

# MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

DECEMBER 2021

## PLANT QUESTIONS

**Are there any cool weather annuals that the deer won't eat?** Snapdragons, calendula, and cyclamen show up on lists that the deer won't eat. However, many gardeners report that deer eat cyclamen blooms. Deer did not eat my snaps. Consider spraying Liquid Fence to discourage deer from pulling up your annuals.

**If I put out suet, what types of birds will it attract?** Suet is flavored beef fat. Insect eaters like woodpeckers, wrens, warblers, mockingbirds and kinglets will go for your suet. If you use the pepper flavored suet the birds will eat it, but the squirrels don't like the hot taste.

**We received paperwhites as a holiday present. Should we plant it?** Yes, paperwhites naturalize if planted in full or partial sun. The lush green foliage will emerge every December and be followed by the blooms in January. They are drought tolerant, pest free, and the deer will not eat them.

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.



**Peace Lilies** are eye-catching plants that are super-easy to grow, and thrive in the low light inside your house but there's a trick to getting those gorgeous blooms. Peace lilies are perfectly happy growing in containers, but they don't like sitting in pots much larger than their root balls.

## GARDENING EXPERTISE

### Bringing The Green Indoors

Indoor plants are easy to maintain and can be placed in any room of your home. From ferns to ficus, houseplants can add color, beauty and texture to your space and offer air cleaning health benefits. The key is to know which varieties work best indoors, what level of care is required for them, and understanding what you can realistically expect from your indoor plants.

Picking the right houseplant is easy, but it does require a little forethought if you want to get the most from it. Light and air flow are the two most important factors that will determine which house plants to put in which location. Areas in your home that have low light can still be used for indoor plants. For instance, the Zanzibar Gem (or ZuZu) requires a minimum amount of light. Additional low light indoor plants include Peace Lily, English Ivy, Boston Fern, Palms, Pothos, Dracaena and Orchids.

(MORE INDOOR PLANTS 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.

## GARDENING EVENTS

December 4 **FREE EVENT**  
CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR UPDATED SCHEDULE

### Milberger's Traditional Christmas Open House

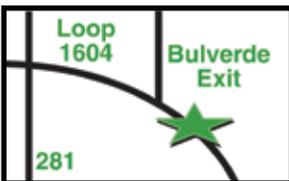
*JOIN US FOR A DAY OF WHOLESOME HOLIDAY FUN FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY!*



Remember to bring your camera for memorable photos with **Santa Claus**. And **Free rides** through the forest of living and fresh cut Christmas Trees on our **Little Red Choo-Choo**. Between Noon and 2pm (*kids 12 and under only*)



Visit Milberger's Christmas Tree Lot for reliable selection of Christmas trees in the San Antonio Area. All of our trees have been selected for their excellent needle retention and shape. Every tree is fresh cut and displayed in water to maintain superior freshness. Trees range from 5' to 12' tall.



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](http://www.milbergernursery.com)  
[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 December Features

### VISIT MILBERGER'S Christmas Shop

Where you will find  
a great selection of  
**FRESH  
WREATHS  
garlands  
and gifts**  
FOR GARDENERS.

We have a great selection of gifts for the avid and novice gardener on your list. And for that hard to please, purchase a

**Milberger Landscape Nursery GIFT CARD**  
for any denomination starting at \$10. You can even order by phone 210-497-3760 and we will mail the card the next business day.

### Living Container-Grown Trees Shaped for Christmas



LIVING TREES BEAUTIFULLY SHAPED FOR CHRISTMAS. Choose from **Italian Stone Pine, Aleppo Pine, LEYLAND CYPRESS, Blue Point Juniper, Arizona Cypress** *and more!*

**Planning for a Water Garden?**  
Milberger's has Pumps for your water garden, Water Garden Supplies, 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

## Bringing The Green Indoors

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Different rooms will naturally have different light and airflow patterns, plus there's something to be said for what you will be doing in that room. Take your bedroom, for example – the room where you want to relax, get some good sleep and wake up refreshed. Is there a plant for that? Several, actually. The best are plants from the Bromeliad family which release the majority of their oxygen at night – while working to remove pollutants – so they are a great option to have in your bedroom where you sleep. Plus, due to their variety, there's a bromeliad to go with virtually any bedroom decor.

“While most houseplants are low maintenance, there are a few varieties that are especially easy to care for. Bromeliads, Cacti, Succulents, Airplants, Ponytail Palm, Hedera Ivy, Maidenhair Fern and more are all easy to manage – even for beginner gardeners.”

Another choice indoor plant that makes the most sense for your bedroom is the Sansevieria (aka Devil's Tongue, Snake Plant, or Bow String Hemp), which lowers airborne allergen levels while it releases moisture into the air.

