

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

MAY 2022

PLANT QUESTIONS

Should we stop feeding the birds as we move into summer? It seems like they shouldn't need food support in the summertime.

The main reason many of us feed the birds is to bring them into range for easy observation. That is easier to do in the winter than the summer.

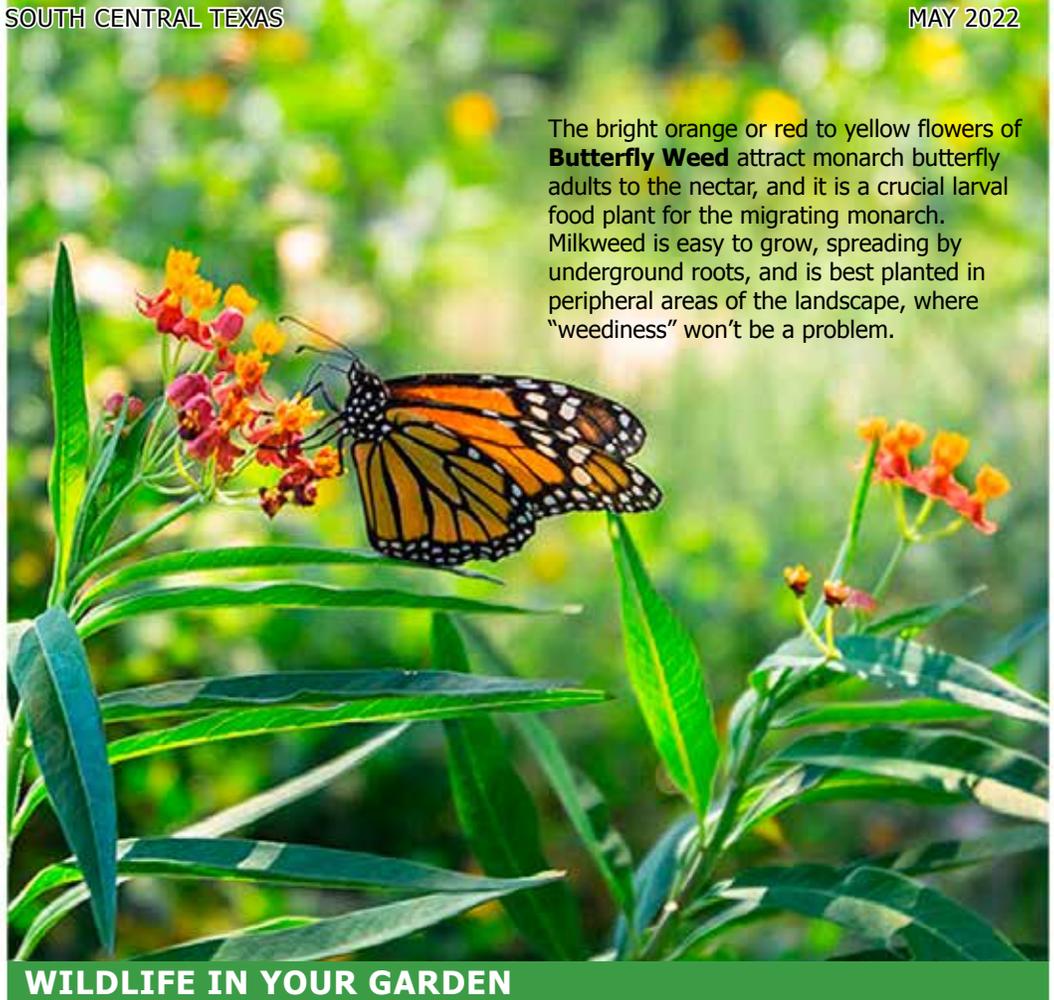
My English peas are already declining. Is that normal?

They sometimes last through May if you are generous with the water and mulch them.

Our St Augustine grass is finally beginning to grow but it has a yellow hue. Is that an iron deficiency?

