THE NURSERY**

**Sat., Aug 28 10:00 – 11:30am** *FREE*

**Preparing Your Fall and Winter Vegetable Garden PART I - Warm Weather Crops.**

It's not just spring. South Texas offers vegetable gardeners two great growing seasons every year. David Rodriguez, Extension Horticulturist for Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension Service will answer your specific questions about your gardening issues. Only 30 spots available! Sign up with Cashiers or email us at [nursery@milbergersa.com](mailto:nursery@milbergersa.com).

**Sat., Sept. 18 10:00 – 11:30am** *FREE*

**Preparing Your Fall and Winter Vegetable Garden PART II - Cool Weather Crops.**

David Rodriguez, Extension Horticulturist presents this FREE adult seminar on Cool Weather Crops. Fall's milder temperatures bring out the best flavors in home vegetable gardens. Insects and disease are less bothersome. And we can grow warm- and cool-season crops. David will answer your specific questions about your gardening issues. Only 30 spots available! Sign up with Cashiers or email us at [nursery@milbergersa.com](mailto:nursery@milbergersa.com).

**Sat., Oct 2 10:00 – 11:30am** *FREE*

**Lawn Basics 101.** Getting your lawn ready for winter. Free Adult Earth-Kind Educational Seminar presented by David Rodriguez, Extension Horticulturist for Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension Service at Milberger's. Only 30 spots available! Sign up with Cashiers or email us at [nursery@milbergersa.com](mailto:nursery@milbergersa.com).



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**

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[nursery@milbergersa.com](mailto:nursery@milbergersa.com)

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](mailto:mhess@hctc.coop).

**Milberger's Nursery  
September Features**

Take Advantage of South Texas'



*"Second Spring"*

**Ornamentals**

**Shade Trees**

**FALL** is the ideal time to add **TREES** and **SHRUBS** to your landscape and Milberger's has the **LARGEST SELECTION** to choose from.

**It's Coming Soon!**

**Milberger's  
PUMPKIN  
PATCH  
SPOOKY-er  
THAN EVER**



**It's growing and growing.  
Come see for yourself!**

**Gardening South Texas on the air at KLUP (am 930)**

Saturday and Sunday 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

To have your gardening questions answered during show hours ONLY

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## FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING

# Your Vegetable Choices for the Fall

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

If your spring garden was successful, the same location should work well in the fall. When planning a new garden, keep in mind that vegetable crops must have at least eight hours of direct sun each day and should be planted where the soil drains well.

For a new garden site, remove all the grass. Just tilling it into the soil will not eliminate all the grass sprigs; they will continue to grow and interfere with the garden. Likewise, for a raised garden, remove all turf before building the frame and filling it with soil.

“A fall garden often produces better quality and higher-yielding vegetables than a spring-summer garden. Cooler weather means a longer harvest period for many vegetables.”

~ Dr. Jerry Parsons, Celebrity Horticulturalist

Vegetables adapted to fall gardens can be divided into four groups, based on their tolerance of freezing temperatures.



Spinach is one tasty vegetable that prefers the fall garden over the spring garden. The onset of hot weather in spring causes plants to bolt or send up a seed stalk, and quality plummets. Fall planting allows for harvest during cool weather and top-quality spinach. In South Central Texas you can carry the fall plants on through winter and into spring. With some protection during cold nights you can even continue planting into late winter. Spinach is quite cold hardy and established plants can take temps down into the low 20s. If you purchase a lightweight rowcover fabric you can keep a patch going all winter.

Some warm-season vegetables adapted to fall gardens—but killed by frost—are snap beans, southern peas, summer squash, winter squash, cucumbers, sweet corn and early-maturing pepper and tomato varieties.

The second group includes cool-season crops usually damaged by light frost when mature, such as lettuce, cauliflower, kohlrabi, celery, cabbage and broccoli.

The third group contains those that are moderately tolerant of repeated light frosts: carrots, parsnip, beets, leaf lettuce, endive, radishes, rutabagas and turnips.