When you think about your kitchen from a plant's point of view, you can guess that fluctuating temperatures, varying light levels (from sun-drenched to overhead lighting), and all manner of smells and other airborne “extras” will play a major role in deciding which plants work best in the heart of your home.

Plants that help with moisture control are the best types to have in your kitchen. Ficus Lyrate, also known as Fiddle-Leaf Fig, controls humidity and purifies the air, naturally cleaning your kitchen of chemical compounds and dust. Additionally, Hedera Ivy can substantially reduce the amount of mold in the air.

Just like outdoor plants, indoor plants need care and maintenance with water, light and proper nourishment to grow, survive and thrive. However, keep in mind that indoor plants do not like standing in water.



**Dracaena** is one of the best plant choices to remove harmful pollutants, like benzene chemicals commonly found in cleaning products, plastics and paint, from the air. Because of their air cleaning properties, Dracaena is an ideal indoor plant for people with asthma.

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You will find Milberger's greenhouses full of many different types of plants that will thrive in your house and make wonderful gifts that will last long after the Holidays. The interior plant experts at our nursery will help you find the right plant for the right room in your home.

## IN YOUR WINTER GARDEN

# Winter Review of Your Garden

Winter in Texas is a good time of year to look at your landscape, and imagine what evergreen plants can be added to enhance the view. In winter, evergreen plants that change very little throughout the year are the showstoppers of your landscape. Winter is the best time of year to determine where you might want to add some of these plants come spring, and how they'll integrate into your landscape.

Things to consider when integrating evergreen backbone plants into your landscape:

- ☞ Determine their function – screening, backdrop, turfgrass replacement, wildlife habitat, architectural focus, or all of the above.

- ☞ Be thoughtful about placement – keep structural plants such as yucca or cactus away from walkways.

- ☞ Consider your soil type – deep (central and east Bexar County), shallow (northern Bexar County) or sandy (south Bexar County).



Perennials are the reliable staples of your landscape. The key to a perennial's true resilience is its life cycle: After germinating, a perennial establishes itself, first through the roots and then the stems and leaves. Firmly established in the second year, most perennials will flower and set seed. Others may take a few more years before blooming.

In Texas, below-freezing temperatures are spread out throughout the wintertime. November brought us our first taste of really cold weather. Freezes will become more frequent as the winter progresses; however, they are rarely constant. It's a good idea to have a plan in place for when freezes do come to make sure that your perennials (plants that survive winter) are protected for re-blooming in the spring. Since freezes are quite sporadic during a Texas winter, it's feasible

for you to pull out all the stops when you hear news of a freezing cold front. Be prepared to take the following actions when a freeze is imminent:

- ☞ Cover shrubs and other tender plants with some sort of fabric (burlap, sheets, etc.). Do not use plastic to cover your plants.

- ☞ If high winds are expected, plan to cover evergreen plants as well.

Year-round gardening is one

of the great perks to living in South Central Texas. Planning for the season and selecting the plant varieties that thrive here can give you a beautiful garden experience twelve months of the year.

## OUT IN YOUR LAWN

# Dress Your Landscape in Layers

By Sasha Kodet, SAWS Conservation Planner

Here in South Central Texas we can grow a wide variety of plants from cacti and succulents to semi-tropical bloomers and palms. Many plants bounced back promptly after the prolonged cold snap while others died or recovered more slowly. You will find it best to work with nature to create a multi-layered gardening approach that will help you create a more resilient, wildlife friendly backyard.

Plant for biodiversity. A rich variety of plants keeps your yard looking great year-round and is key to a

“It’s sweater weather for your landscape. To help your garden survive cold snaps, like we had last February, and keep backyard wildlife cozy use a multi-layered landscape design.”

~ Sasha Kodet

great wildlife garden that supports local and migrating wildlife. Massed plantings are a common and beautiful design principle, but relying on one plant species could leave a big hole in your landscape that’s expensive to replace.

Choose native plants. Our tough regional plants are more likely to take droughts and freezes in stride. A diverse mix of native plants require much less water and provide for wildlife all year, too.

Layer your landscape. Use trees, shrubs, perennials and groundcovers to provide safe nesting spaces and food. The right plants keep wildlife cozy in winter. Remember, evergreens are the sweaters of the landscape.

Mulch for healthy soils. I’m a lazy gardener, so I mow leaves into the lawn and rake a reasonable layer of leaves into my landscape beds to keep over the winter. Then I add a layer of mulch over them in spring which helps hold moisture in the soil and freshens the look. Try “green mulch.” Plant densely instead of using wood chips. Mimic natural communities for an adapted yet artful look.