Chlorosis in early spring in St Augustine grass is not a major problem. The St Augustine grows out of it. A chelated iron products sprayed on the foliage will green it up. Or use "Iron Plus" if you prefer a granular fertilizer.

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 bright orange or red to yellow flowers of **Butterfly Weed** attract monarch butterfly adults to the nectar, and it is a crucial larval food plant for the migrating monarch. Milkweed is easy to grow, spreading by underground roots, and is best planted in peripheral areas of the landscape, where "weediness" won't be a problem.

WILDLIFE IN YOUR GARDEN

Attracting Butterflies

By Keith Hansen, A&M AgriLife Extension Agent

Butterflies are the gems of the insect world. Their graceful flight and bright colors never fail to delight children and adults alike. I still get excited when I see a colorful butterfly, especially ones that are unusual or not frequently seen. You don't need a fancy facility to attract butterflies to your own yard. Large masses of color will draw in both native and migrating species, and if the right foods are present, they'll probably hang around and visit for many days. Provide Food and They Will Come. It is important to provide food plants not only for the adult butterfly, but also for the less-attractive larval stage. By supplying larval food plants, butterflies will be attracted to your yard to lay their eggs for future generations.

(MORE BUTTERFLIES 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.

GARDENING EVENTS at the NURSERY

**Sat., May 7 starts at 10:30 am FREE SEMINAR
Landscape and Patio Citrus**

Fruit trees are a gorgeous, healthy, and practical addition to your patio or landscape. They are easy enough to take care of as a beginning gardener or a great plant to take care of with your children, allowing them to see science in action.

Texas is a perfect state for all kinds of fruit trees, such as apple or fig, as its warm weather and plentiful rain create an ideal environment for growth and the production of healthy fruit. If you are considering fruit trees for your landscape be sure to attend this free seminar.

FREE Adult Seminar with Bexar County Extension Agent, David Rodriguez. David will discuss the how and why of establishing your own home fruit orchard. David will discuss the types and varieties of fruit, nuts, grapes and berries suited for South Texas. You will learn how to plant and care for you orchard including the best cultural practices to maximize yield and quality.

**Sat., June 4 starts at 10:30 am FREE SEMINAR
Color Plants, Crape Myrtles and More**

Learn what you can do to keep your garden beds blooming throughout the heat of the summer, how to attract butterflies and humming birds and how to prepare your landscape for summer heat. Presented by David Rodriguez, Extension Horticulturist for Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension Service. David will answer your specific questions about your gardening issues. Bring a notebook.



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

Milberger's Nursery
May Features

MAY is One of the **MOST COLORFUL TIMES OF THE YEAR**

Look for weekly specials on **BOUGAINVILLEA HIBISCUS** and OTHER **BLOOMING BEAUTIES** that thrive in our hot South Texas sun.

Backyard Citrus

- ❖ Beautiful dark green foliage
- ❖ Sensuously perfumed flowers
- ❖ Fabulously edible fruit

Your citrus will thrive in pots set out on your patio.

Planning for a Water Garden?
Milberger's has it all:
WATER GARDEN PUMPS AND SUPPLIES
WATER PLANTS

Not only do water features add an **AIR OF TRANQUILITY** to your landscape – they **INCREASE THE VALUE of your property.**

Watch for our weekly sale specials in The San Antonio Express-News or at www.MilbergerNursery.com

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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WILDLIFE IN YOUR GARDEN

Attracting Butterflies

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Butterflies also like damp areas where they can sip water and dissolved salts from the mud. This is called “puddling.” You can make your own puddle by fixing a spot in the sun near your flower garden where the soil will stay damp and visiting butterflies can easily spot it.

Keep the soil constantly moist. You may not attract any butterflies, but when you do see them resting elsewhere on a muddy patch of ground, you’ll know what they are doing.

