

# MILBERGER LANDSCAPE NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

JULY 2022

## PLANT QUESTIONS

**My impatiens has what appears to be deposits of "salts" on the stems. Is this natural?** These "grains of sugar or salt" are honeydew secreted either by scale insects or aphids – probably aphids. Use a general purpose insecticide ensuring complete and thorough coverage and you should eliminate your deposits of grain problem.

**My eggplants have a small, black, weevil-like bug eating them. They leave only lace-like remnants of the leaves. What can I do?** Your eggplants are being attacked by flea beetles. You can treat the foliage with Sevin, Malathion or Thiodan. Or "organically" you can try Spinosad.

**What is the most efficient way to water vegetable and flower gardens?** Drip irrigation slowly places the water right on the root system. That is why it is so efficient.

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.



**Rock Rose**, or Pavonia, has an "old fashioned" growing pattern as it sprawls outward from its base, often growing over three feet tall. It makes a good informal ground cover for sunny dry sites. The blooms are quarter size, flat and pink. Because of its resilience in local growing conditions Rock Rose has been recognized as a Texas SuperStar™.

## SUMMER COLOR

# Hot Weather All Stars

By Dr. Calvin Finch

The hot weather is here in earnest. The hot weather cuts down the gardening opportunities, but there are some all-star performers that will do their best show during the blistering heat. They are blooming in area landscapes and can also be planted at this time of the year. Consider **esperanza**, **poinciana**, "**indigo Spires**" **Salvia**, **firebush** and **rock rose** for summer blooms. Gardening in South Texas' summers can be challenging, with brutal summer heat and cyclical droughts. However, with care and attention, you can keep your gardens and beds colorful and productive. For general practices it is important to pay attention to the light and watering requirements of your plants. Cover all bare areas with mulch. This will keep the ground cooler throughout the hottest part of the summer and will break down to provide much-needed organic matter in the soil.

(MORE SUMMER COLOR 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.

**TEXAS FRUIT TREES**

# Texas Tough Persimmon

By David Abrego, SAWS Conservation Consultant

This sun-loving perennial beauty bears sweet black fruit in late summer for you and the wildlife to enjoy. Many times, nature is not balanced and gives many virtues to a single plant. This is exactly what happened to Texas persimmon.

This perennial shrub (or small tree) is extremely drought tolerant and an excellent choice for decorating our gardens. Its bark is a smooth, steely gray color and the leaves are small, thick, and covered with tiny hairs. Although it's slow growing, Texas persimmon can eventually reach 20 feet tall.

In spring, Texas persimmon boasts branches covered in small white flowers that develop into hundreds of one-inch fruits that cover the tree in late summer. The very sweet black fruit (similar to figs or prunes in taste) can be consumed fresh or used to make jelly. Myriad species of birds and mammals love the fruit, which is also used in many places around Mexico to dye leather. (The dark purple fruit can also stain driveways and decks.)

Texas persimmon reproduces mainly by seed and enjoys mostly sunny spots with good drainage, but it's not very demanding since it will resist onslaughts of both heat and poor nutrient soils.

If you have a nice open space in the sun where other plants have said no, give this tough Texan a chance to put the sun and drought in their place.



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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 fullfathom505@gmail.com.

# Milberger's Nursery

## July Features



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## SUMMER COLOR

## Hot Weather All Stars

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

**Pride of Barbados** or **poinciana** like the sun and heat as much as **esperanza**. Like **esperanza** they do not need supplementary irrigation and they are a favorite hummingbird plant. Butterflies also favor the rounded clumps of “glow in the dark” orange and yellow blooms. Unfortunately deer eat poinciana. A poinciana makes an airy tropical looking plant that freezes back each winter, but grows to seven or eight feet tall by summer’s end.



**Firebush** is a sun loving summer bloomer in the same league as poinciana and **esperanza**. It has nickel size tubular red blooms that cover the shrub from June until November. Firebush has an attractive red tint to its foliage and purple red foliage after the first cold wave moves through. In between the red blooms is probably the most favored hummingbird plant in the garden.

“Poor cultural practices and neglect during summer months will weaken your beautiful summer bloomers and make it harder for them to withstand rugged winter condition.”

~ Dr. Jerry Parsons, Bexar County Horticulturalist

**Esperanza** is also called **Texas Bells**. The blooms are bright yellow and look like miniature bells (half-dollar size). The foliage is light green. Most winters **esperanza** freezes back to the ground. If the weather is mild and they do not freeze back the plant eventually makes a small tree. There are several 15 foot **esperanzas** downtown and near the Riverwalk where it rarely freezes. If you cut them back to the ground each year they grow to seven feet most summers. **Esperanza** have really become popular since the “Gold Star” selection was introduced by Dr. Jerry Parsons. They are blooming machines. The older selections had a few blooms at the end of the stems. ‘Gold Star’ begins blooming when it is two feet tall and has large clumps of flowers throughout the plant. **Esperanza** benefits by being deadheaded as the current flowers decline. If the spent flowers are not cut off, seed pods form and there is more time between flushes of blooms.

