

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

MAY 2021

PLANT QUESTIONS

Is it too late to put tomato transplants into our new vegetable garden?

You want to get tomatoes planted as soon as possible. Determinate varieties like Tycoon, HM 8849, Valley Cat, Celebrity, and HM1823 are recommended because they set and mature fruit before the hot weather shuts tomatoes down.

What do you recommend for adding color to shady areas? My top choice is probably the semperflorens begonia. It has several leaf colors and flower colors to select from. There is also a large flowered and leafed version called the “whopper.” Impatiens are another good choice for flowers in the shade. Coleus and caladiums do not produce flowers, but they have colorful foliage.

Is it required that you have a reel mower if you have a zoysia lawn? It works best if you have a reel mower for zoysia grass, but it is not absolutely necessary.

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 huge and dramatic flowers of the **Hardy Hibiscus** can be used in large containers, as a perennial border and in butterfly and hummingbird gardens. Truly a perennial, once established, the Hardy Hibiscus will provide years and years of brilliant landscape color.

GARDENING EXPERTISE

Summer on Its Way

It is still spring, but it may be starting to feel a bit more like summer. May is the transition month. You are moving from “I can do anything right now, I have the power” to “I have exactly two days until the heat kills everything I just planted.” Use the first half of this month wisely to get necessary planting done. You do not have much longer. Many plants, from annual to perennial, can still be planted now. But you are running out of time before summer really gets here so get to it.

(MORE SUGGESTIONS FOR 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 to sign up. We respect your privacy and we will not share your address or information with anyone not associated with this newsletter.

SPRINGTIME GARDENING CHORES

Heed Your Weeds

Mark Peterson, SAWS Conservation Consultant

Let's not be so quick to judge the humble weed. After all, they are green, native, and an important part of a diverse, stable ecosystem. We have been blessed recently with plenty of rain to make everything grow lush and green. Of course, with all this extra time staying home and working from home, we find ourselves gazing upon our lush, green yard – of weeds.

If you want to eliminate these native, resilient plants, here are a few tips and tricks to try:

- ☛ While the soil is moist, pull firmly and consistently on the weed to remove as much of the root as possible. If you tug too quickly, you'll break the root and the weed will regrow.
- ☛ Spread a layer of mulch over the weeds to smother them and make it easier to pull them out.
- ☛ If you are using a non-selective herbicide spray, you can protect non-target plants with cardboard or plastic.
- ☛ Prevent the germination of warm season weeds now with an even layer of corn gluten meal. It prevents the germination of many weeds, but also wildflowers so avoid using in areas you want wildflowers to bloom in the fall or following spring.

Regardless of which method you choose, have patience and keep after it. Persistence does pay off.



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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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.

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.



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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

Follow us on call 210-308-8867 or 1-866-308-8867
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GARDENING EXPERTISE

Perennials for Your Summer Garden

From Bexar County Master Gardeners

Perennials can be highly useful and attractive in the home landscape. They often persist for many years and usually require less maintenance than annuals. They can provide long seasons of color and cut flowers while enhancing overall landscape development. If a perennial border is more than you care to attempt as your initial experience with perennials, try adding a few to existing plantings. Many perennials have attractive foliage and are an asset even when not in flower. Most perennials will tolerate relatively poor growing conditions but respond very favorably to well-prepared planting areas containing high percentages of organic materials and moderately high fertility rates.

Most perennials are easily propagated by division, seed or cuttings. Division is particularly successful

“Most times you get more bloom for your money with perennials than annuals. Many perennials have attractive foliage and are an asset even when not in flower.”

~ Dr Calvin Finch

since it not only provides new plants but is often necessary for the continued vigor of plants. Perennial plants may be defined as those which endure or persist from the same root part year to year. Once a prominent part of nearly every Texas landscape, perennials are often overlooked by today's gardeners.



Mealy Cup Sage bloom from early summer to frost on tall, sturdy flower stems growing from the clusters of leaves in axillary and terminal racemes that somewhat resemble lavender. Dark blue, light blue, purple, or white flowers are borne in dense whorls along each flower spike. The spikes can be cut to use in fresh or dried arrangements. Grows to three feet in full sun.



