

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

OCTOBER 2021

PLANT QUESTIONS

When is the best time to replace my zinnias with cool weather annuals?

You would probably be successful planting snapdragons, stocks, dianthus, petunias, ornamental kale, and calendulas now, but I would wait for a few more weeks before planting sweet peas, pansies, cyclamen, and primula.

Do our satsumas need to be orange before we harvest them?

They do not need to be orange. The satsumas I got this week were still mostly green but tasted excellent. If you have lots of fruit on your trees, test a few now. If you do not have a large number of fruits you can wait until later in October. They are good now but will be even sweeter later.

What are the best peach trees for our area?

We recommend Florida King, June Gold and La Feliciana.

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.



As its name implies, the **Fall Aster** blooms in fall providing a colorful display when other flowering plants may have run out of steam. This is a wonderful plant for South Texas. It is suitable for sunny locations, but adapts to lightly shaded areas. It is drought tolerant and has no pest or disease problems. Asters tolerate our acidic, rocky and sandy soils. You will have to thin them out regularly to control spread.

GARDENING EXPERTISE

A Fall Favorite for Mounds of Color

By Jay White, The Masters of Horticulture

Fall Aster is one of the last plants to bloom in the fall. Fall aster is a clumping perennial that is almost an evergreen plant and often keeps its leaves for 10 or 11 months. Because of this, it works well in the perennial border. Even though fall asters are relatively unremarkable most of the year, they really redeem themselves in the fall. Starting in early October this plant literally explodes with color. Even though they are beautiful on their own, you can pair it with several Golden Rod varieties and create a very attractive fall border in a complimentary color scheme. Plant this hearty and beautiful plant now and you will be rewarded with stunning borders for many Octobers to come.

(MORE FALL ASTERS 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.

OCTOBER GARDENING EVENTS

Sat., Oct. 2 from 10 'til 11:30 *FREE*
Lawn Basics 101. Getting your lawn ready for winter. Free Adult Earth-Kind Educational Seminar with David Rodriguez, Extension Horticulturist for Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension Service at Milberger's. Only 30 spots available. Sign up with Cashiers or call 210-497-3760

Sat., Oct. 9 from 10 'til 11:30 *FREE*
Fall is for Planting Trees, Shrubs and Much More. Fall is an ideal time to plant in South Central Texas because our cooler night temperatures and better rain chances promoter faster root and plant growth. FREE Adult Seminar Only 30 spots available. Sign up with our Cashiers or call 210-497-3760

Sat., Oct 9 from 10 'til 11:30 *FREE*
Fall Color. One of the great things about living in South Central Texas is that we have a gorgeous "Second Spring" from September to December every year. This FREE adult seminar will show you how to make the fall explode with vibrant colors this fall. Only 30 spots available. Sign up with our Cashiers or call 210-497-3760

Sat. & Sun, Oct 30 -31 All day *FREE*
Milberger's Famous Halloween Weekend Celebration. Bring your kids for a fun filled weekend of free Halloween events at the nursery: Pumpkin Patch, Ride the terror train, venture into our famous Hay Maze. Check back our website for our event schedule.



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

3920 North Loop 1604
 San Antonio, TX 78247
 (210) 497-3760

Or on the World Wide Web at
www.milbergernursery.com
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@htc.coop.

Milberger's Nursery
October Features

Autumn in South Texas

IT'S THE BEST SEASON
 FOR PLANTING

Trees & Shrubs
Bedding Plants
Garden Vegetables

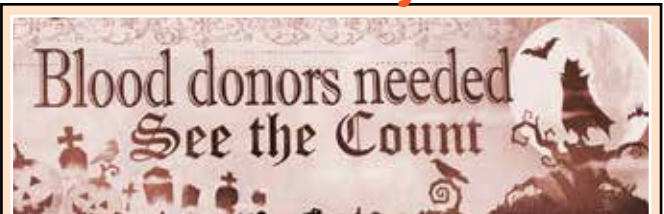


It's Coming Soon!

Milberger's
PUMPKIN
PATCH
SPOOKY-er
THAN EVER



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



Milberger's Halloween Blood Drive

Sat., Oct 30 from 10am 'til 3:00pm

By appointment only. Contact South Texas Blood & Tissue Center or watch for the sign-up link to be posted on our website.

Planning for a Water Garden?