‘**Indigo Spires**’ **Salvia** is far from disciplined. At the Botanical Garden ‘**Indigo Spires**’ grows to six feet tall and sprawls in all directions. It achieves “All Star” status because of its drought-tolerance, pest free growth and blue blooms. The dark blue blooms make a spectacular show. Deer do not eat **salvia** and they are a favorite nectar source for butterflies and hummingbirds. ‘**Indigo Spires**’ freezes back to the ground every winter.

## SUMMER GARDEN TASKS

# Cutback Now To Ensure Fall Blooms Later

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

Blooms may last longer in cooler climates but cooler climates do not have the potential for two spectacular bloom periods each year as South Texas does. Most of us expect our flowering perennials to bloom well in the spring but overlook the fall blooming season. Plants are not flowering to make us happy; they are flowering to produce seed and complete the reproductive stage of their life cycle. If the old flower stalks are cut off and not allowed to mature seeds, the plant will attempt to make more seed. Then we get to enjoy another bloom cycle. Flower petals burn in the summer sun. August is the time to act. Remember, shrubs that bloom after June usually do so from buds that are formed on shoots that grow the same year. These shrubs should be pruned in late winter to promote vigorous shoot-growth in spring.

Hot weather greatly shortens the life and beauty of blooms. During the spring bloom season, Texas weather is making the transition from winter to summer. Unfortunately the transition period may only be for several days, i.e., Texas temperatures rapidly change from frosty to scorchy. The fall weather conditions, in comparison, are ideal for blooms. Usually extremely hot weather ends in September and the cooler temperatures, especially at night, signal that the South Central Texas second “spring” has begun. These cooler

temperatures stimulate plant growth and intensify the color and duration of the blooms. Many people do not prepare their plants for this second spring so they miss really the most spectacular bloom period.

**Roses** should be pruned or groomed during the first two weeks in September, no later than September 20. Fall pruning is lighter than in the spring. Cut about one-fourth to one-third of the bush. When pruning miniatures, other than cleaning them out, simply cut off all the blooms. When pruning standard size roses remove all the blooms and bloom pods. The general shape of a rose bush should be open-centered or vase-like with canes evenly distributed around the outside.



You can cut large plants of **'Gold Star' esperanza** to the ground in July or August and have them blooming profusely as a multi-trunked perennial in October. The hotter the temperature when it is growing back, the faster it grows. After the cutback seed pod removal remember to water and fertilize your plant.

Texas Superstars™ are plants that undergo extensive tests by AgriLife Extension horticulturists and are selected by a board for their ability to perform well for consumers and growers. Texas Superstars are readily available at Milbergers Nursery where you will frequently find them among our weekly on sale items. Find our weekly sale items on our web site [milbergernursery.com](http://milbergernursery.com).

## TREES AND SHRUBS

# Is My Sago Palm Dead?

By Robert Richer, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

There are several genera and about 200 species of plants referred to as cycads but the most common by far in our area is *Cycas revoluta*, which is commonly known as **Sago palm**, even though it isn't a true palm. These plants add a tropical look to the landscape and are generally considered cold hardy in our area. However, when temperatures dropped below freezing this past February many plants were severely affected including Sago palms, many of which lost all of their leaves leaving many area gardeners wondering if their plant is dead or not.

“The Sago palm is not actually a palm but a cycas—a seed plant distinguished by stiff evergreen palm-like leaves. Sagos have become a very popular landscape plant due to their palm-like appearance and generally hearty and slow-growing nature.”

~ David Rodriguez, Extension Horticulturist for Bexar County



New leaves slowly emerging from a freeze-damaged **Sago palm**. Although they are not true palms they are a much-loved evergreen that develops a stout trunk topped with dark green, glossy fronds. They add a splendid tropical palm tree-like element to smaller landscapes and patio gardens. Plant as a single specimen to avoid overcrowding.

Your sago is most likely fine, but is just taking its time putting out new growth. The terminal bud is semi-protected inside the top end of the trunk and while the temperature was cold enough to destroy the leaves, the big freeze we had last February doesn't seem to have been cold enough or for long enough to kill the terminal buds. Most sagos around town have begun to show new growth at the top of the trunk and the rest will most likely follow in turn. Many are sending out new offsets from the base, commonly referred to as “pups.” These can be pruned away from the base of the trunk (to maintain a single-trunked plant for easier access and maintenance) and either discarded or potted up to start new plants.

Sagos are dioecious, meaning they have separate male and female plants. Many of these plants around here have “bloomed” this spring/summer, sending up either an elongated pollen structure (male plants), or producing a large rounded mass in the center (female plants). This has contributed to the delay in the emergence of new leaves, especially in the case of female plants that bloomed.