Overripe fruit will also draw many butterflies. A shallow pan on the edge of the garden filled with slices of melon



Giant Swallowtail munching on **Garden Phlox**. Also known as John Fanick Perennial this hardy perennial attracts butterflies with its with showy clusters of light pink blossoms with darker pink throats. Compact growth habit; dark green foliage it tolerates heat, drought and is a Texas Superstar™

“Providing nectar sources for butterflies is important due to habitat loss and increased use of pesticides in crop fields. You can do your part to provide sanctuary for these insects — and save water while doing so.”

~ Sarah Galvan, SAWS Conservation Consultant

or banana will attract a lot of attention. Try using cantaloupe rinds clipped to a coat hanger and hung in a sunny spot for drawing butterflies. Nearly any kind of overripe fruit, especially if it is fermenting, will host a crowd of bibbers.

Some butterflies are drawn to very specific plants, while others will visit nearly any attractive flower that provides nectar. Many species need very particular plants on which to lay their eggs. For example, the beautiful orange, silver and black Gulf Fritillary butterflies lay their eggs on passionflower or may-pop vines and it would be unusual to not find the rusty red caterpillars munching away on the leaves or the adults flitting around. Passionflower vines are easy to grow and have beautiful flowers. Provide plenty of room for the vines to sucker and run.

WATER GARDENING

Water Features in Your Landscape

Many homeowners look for clever ways to spruce up their lawns, which can include statues, topiaries, and outdoor lighting. Perhaps one of the most pleasing and relaxing additions are those that involve water features.

The trickling water invokes a sense of calm and adds a decorative touch to the landscape. The benefits of adding water features to your yard are numerous and include improved air quality, increased wildlife presence, peaceful trickling water, and low maintenance.

Water Features Attract Wildlife Such As Birds & Frogs to Your Residential or Commercial Property. One of the most exciting benefits of water features is the attraction of wildlife to residential and commercial properties.

All animals need water, and they usually spend a good portion of their day seeking it out.

The installation of a pond or waterfall will offer a refreshing place for animals to stop and cool off. You can see birds, frogs, squirrels, and many other animals visit your yard to take advantage of the water from your water features.

Sounds of Trickling Water Are Soothing & Proven to Be Relaxing. Therapists often use the sound of gently flowing water to invoke a sense of calm in their patients. Research has shown that the sound can help to reduce stress, and many mothers use the sound to soothe babies. It's been said that the sound is similar to the noises heard in the womb by babies.

After a hard day at work, it will be beneficial to sit next to your new water feature and kick back for a bit. The overall effect will be a positive one, which will make the investment worthwhile.

Water Features Can Be Very Low Maintenance and Constantly Recycle Water. Water features do not waste water. They recycle their own water, continually stirring it to prevent mosquitoes from breeding. Pumps are used to suck in, filter, and redistribute the water. The quality of the water is not as important in water features as it would be in pools, for example, which makes it easier to maintain. Occasional maintenance of pumps, pipes, and drains may be needed, but for the most part, water features are very hands off.



Compared with other types of gardens, water gardens require a minimum of attention. There is very little weeding, certainly no watering, and there are fewer insects or diseases which attack the plants.

Whether you want to install your own water garden or have it installed by professionals, Milberger's has the materials and expertise to help you add a water feature that will add value to your landscape. Visit our web site www.milbergernursery.com for ideas and information.

IN YOUR ROSE GARDEN

Growing Roses in Containers

With the exception of large climbers, most roses can be grown successfully in containers. It is important that the container be large enough to provide ample space for the roots; also to have good drainage, good soil and a location with adequate light and air circulation.

The container may be plastic or clay. Plastic fares better in cold climates where freezing may actually crack clay containers. Clay containers do provide a cooler condition for the roots during hot weather.

“Roses in pots extend the scope and possibilities of gardening. Wide walkways can be highlighted with tubs of roses, entryways can be graced with the beauty and fragrance of roses. Miniature roses can dress up window boxes in the summer, and then be brought indoors in winter to perk up the house.”