Milberger's has Pumps for
 your water garden, Koi, Water Plants
 and expert advice.

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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GARDENING EXPERTISE

You Really Can't Go Wrong with Fall Asters

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Fall Asters can be used in many places, such as in borders, rock gardens, or wildflower gardens. You will find that growing asters is a simple garden chore. Fall aster is a very hearty plant and it can be grown in just about any soil Texas has to offer. They may be started from seed in spring, but are most often purchased as a potted plant. Plant into a full sun to part sun location in loamy, well-draining soil. Keep new plantings moist and continue watering until blooms cease. It prefers well-drained soil and needs very little water once established, so be careful not to overwater it.

Appropriate care of aster includes watering at the base and not splashing the foliage. Getting water or fertilizer on the leaves encourages powdery

“There are a couple of curious things about this handsome little aster. First, asters in general don't like Texas at all. We're just too hot to suit them. Which brings in the second odd fact: Fall Asters are a native wildflower in Texas, growing as far west as the Hill Country. That's why it handles our growing conditions. Fact is, it handles just about anything.”

~ Neil Sperry's Gardens

mildew and other fungal diseases. Organic mulch can hold in moisture and supply nutrients as it breaks down. Apply within a few inches of aster

stems, but not against them. Fertilize growing asters with a balanced plant food about once a month. Asters need little in the way of maintenance. Care of asters may include deadheading for more blooms and occasionally includes controlling powdery mildew.

Bees, butterflies and other insects love this plant for its fall nectar. They are relatively disease and pest free. The only negative that you should watch out for with this plant is the fact that the stems seem to lose their lower leaves as they age. This can be helped by cutting back about a third of the plant in the summer.



Fall Asters will give you a lovely, natural looking, mounding perennial that blooms in the fall with masses of daisy-like lavender flowers. They are wonderful when standing alone or when blended in with your wild flower bed or in combination with mums.

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 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.

FALL LAWCARE

Fall Top Dressing Your Lawn

By Mark Melchione, *Plant for Success*

Top dressing and overseeding is the absolute best way to renovate your lawn. If your lawn is showing signs of weakness, consider these steps to have your best lawn. It happens to the best of us. Despite your best efforts, some years your lawn just goes to complete junk. A lot of times things may look good in the spring, but as the heat of the summer sets in you can be overwhelmed with problems. Weeds, fungus, grubs, and heat stress can attack your lawn, and your sanity. As defeating as this can be, there is plenty of reason to be hopeful. The cooler weather is around the corner and that means it's the perfect time to top dress your lawn. Top dressing your lawn, especially when combined with core aerating and overseeding, is the best way to renovate your lawn.

What Is Lawn Top Dressing? Top dressing is the process of spreading a thin layer of material over your lawn, or sections of your lawn. This layer is only about a ¼" and is meant to amend the soil of your lawn while letting the existing grass grow through the top dressing material. It is important to be clear that when top dressing your lawn, you don't want to cover your lawn in a thick layer that suffocates it. Instead, you are looking to improve soil conditions for your existing lawn while providing a good environment for new seed to germinate.

Benefits of Top Dressing:

- 🌱 Improves Soil – Top dressing adds nutrients to your lawn organically and improves drainage.
- 🌱 Breaks Down Thatch – The top dressing material helps to break down the thatch layer in your lawn.
- 🌱 Levels Lawn – If you have areas of your lawn that are bumpy, top dressing is a great way to smooth out these areas.
- 🌱 Helps Seed Germinate – If overseeding your

lawn, top dressing allows seed to make direct contact with soil which is best for germination.

- 🌱 Helps In Renovating Distressed Lawn – If there are bare spots in your lawn, or if your lawn is being crowded out by weeds, top dressing is your best bet for correcting soil conditions and incorporating new seed.

Our Central Texas soil is naturally thin and what lies below the surface of your lawn is probably clay sitting on a large layer of limestone. During the construction of your home your yard was stripped of topsoil and compacted, so you are left with shallow compacted and hard soil. In order to add to the organic layer of your soil and stimulate the soil's natural properties, you'll need annual top dressing.



When top dressing your lawn, make small piles either from deploying your bags and opening them in random locations across your lawn or filling your wheelbarrow with your material and dump a bunch of small piles over your lawn. Dumping small piles will make it a lot easier to rake out later on and ensure that you are creating a thin layer.