Know your microclimates. Check plant tags at the garden center to see if it grows in sun or shade, but also consider which direction it’s facing, nearby windbreaks, heat-holding stones and slope. Protected locations helped many plants survive last February.



**Sabal Palms** seemed to scoff at the freeze while other palms, including nearly all royal, date, queen and Mexican fan palms did not survive the freeze. Many other species of palms, including windmill, European and California fan palms, took the spring and summer to recover. (Dwarf Palmetto Sabal Minor shown in photo)

You can find excellent quality mulches at Milberger’s Nursery that will help protect your landscape and flower beds throughout the winter months. Apply at least 2” of mulch to all your landscape and around trees, it will help protect your plant investment from surprise winter freezes.

## TREES AND SHRUBS

# Plant A Tree. Save Energy. Save Money.

## With CPS Energy Green Shade Rebates

Not only are trees aesthetically pleasing, they also increase property value, provide cooling shade to your home's interior and exterior, remove pollutants from the air, reduce storm water runoff and improve the environment for a sustainable future.

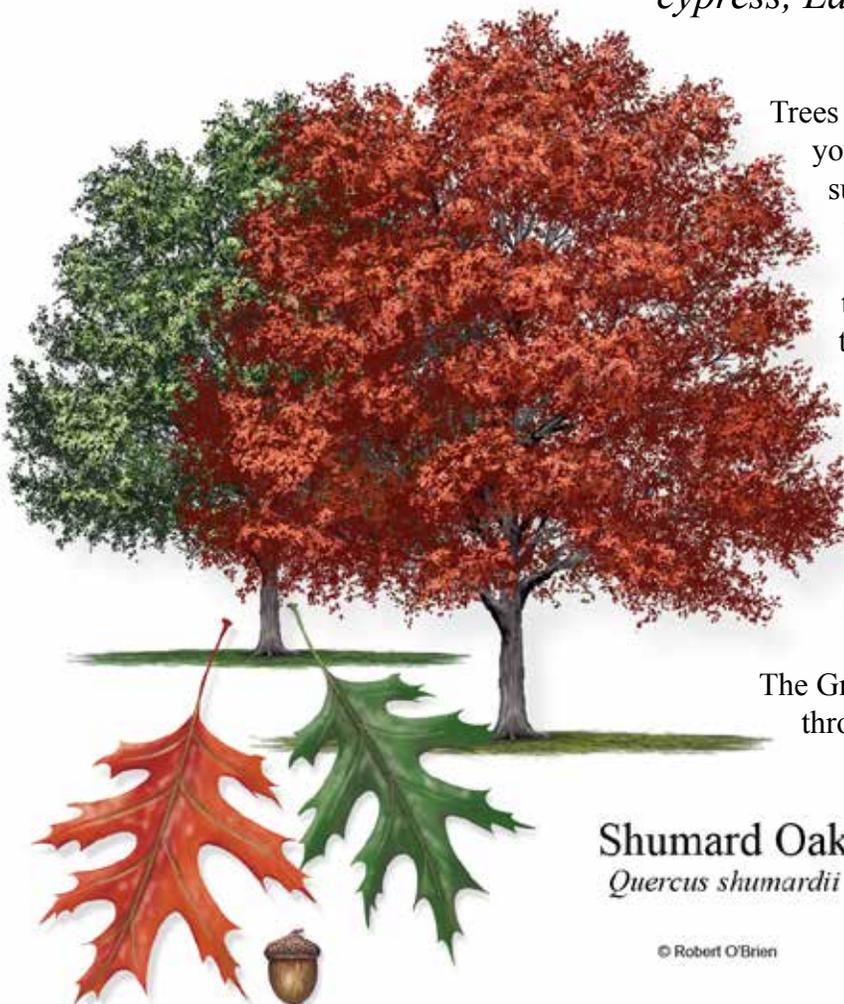
“December is a great month to plant trees and shrubs. The cool winter weather allows the plants to develop a root system before it gets hot again. For shade trees, consider live oak, bur oak, Mexican white oak, cedar elm, Chinese pistache, chinkapin oak, Montezuma cypress, Lacey oak, or Texas red oak.”

~ Dr. Calvin Finch

Trees planted on the west, south and east sides of your home or building provide shade from the sun during the hottest times of the day, reducing the load on your air conditioning system. Shading from trees can reduce surrounding air temperatures as much as 9° F. This helps reduce the burden on your air-conditioning system, which helps you save energy. According to a study by the Houston Advanced Research Center, a mature medium or large tree planted within 10 to 30 feet of a building on the west, south or east side can save a home approximately 381 kWh per year, or roughly \$37 per year, in energy savings.