~ Dr. Jerry Parsons, Bexar County Horticulturalist

If choosing plastic, it is better to obtain the lighter terra-cotta color rather than the darker plastics, as they heat up faster. When met with these requirements, one can grow miniatures right through roses that can attain a height and spread of up to five feet.



Roses that grow from pots may need to be watered daily during our hot, summer months. It's relatively easy to move them to a sheltered position in extreme weather.

It is important that bush roses and small shrub roses be placed in containers no less than 15 inches in diameter. They will do well there for about two years and then will need transplanting. Roses in containers tend to deplete the soil of its nutrients more rapidly than if they were in the ground. Often they will also outgrow their containers and need a larger home. In this case one can provide the rose with a container one or two sizes up from the previous one.

Place your potted roses in a location where they receive some moving air. This will reduce the incidence of fungus-related rose diseases. A rose should also have a full day of sun, or at least seven hours.

Milberger's carries many varieties of Antique and Modern roses that are recommended by Texas A&M and the San Antonio Rose Society to do well in South Central Texas. Stop by the nursery and one of our South Texas gardening experts can help you choose the rose varieties that are best suited for your landscape and your gardening style.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Texas Mountain Laurel

By D. Hairlloyde, The Accidental Gardener

Your Texas Mountain Laurel will serve you well as a small tree for tight spaces such as entry ways and courtyards. Or you can use this Texas Native as a dense hedge by planting a row of them and let the shrubs develop without shearing. The dense evergreen foliage works well as a fence line or to screen an unattractive view. Though these slow-growing plants can be kept pruned to a shrub size, most often they are allowed to mature into small tree-like forms 10 feet wide and 15 feet high, multi- or single-trunked.

The bright purple blooms contrasting with the dark green leaves are one of the most attractive features of this plant. Lovely as they are, the flowers of Texas Mountain Laurel are toxic to humans and animals, as are the plant's seed pods and leaves. The seeds – called mescal beans – are a pretty orange-red color and have been used as necklace beads. The brilliant, lacquer red seeds were valued by indigenous people for ornament and ceremonial use. They contain the highly poisonous alkaloid cytisine or sophorine—a substance related to nicotine and widely cited as a narcotic and hallucinogen.

You will also be attracted to the fragrance. Many are reminded of the scent of grape Kool-Aid, soda, or gum, but the fragrance is deeper, richer, and more floral than the artificial aroma of processed food.

These plants grow slowly, so if you're looking for an immediate statement in the landscape,



Deer may not like **Texas Mountain Laurel**, but the Tiger Swallowtail does. Fragrant violet-blue flowers in terminal clusters create a wonderful display in spring against the backdrop of shiny dark green foliage. This multi-stemmed evergreen is excellent for use as a large shrub or small tree. Slow growing and easily trained as espalier or a patio tree. This desert native thrives in warm, sunny, arid environments.

you might consider purchasing a well-established specimen in a large container. Texas mountain laurel does not propagate well from cuttings. However, if you're patient, you can grow a Texas Mountain Laurel from seed. A better choice is transplanting a sapling. When transplanting into the ground, mix some extra calcium into the soil at the planting site to help plants get established. Texas Mountain Laurel prefers alkaline, well-drained rocky soils, including those that contain limestone. They'll do well in clay, loam, and sand, and will tolerate being planted in or near turf.

Choose a planting site in an area that gets full sun although your Texas Mountain Laurel will also tolerate light shade for part of the day. Once established, these drought-tolerant shrubs require little to no irrigation. They also do perfectly well with no fertilization, but in areas with very poor soil you can add a small amount of a balanced fertilizer such as NPK 10-10-10 in springtime.

There is no actual need to prune Texas Mountain Laurel. But if you want to change its form, say, into more of a traditional tree shape, or into a more compact bush, you can do so. But do keep in mind that the blossoms only appear on year-old wood. So while you might be tempted to prune during winter dormancy, this might result in less abundant blooms. An alternative pruning time is in the summer, after it has finished flowering. When the brutal heat strikes these plants will go dormant.