Mexican Mint Marigold, Yerba anise or Mexican tarragon, is an ancient herb. It is an easy-growing plant with many uses, including being used in tea, in chocolate, or as a savory seasoning. It will provide your garden with rich yellow flowers and fragrant, "licorice" scented foliage. It blooms in fall and is drought tolerant, hardy, sun loving and grows to two feet.

For a list of native shrubs that will thrive in South Central Texas' unique landscapes visit our web site MilbergerNursery.com. Under the GARDEN CENTER tab choose the drop down that says TREES AND SHRUBS. Of course, you can always ask one of the south Texas tree experts next time you visit the nursery.

LAWNCARE

Fading or Yellow Lawns

By Dr. Calvin R. Finch

May is a transition time for our lawns. The most noticeable thing is that some lawns are changing color as we proceed into warm weather. If you are experiencing the color change, do not panic, there are reasonable explanations and actions you can take.

The first instance of color change is being experienced in lawns in the shade where the cool weather grasses grew and looked great this winter. Rescue grass, annual blue grass, and rye grass reseed themselves each year in some lawns in the shade. If you keep them mowed they look great until the hot weather arrives. Now the cool weather grasses are declining quickly as summer approaches.

There really is no need for a special response to this color change. The St. Augustine grass under the weed grasses is responding to the rainfall and good growing conditions. As the weed grasses decline the St. Augustine will fill the gap. You can apply a slow-release lawn fertilizer to help the St. Augustine along, but do not panic by adding unreasonable amounts of water. Keep the lawn mowed.



Time to fertilize. After you have mowed real lawn grass two times, it is time to fertilize the lawn. Use slow-release lawn fertilizer. The first number is the percentage of nitrogen. Apply one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. If the fertilizer has a 19-5-9 formula, that means about 5 pounds of fertilizer per 1,000 square feet. The bag will tell you what rate to set the spreader to achieve the pounds of nitrogen.

The second example of discoloration is due to iron chlorosis. Recognize it by the parallel stripes of yellow and green on the grass blade. This color change can be addressed by adding iron. We have large amounts of iron in our soil, but it is locked up in compounds with phosphorous and other materials characteristic of our alkaline soil. Many lawns will grow through the chlorosis as the soils warm up. Severe iron chlorosis, however, will weaken your lawn.

To correct iron chlorosis spray on an iron product like Liquid Chelated Iron or a granular product like Iron Plus. A back pack sprayer or even a hose-end sprayer works well. For a longer lasting solution, mix one cup of iron sulphate (copperas) per bushel of compost and spread it thinly over the lawn.

SUMMER COLOR

Gladiolus in Your Garden

By Dr. William C. Welch, Landscape Horticulturist, Texas A&M University

Gladiolus are grown for their showy spikes of flowers which come in many colors. There are large-flowering types as well as small ones.

Glads are commonly used as background plants in the garden, in rows, or as cut flowers for the home. If care is given to a planting schedule, flowers can be available from early summer until frost. To achieve this, the corms are planted at various times, usually at two- or three-week intervals, from as early as mid-February until the last of April. For best results set the corms in the ground at about four to five inches deep and six inches apart in groups or rows.

At least two species of gladiolus are considered heirloom plants in our area and may be left in the ground and grown as perennials. *Gladiolus byzantinus*, sometimes known as cornflags, mark

“*Gladiolus are especially impressive combined with summer annuals and perennials in the garden, or when cut, they make a superb arrangement of flowers for the home.*”

~ Dr Jerry Parsons

many old home sites and cemetery plots in Texas and the South. Their magenta and rarely-white flower spikes are smaller than the hybrids.

Another interesting gladiolus is *Gladiolus natalensis*, sometimes known as the parrot gladiolus. Flowers of this species, which is native to Africa, are larger than those of *G. byzantinus*, and are a brilliant combination of yellowish green and red.



Gladiolus is a classic perennial known for its tall flower spikes and large, colorful blooms. Great cutting flowers, gladioli look spectacular in summer bouquets. They grow best in full sun with good water drainage.