The Green Shade Tree Rebate program runs October through April. CPS Energy customers are eligible for a lifetime limit of 5 rebates per physical address toward the purchase of trees from the approved species list. Rebates are awarded on a first come, first serve basis and are available until funds are exhausted.

You can view complete information on the program and download an application at the CPS web site at <https://www.cpsenergy.com/en/my-home/ways-to-save/rebates-rebate/green-shade-tree-rebate.html>.



**Shumard Oak**  
*Quercus shumardii*

© Robert O'Brien

**Shumard Red Oak** is one of the most popular landscape trees among professional landscapers in Texas. It can grow rapidly, possibly 50-60 feet at maturity, and will have a spread of possibly 40 feet at maturity. Its popularity is also driven by some wonderful autumn color. Quite possibly, the Shumard's biggest selling point could be its easy adaptability to our alkaline soils. On the down side, like the green ash, the Shumard can often be one of the last to re-leaf in the spring.

Milberger's has the largest selection of fresh, well-rooted trees in the area. Our South Texas landscape and tree experts can give you advice on which A&M recommended trees would be most suitable for your landscape. Visit our web site at [www.MilbergerNursery.com](http://www.MilbergerNursery.com) and click through to our on-line tree lot for section and planting guidelines.

## DECEMBER GARDENING TIPS

# Winter is an Ideal Planting Time

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

**Plant:** November and December are the ideal months to plant trees and shrubs. It is the ideal time to move trees and shrubs as well. Planting now gives the plant time to establish its root system before the shoot growth develops in the spring. Also, usually little supplemental watering is required through the winter. Look around at the fall color and see which plants you would like to add to your landscape. Make certain your final choices are from the list of recommended trees and shrubs for this area found at [www.milbergernursery.com](http://www.milbergernursery.com).

Many of South Central Texas' finest wildflowers can be seeded now and bluebonnets can be transplanted. Direct-seed the seed mixes into the soil.

**Prune:** This is the ideal pruning time for many trees and shrubs. If you have oak trees in need of pruning, begin now. It is especially critical in areas where the oak wilt fungus is a problem. Apply horticultural tree wound dressing on all oak cuts. Prune out dead, damaged or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Avoid topping or dehorning.

**Fertilize:** If you have procrastinated the application of the most important lawn fertilization of the year - the application of a "Winterizer" fertilizer to condition the grass for winter survival - do it before December. The fertilizers to use are the ones which have "Winterizer" on the bags and are complete (contains all three elements — nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium) analysis with 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratios.

**On the Lookout:** Watch for pillbugs (sowbugs or rollie-pollies) eating seedlings and young transplants of flowering annuals such as bluebonnets, pansies, etc. Control with a barrier of an insecticide or by using baits until the plants are older and tougher. Scale and other hard-to-kill insect pests may be overwintering on your trees or shrubs.

**Odd Jobs:** Do not allow heavy accumulations of leaves to pile up on the lawn area. If they get wet and packed together, the grass can be damaged. It is best to rake leaves or pick them up with a mower and bagger and place them in a compost pile or spread them over the garden area and work them into the soil. Add additional fertilizer to assist in decomposition.

For more seasonal tips and ideas for your gardened beds and landscape visit our web site at [www.milbergernursery.com](http://www.milbergernursery.com) or stop by the nursery and talk to one of our South Texas.

### We're Going Green!

We will no longer print and mail the black and white version of this, our GARDENING NEWSLETTER for SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS.

Milberger's has been proud to print and mail this popular newsletter to our subscribers since December 2003. But the black and white images just didn't do justice to the beauty that Texas offers its gardeners.

### We're Going Full Color!

The FREE Full Color version of this Newsletter will be available to you at absolutely no cost.

Every month (except January) you will be able to find and download this publication from our website [MilbergerNursery.com](http://MilbergerNursery.com) or, if you prefer, have it delivered to your in box.

eMail Address \_\_\_\_\_

We always respect your privacy. Your email address will never be shared with anyone who is not associated with Milberger's Nursery.

Milberger's Landscape Nursery  
3920 N Loop 1604 E  
San Antonio, TX 78247



## Christmas Trees

Milberger's will have the freshest, most reliable selection of Christmas Trees in San Antonio. Fresh cut. Displayed and kept in water.

*In the nursery after Thanksgiving*



**Primula**, another name for primrose, means "first prime." It's a very accurate name for this little shade-loving beauty, since the flowering primrose is one of Mother Nature's first indicators that spring is a step away from your door. *Primula vulgaris* grows four to six inches in height and tends to have creamy single flowers centered in a rosette of dark green foliage. It's a herbaceous perennial that adds bouquets of color to your shade gardens.