Looking for turf grass? St Augustine Raleigh is now available in large quantities at Milberger's Nursery. We also have the four most common varieties of Bermuda in stock as well as limited quantities of Zoysia. Refer to the Turf Grass and Sod page of our web site milbergernursery.com for current availability and pricing. Or talk to our sod and turf grass experts when you are at the nursery.

HAPPY FROG® SOIL CONDITIONER

in 1.5 cu.ft. bags
On Sale at Milberger's
for \$24.99 each

In every bag of Happy Frog® Soil Conditioner you'll find finely-screened aged forest products, earthworm castings, and bat guano, not to mention soil microbes to help increase root efficiency and encourage nutrient uptake.



Rake the piles of Top Dressing material into your lawn. Be sure to break up any clumps of compost and make sure you thoroughly rake out each area so it is no more than a ¼" thick. There should be plenty of grass visible once your material is raked in.

The best time to top dress your lawn is when it is actively growing and you are heading into prime growing conditions. For cool season grasses, late summer/early fall is best. In South Central Texas, fall can be the best time to seed your lawn because we don't have to worry too much about really cold weather coming in before the end of the year.

Happy Frog® Soil Conditioner loosens clay soils and provides air space for healthy roots. Every bag is filled with finely screened, pH-balanced aged forest products, earthworm castings, and bat guano, not to mention beneficial microbes that stimulate root development and help plants access nutrients in the soil. Humic acid is added to help increase the uptake of important micronutrients.

For best results, add a three-inch layer of Happy Frog® Soil Conditioner around the base of the plant in spring and fall. You can also rake it into your lawn, and mix half soil conditioner and half native soil every time you plant.

Lawn Basics 101. Getting your turf grass ready for winter and a head start on your spring lawn. FREE Earth-Kind seminar with David Rodriguez, Extension Horticulturist with Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension Service. At the nursery on Sat., Oct 2 at 10:00am. Only 30 spots available. Reserve yours with any one of our cashiers or email us at nursery@milbergersa.com.

TREES AND SHRUBS

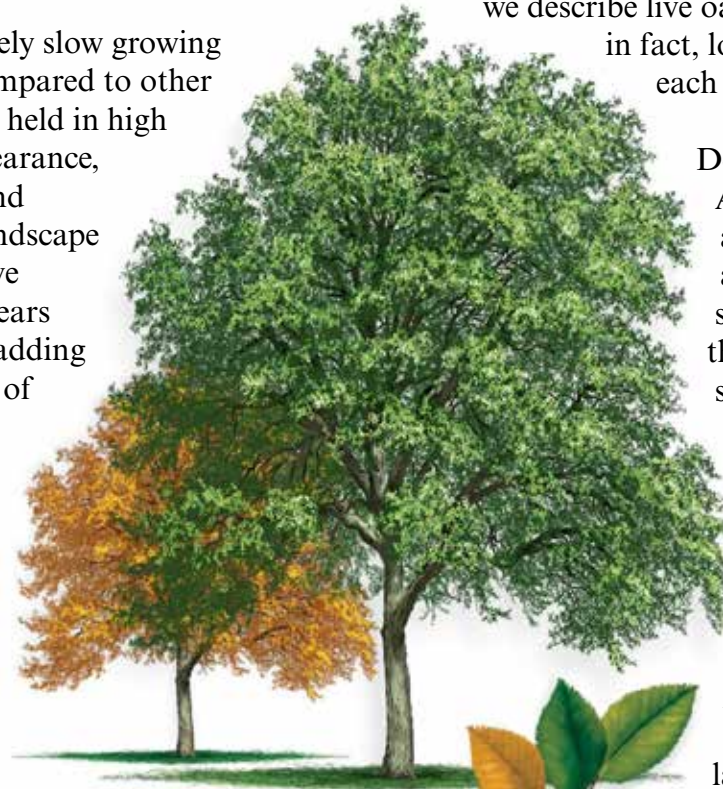
Selecting and Planting Shade Trees

By Dr. Calvin Finch

When you live in a climate like we do, shade trees are an important part of the landscape. Temperatures of 100 degrees plus are difficult to tolerate in the shade and even more unpleasant if there is no shade. Now is a good time to plant a shade tree in a San Antonio landscape.

Among the important issues to consider when selecting a shade tree species are the ultimate size, the growth rate, the appearance, drought tolerance, soil preference and susceptibility to pests and diseases.