Members of the fourth group, which tolerate night after night of freezing temperatures and have even survived a mild winter, include bulb onions, Brussels sprouts, shallots, spinach, parsley, collards, kale and Romaine varieties of lettuce.

For the ideal planting dates for your fall vegetables visit our web site: [www.MilbergerNursery.com](http://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, and the tools and advice you may need at Milberger's Nursery.

## LAWNCARE

# Trash the Turf and Go Native Instead

By Seth Patterson, Conservation Consultant for San Antonio Water System

For green grass yards to thrive in our region, we're forced to over-fertilize and over-water. But there is a better way. There's a common misconception that every American home should be accompanied by a perfectly manicured lush lawn.

Unfortunately, the reality of this ideology is that our region — with its bouts of prolonged drought and shallow, poor-quality soils — is simply not conducive to healthy grass growth. For green grass yards to thrive (or even survive) in our region, we're forced to overcome the environmental conditions by over-fertilizing and over-watering.

But there is an alternative, one that is more proactive in water preservation and conservation. It's as simple as trashing the turf and reimagining what a healthy, happy landscape might look like. Perhaps that's a central hardscape with a permeable patio out of flagstone or pavers, where you can enjoy lounging and taking in the aesthetic of your new landscape. You could surround the hardscape with low-growing native herbaceous plants or sedges like horseherb, silver ponyfoot or Texas sedge.

Once established, these attractive, alternative

ground covers require little to no supplemental watering and can provide a lovely cover even in shade too dense for grass to grow.

Around the perimeter of your yard, convert the grass to garden beds filled with a drought-tolerant and diverse grouping of shrubs, bushes, trees and cacti. They'll provide privacy to your yard as well as an assortment of flowers and fruits for birds, butterflies and other native wildlife.

Of course, if you must have some grass, there are several native options better suited for our region. Instead of water-guzzling Bermuda, zoysia or St. Augustine, consider Buffalo grass or a native

grass mix designed specifically for the poor soils of the Hill Country. You'll have the aesthetic of a pleasing grassy yard, but without the need for excessive watering or maintenance.

Not quite ready to commit to a complete change in your landscape? Simply adjust your expectations about what a grass yard should look like. Bermuda and zoysia go dormant in times of drought and extreme heat, but as soon as the rains return they green up and look great again.



In this natural landscape, silver ponyfoot blends well with the Gulf Muhly grass, its pink plumes softening the spiky plants in this bed. This sample of a 'wildscape' uses native plants and provides habitat through a natural landscape design. Native plants and natural landscapes go hand-in-hand. Native plants provide food for wildlife and a natural landscape style provides nesting, safety, and water for wildlife.

You will 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. Mulches are the best way to keep your soil moist and weeds at bay.

## WILDLIFE IN YOUR LANDSCAPE

# Fall Migration in South Central Texas

By Dr. Calvin Finch

There is a lot of butterfly, hummingbird, and other pollinator traffic in the autumn. Your landscape can be an important part of the action if you have some of the plants being sought out – they are seeking nectar from plants.

Soon the migrating Monarchs will arrive on their way to the wintering grounds in forests near Mexico City. Milkweeds are a favorite nectar plant for most butterfly species and are the only plant species on which Monarchs will lay their eggs. The potent chemicals contained in the milkweed foliage are transferred to the feeding caterpillars and make them and the adults less desirable to potential

“Texas is important to the monarch butterflies because of location. It’s situated right between the principal breeding grounds in the north and the overwintering areas in Mexico. Monarchs will enter the Texas flyway in late September, and by the third week of October, and most have passed through into Mexico.”

predators. In the spring, the migrating Monarchs will often lay eggs on our local milkweeds. In the fall it is most likely that the migrating Monarchs will use the plants in our landscapes for nectar to nourish them to finish the trip south. The caterpillars hatching on milkweed in San Antonio landscapes in the fall are usually those of the Queen butterfly, a Monarch cousin. The caterpillars of the two species look similar except that the Queen caterpillar has three antennae like appendages spaced along the body, and the Monarch only has two appendages, one at each end of its body.