MAY GARDENING TIPS

Planting Before the Summer's Heat

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

Plant: Fruit set of many vegetables are sensitive to high temperatures, so plant okra, Southern peas, peanuts, sweet corn, watermelons, cucumbers, squash, cantaloupes and eggplant during the first part of May for best results. High temperatures, both day and night, interfere with pollination and fruit set in many vegetables. Caladiums prefer a loose, well-drained soil with plenty of organic matter.

Plant sun-loving, heat tolerant annual flowers such as portulaca, purslane, copper plants, lantanas, and ornamental peppers.

Prune pillar or climbing roses as soon as they have finished their major bloom to allow time for the development of new canes for next spring's blooms. Prune storm-damaged tree branches immediately after damage occurs.

Fertilize: If you have not applied fertilizer to the lawn, May is a good month to fertilize lawn grasses after the lawn grass has been mowed twice. Slow-release fertilizers are best because they feed throughout the growing season and do not leach (wash) into the ground.

Odd Jobs: After spring bulbs have finished flowering, wait until the foliage turns brown before cutting it off. Food is being manufactured and stored for next year's blooms. Mulch plants to reduce watering requirements, suppress weed growth and minimize soil temperature changes. Peach fruit should be thinned to six to eight inches apart along the fruiting branches which generally leaves about 600 fruit per mature tree; apples and pears should be thinned to one fruit per spur or cluster.

On the Lookout: To encourage more rapid reblooming, pinch off old flowers on bedding plants after their first flower cycle is completed. Roses may encounter insect problems. Watch for aphids on tender new growth, thrips on flowers and cucumber beetles on foliage. Beetles are especially a problem if a vegetable garden is nearby. Fear not, this is the normal season of leaf shed for photinias, gardenias, ligustrums, pittosporums and magnolias.

For more details and complete Gardening Tips for this month visit www.milbergernursery.com.

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HOW TO

Care for Perennial Primrose

This plant with its finely textured leaves will bloom from spring to summer. Primrose can reach six inches in height and has a spread up to three feet. Texas Primrose will tolerate heat making it a great rock garden plant or a border in a sunny location. Make sure to plant in an area with good drainage.

🌱 Grow primroses in a garden bed that receives partial all-day shade or partial morning sun and afternoon shade. Select a bed with well-drained but moist soil, and space the plants eight inches apart in all directions.

🌱 Spread a two-inch layer of mulch over the garden bed after planting to help conserve soil moisture and prevent weed growth. Replenish the mulch in spring to maintain its depth through summer.

🌱 Water primroses once weekly or before the top one inch of soil dries completely. Supply about one

inch of water at each irrigation to moisten the top six inches of soil.

🌱 Apply 1/2 pound of 8-8-8 fertilizer over 50 square feet of bed in spring when the primroses first begin to emerge. Sprinkle the fertilizer on the soil surface between the plants so it doesn't touch the tender young stems. Water following application so that the fertilizer dissolves into the soil.

🌱 Pinch off the spent primrose flowers to clean up the plants and encourage further blooming. Cut back the primroses by up to one-third their height after the first flush of bloom so that they can regrow dense foliage and new flower buds.

🌱 Monitor the plants for leaf spots, chewed foliage or sticky residue on the leaves, which can indicate aphid or mite infestations. Rinse these pests off the foliage with a direct spray of water, or spray them with an insecticidal soap.



Bougainvillea comes in lots of colors—from the traditional hot pink to red, soft pink, apricot and even white. The colors that attract us are the bracts—modified leaves—like poinsettias. Its tiny white flowers inside the bracts attract butterflies. Bougainvillea does best in containers. Full sun is best and they're very drought-tolerant, once established. When you water give them a deep drench and let them dry out.