Live oaks are relatively slow growing shade trees when compared to other choices, but they are held in high regard for their appearance, drought tolerance and longevity. If your landscape includes a 50-foot live oak, it may be 100 years old and is probably adding \$30,000 to the value of the property. A lot of attention is given to the live oaks susceptibility to the disease “oak wilt” but it is recognized that the disease is relatively easy to detect and prevent if a homeowner does a limited amount of research and is alert to the situation with the trees in the surrounding



Cedar elm is a deciduous shade tree that grows more upright and even taller than the other recommended shade trees. In my experience they seem to grow faster than live oaks but not as fast as Texas red oaks or Mexican sycamore. Cedar elm is a good shade tree choice if your neighborhood is dominated by oaks and you want to diversify but not to the degree of planting a Mexican sycamore.



neighborhood. One of the most effective ways to protect the value of live oaks and other shade trees is to establish a relationship with an arborist that practices in the neighborhood.

Texas red oak is like a live oak in its size, attractive shape and drought tolerance. It is different in its faster growth rate and it is a deciduous tree (loses its leaves every winter). Depending on the soil, it is not unusual for a Texas red oak to add six feet of growth each year for several years after it is planted. Quite often area gardeners remind me that we describe live oaks as “evergreen”, but they do, in fact, lose their leaves for a short time each March.

Deer are common in many San Antonio neighborhoods and are a factor in successfully growing a shade tree. In addition to deer, similar damage can occur when the young smooth bark of a shade tree such as Texas red oak is damaged by a string mower or other piece of equipment. Protect your newly planted tree from the deer with fencing and from string mowers with mulch.

Another species to consider for a shade tree in your San Antonio landscape is the Monterrey oak or Mexican white oak. In terms of growth rate, ultimate size, drought tolerance and pest resistance it is in the same league as the Texas red oak. Mexican white oak is generally evergreen but will sometimes drop its leaves in response to a droughty period.

OCTOBER GARDENING TIPS

Growing in South Texas' Second Spring

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

October is a great time for gardening and landscaping. Many plants can be set out now and this is the perfect time to be replacing plants lost due to the summer drought.

Plant Flowers: The most popular of the cool season flowering annuals to be set out now are pansies. There are so many types and colors of pansies – it might be hard to pick just one. There are pastel shades, varieties with no faces and miniature flowers, so you should have no trouble finding one you like. One tip for flowering annuals—the brighter the color, like reds or yellows, the easier they will be seen from a distance. Blues are best viewed up close.

Besides pansies, other bedding plants that can be planted now include dianthus, flowering cabbage and kale, snapdragons, violas and calendulas.

Wildflowers and seeded annuals like California poppy, oriental poppy, larkspur and bluebonnets should be sown early this month.

October is also a great month to divide and plant spring-blooming perennials like native columbines,

daylilies, phlox, Louisiana and bearded irises, dianthus, coreopsis, coneflowers and daisies.

If you have extras after dividing, give to or trade with a gardening friend or neighbor.

Trees and Shrubs: The fall season is also a perfect time to establish new trees and shrubs. Plants set out now undergo less stress, and their roots have months to grow and become established before spring growth begins and summer heat and drought arrive next year.

Fertilize: October is time for the most important lawn fertilization of the year – application of a winterizer fertilizer to condition the grass for winter survival. Wait until the lawn grass slows growth and mowing every two weeks is adequate before applying. A light application of garden-type fertilizer will boost annual and perennial flowering plants.

Grass: Tall fescue and ryegrass can also be planted in early October. It is too late to sow Bermuda or centipede seed. Beware that armyworms could quickly devour newly sprouted ryegrass.

For more seasonal tips and ideas for your gardened beds and landscape visit our web site at www.milbergernursery.com or stop by the nursery and talk to one of our South 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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IT'S HERE!

Milberger's Pumpkin Patch and Monster MAZE

Bring the kids. Bring your camera for
some Halloween fun for the entire family!



An excellent choice for fall color, **Fall Pansies** are the same as regular springtime petunias only planted in the fall. Pansies thrive in cool weather and will bounce back after hard frosts to resume blooming giving a spectacular display of fall color. They are fast growers and relentless bloomers as long as they are planted and cared for properly. Pansies have relatively large faces and come in the widest range of colors.