Gladiolus prefer well-prepared garden soils with good drainage. As soon as plants are six to eight inches tall, apply fertilizer, such as 13-13-13, at the rate of three pounds per 100 square feet. Organic fertilizer sources, such as cottonseed meal, also work well. Water thoroughly when soil appears dry, and stake if necessary.

To save gladiolus corms for next year, dig the corms after the foliage has dried in late summer or fall. Remove the soil and snap off the dead tops. The old or original corm may be removed and discarded at this time. Spread the corms out on the garage or storage-room floor and allow to dry for a few days. Place the corms in boxes with dry peat moss or sawdust.

A visit to Milberger's Nursery will help you get your spring garden going. You will find healthy plant stock that is selected to thrive throughout our South Central Texas summers. You will also find the good advice and creative suggestions for your specific landscape and gardening needs. To see what is on sale each week visit our web site at MilbergerNursery.com.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Small Trees to Balance Your Landscape

By Dr. Calvin Finch

Too often when we think about landscaping we only consider lawns and shade trees. It is important to balance the landscape between shade trees and lawn with perennials, shrubs and small trees. In addition to the aesthetics involved, the perennials, shrubs and small trees allow you to increase color in the landscape and habitat for wildlife such as birds and butterflies. There are a number of small trees to consider.

Crape myrtles are a favorite way to add small trees to the landscape. There are two main arguments for using crape myrtle in the landscape. They offer long periods of summer bloom and you can pick the size of crape myrtle that fits exactly into the space or gap that exists in your landscape. Among the colors to choose from are lavender, pink, red, and white.

Vitex is also called **Texas lilac** or **chaste tree**. This deciduous tree will grow to about 25 ft. in full sun. The attractive lavender blooms are produced on stalks that emerge all over the sprawling crown of this especially drought tolerant tree. Butterflies and hummingbirds use vitex as a nectar source. Deer do not eat vitex. Vitex has been designated a Texas

Superstar[®] because of its attractive bloom, drought tolerance and pest-free growth.

Mexican plum is similar to loquat in that it produces a fruit and has shade tolerance, but it only grows to about 15ft tall. The bloom in February is short-lived but showy. The fruit is again a favorite of birds but the quantity is not overwhelming and it ripens in late spring. Mexican plum forms a very compact crown that is attractive as a specimen tree and is also attractive to nesting birds such as cardinals and mockingbirds. Mexican plum is very effective when planted in groups to form a thicket that becomes a center of bird activity. Deer do not seem to browse on Mexican plum.



Loquat (Japanese plum) is an evergreen tree that grows to 25ft tall in sun or shade. Because of its shade tolerance it can be used on the edge of the landscape under the crowns of large shade trees. You can eat the fruit fresh or in preserves. It is also a favorite food for birds. Production can be high so you may not want to plant loquat on the edge of the driveway where the fruit will fall on your car.

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 **MilbergerNursery.com** and click through to our on-line tree lot for section and planting guidelines.

MAY GARDENING AND LAWN CARE TIPS

Planting for Summer Color

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

Plant: For color, get the begonias and impatiens in quickly if you expect them to fare well when the heat arrives. Wait to mid-month to plant periwinkles. Don't plant vinca until at least June 1. Hot weather plants include firebush, lantana, poinciana, esperanza, firespike, caladium, coleus, begonia, moss rose, hibiscus, bougainvillea, purslane, cannas and blue princess verbena.

Plant sun-loving, heat tolerant annual flowers such as portulaca, purslane, copper plants, lantanas, and ornamental peppers. Do not transplant vinca (periwinkle) until June after the rainy season is over. Let your wildflowers go to seed before mowing.

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 re-blooming, 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 detailed and complete Gardening Tips from Jerry Parsons go to PlantAnswers.com where you can find answers to all of your questions about gardening, lawncare, and tree care in South Central Texas.

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When you need
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Zinnias are one of the easiest flowering plants to grow – they grow quickly and bloom heavily. These prolific bloomers will make a massive burst of color in your garden and they will attract butterflies.