Though queen butterflies can be found spring, summer and fall in Central Texas, both monarchs and queens are usually only found together during the monarch migrations of spring and fall. Find caterpillars on milkweeds and look for adult butterflies sipping nectar on Gregg’s mistflower and many of our other important nectar plants.

Other showy fall blooming plants that are sought out by Monarchs and other butterflies are mint marigold, fall aster, duranta, and Mexican flame vine. Quite often the hanging purple flowers on the duranta will be completely covered by queen and Monarch butterflies in the fall. Porterweed is also a favorite nectar source of butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees.

## TREES AND SHRUBS

# Fall is Tree and Shrub Planting Time

By Dr. Douglas F. Welch, Landscape Horticulturist, Texas Agrilife Extension Service

It is September and fall has arrived in South Central Texas. The weather is becoming slightly cooler. Now is a perfect time to add a new tree or a grouping of shrubs to the landscape. Or perhaps you have an area in the landscape that needs 'remodeling' or rejuvenating. The fall may be the best season to plant, surpassing even the spring.

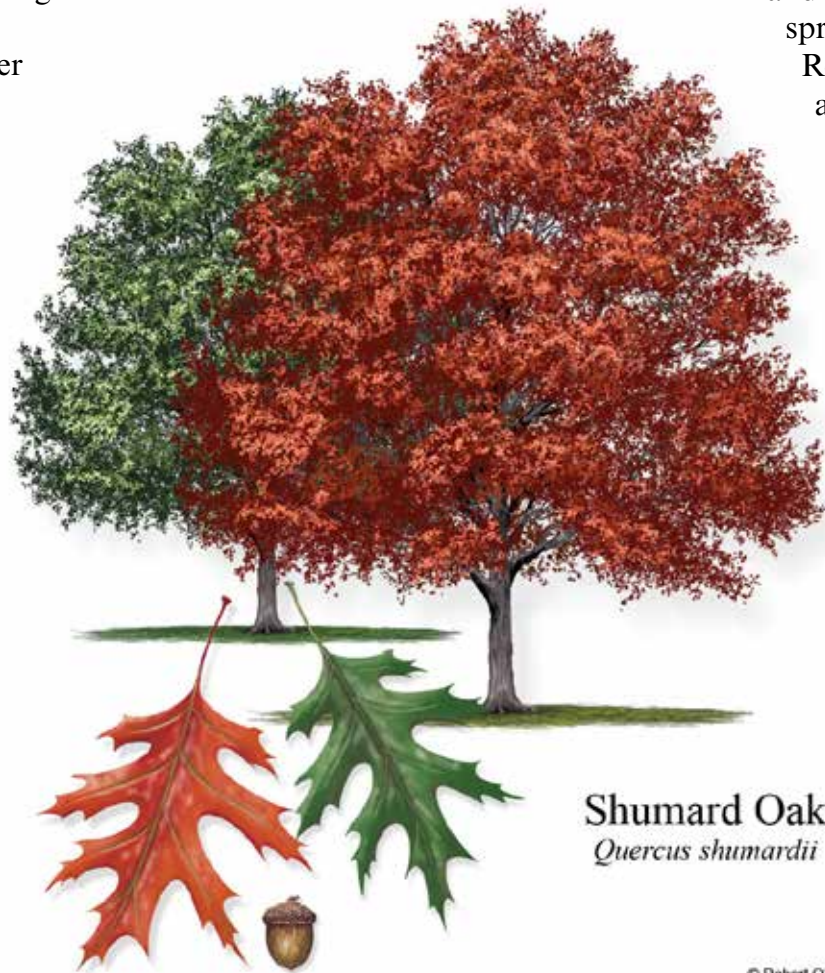
Some people may prefer January through March for planting, but the fall months of September through December have distinct advantages. Fall planting follows the heat of summer, before a cool winter season, and trees and shrubs planted in the fall use this to good advantage. Plant roots grow anytime the soil temperature is 40 degrees or higher, which may occur all winter in Texas. During the winter months, the root systems of the fall-planted specimens develop and become established. When spring arrives,

this expanded root system can support and take advantage of the full surge of spring growth.