So be patient if your plant still looks like a shaggy, short totem pole in your landscape. It should start pushing out some new fronds soon.

## SUMMER LAWCARE

# What Do You Do With Your Lawn When It's So Hot?

By Dr. Becky Grubbs, Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Summer in Texas can be very hot and dry. July, August and September are among the hottest months with the highest temperatures. Here are some lawn care management tips from *AggieTurf* to help your lawn stay healthy throughout the summer.

**Water** as efficiently as possible to conserve resources and to promote dense, healthy turfgrass growth. If warm season turfgrass undergoes a prolonged period of drought, it can go into summer dormancy: cease to grow, turn a tan golden-brown color and then recover when water becomes available as fall approaches.

As fall approaches, remember that watering your lawn can have a significant impact on turfgrass diseases. As a rule of thumb, water early in the morning.

Evening watering can prolong periods of leaf wetness and promote conditions for disease. Turfgrass growth starts to slow in the fall which means that less water and fertilizer are required.

**Mowing:** During the hottest parts of summer, you do not need to mow your lawn. However, mowing and removal of clippings during this time can be helpful in managing weed populations.



When the summer heat is on, it is much better to water in the morning, don't wait until evening, to make sure the plants are well hydrated going into the heat of the day. Evening watering can prolong periods of leaf wetness and promote conditions for disease

**Insect Damage:** Three common lawn insects to be aware of during summer months are mites, grubs and chinch bugs.

☞ For mites there are several insecticide options for severe cases, but one effective tactic is to scalp the infested area and remove the grass clippings, physically displacing many of the mites.

☞ Grub damage appears as irregularly shaped patches resembling drought stress. Another sign is that skunks, armadillos and possums will start to dig up areas of your lawn. Timing is important for treating grubs. Waiting too long can drastically reduce the effectiveness of lawn insecticides.

☞ Chinch bugs are common summer pests in southern lawns. They may be noticeable without magnification, but still somewhat small and sometimes hard to spot without help.

**Lawn Diseases:** The two common turfgrass diseases during summer are Take-All Root Rot (TARR) and Gray Leaf Spot (GLS). Be sure to properly identify a turfgrass problem before applying treatments.

## JULY GARDENING TIPS

# Maintaining Your Summer Garden

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

**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.

**Prune:** Roses (except climbing varieties) should be pruned early August to insure fall bloom. Remove one third of the bush with old canes, dead canes, spent bloom stems comprising the majority removed. This will stimulate vigorous new growth and abundant fall blooms.

Keep tree pruning to a minimum during summer especially on oaks.

**Fertilize** hanging baskets and other containerized plants regularly with a water-soluble fertilizer.

If you failed to make a second application of fertilizer to your lawn in June and moisture is available, do so now.

**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. Look for dry, burned-looking patches in the hottest parts of the lawn. Control with any contact insecticide.

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. Fall webworms may appear on pecan, mulberry, ash, persimmon, and other trees.

**Odd Jobs:** Give special attention to water requirement of leafy garden plants such as coleus, caladiums and elephant ears during hot, sunny periods.

Mulch heavily. Maintain a heavy (two to four inches) mulch throughout your landscape and gardens to reduce water needs and eliminate weeding. Water plants when needed and not according to the calendar or day of the week. Water (soak) thoroughly rather than applying frequent light sprinklings.

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## HOW TO

# Keep Your Flowers Alive While You Are on Vacation

Flowering plants are usually at their peak of production during your summer vacation period and require some attention before you leave.

- 🌱 Move both your indoor and outdoor plants out of direct sunlight since sunlight dries the soil quickly.
- 🌱 Deadhead and trim your plants before you leave. But while pruning before you leave is beneficial, it's best to fertilize plants only after you return. Fertilizing before you leave can lead to plant growth, which causes the plants to require more care and watering.
- 🌱 Right before you leave for vacation, water your flowers thoroughly so that the soil is evenly moist throughout. Water all of your outdoor flowering plants as well, including the pots you moved to the shade.
- 🌱 Most flowering plants can survive only a week or two weeks without care. If you will be gone longer, have someone to water the plants while you're gone.



If you soak your **bougainvillea** thoroughly before you leave it will welcome you home with profuse blooms. With this plant, the dryer the roots the stronger the next bloom cycle.



Unlike some perennials which at times look rather weedy, the scalloped, bluish gray-green leaves and compact, rounded growth habit of **'Texas Gold' Columbine** make it attractive year-round. The bright, butter-yellow flowers with large, graceful cups and long, dramatic spurs are held well above attractive, blue-green leaves. The 'Texas Gold' Columbine is a Texas-tough native, that is heat tolerant as well in moist, shady areas. It is so tough, adapted to such a large area of Texas, that Extension horticulturists awarded it a Texas Superstar™ ranking.