Fall is the optimum time to plant balled and burlapped trees and shrubs. Balled and burlapped plants have ample time to recover from transplanting and proliferate roots before spring growth begins.

Remember, however, all bare root plants, including roses and pecan and fruit trees, should be planted in late winter when they are completely dormant.

All plants have growing requirements. Think about the plant's needs before you invest. Is it adapted to your area's soil? Will it grow in sun or shade? Does it need a wet or dry location? Is it cold hardy? You can find this information on tags beside the plant. If not, ask one of the South Texas landscape experts at Milberger's.



**Shumard Oak**  
*Quercus shumardii*

© Robert O'Brien

**Shumard Red Oak** is an upright shade tree which can attain a height of 120 feet. In Texas it is commonly found on rich bottomland soils, moist woods and along streams. It is fast-growing, with an open canopy and stout spreading branches. Leaves are a rich green that turns scarlet in the fall. Like most other oaks Shumard red oaks have thin bark when they're young. When you bring them home and plant them, their thin-barked trunks are suddenly exposed to intense summer sun. To prevent early bark crack you can wrap the trunk with paper tree wrap for a couple years and you will have a strong shade tree for a lifetime.

## SEPTEMBER GARDENING TIPS

# It May Still Feel Like Summer But . . .

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

**Fall color:** Add compost and fertilizer to your flowerbeds for a little extra kick that tired flowers need. Add instant color by planting annuals such as ornamental kale, calendula, dianthus, fall aster, and phlox. Continue to feed patio plants and hanging baskets with a water-soluble fertilizer. Rejuvenate heat stressed geraniums and begonias by lightly pruning, fertilizing and watering. Divide perennials like daylily and iris now.

**Fall vegetable gardening** should be in full swing. It's time to plant broccoli, spinach, cabbage, cauliflower and other cold crops and cool season vegetables. Protect young seedlings from hot sun. Old sheer-curtains do a great job. Mulching with oak leaves does a great job, too. 3-4 inches of leaves help keep the soil cool, stops weeds from germinating, and helps hold in the moisture.

**Shade trees and shrubs:** Plant trees and shrubs this month or later after the hot weather subsides. Check the requirements for trees and do your planning before planting any. Visit our on-line Tree Lot at [www.milbergernursery.com](http://www.milbergernursery.com) to find out the mature height and width. If you prune your oak trees, be sure to paint as soon as you cut.

**Prune:** The fall pruning of roses is lighter than in the spring and consists of removing twiggy and unproductive growth along with any crossing or dead canes. All rose foliage is left on the bush at this time. Labor Day is a good time to do the fall "grooming."

**Fertilize:** With the advent of cooler weather and rain, your roses will begin their heavy fall blooming season. Vegetable crops benefit from a side dressing of fertilizer to enhance their growth and production potential. Lawns have been expensive to maintain during the prolonged heat and drought. Those with lawns still alive will have to beware of the brown patch fungus which occurs during cool, moist fall conditions.

**On the lookout:** Insects will be in "full swing" and their populations "full blown" by now.

**Odd jobs:** Select appropriate and recommended tree and shrub varieties that will complete or renovate your landscape.

For more detailed and complete Gardening Tips for this month visit [www.milbergernursery.com](http://www.milbergernursery.com).

## SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE FREE

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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## Looking for Sod?

**We now have large quantities of St. Augustine Raleigh in stock as well as several varieties of Bermuda grass and Zoysia Emerald.**



The hardy '**Starry Starry Night**' Hibiscus (also Rose Mallow) will steal the spotlight in your sunny landscape with its incredibly floriferous show in late summer. Although later to emerge than most perennials in spring, these fast-growing plants are capable of adding an inch of new growth a day. The flowers are held on bright green carpels, which contrast nicely with the dark foliage. Flowers are produced from the top to the bottom of the plant, rather than only at the top like some older cultivars.