

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

APRIL 2019

PLANT QUESTIONS

We have limited space but want more butterflies in our landscape. What are the most productive butterfly plants for such a situation? Plant zinnias, Gregg's mistflower, tropical milkweed, lantana, and salvia. If you have the space, also include a duranta, Mexican flame vine, a porter weed, and a mint marigold.

Can I top and shape a tree which is presently 15 feet, to give it a more rounded appearance? Try not to top the tree. Rather, cut it back to a major limb which is growing laterally or spreading.

What is the last date we can expect new purple martins to show up to nest this summer? We have some new houses but no takers yet. I have the same situation. My old houses have nesting pairs, but no birds have rented the new houses that we built this winter. I am going to wait until about May 1 before I consider lowering the new houses if no martins claim them by then.

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.



Not only is a fresh-picked, homegrown tomato extraordinarily tasty, they are easy to grow, and are a summertime favorite in vegetable gardens across South Texas. If you select your transplants from the several tomato varieties that do well in our area just a few plants will provide enough fruit for your entire family.

VEGETABLE GARDENING EXPERTISE

Growing Prize-winning Tomatoes In Your Backyard

The Growing Secrets of Jessica Robertson

Our secret: grow your soil and your tomatoes will grow themselves. Use quality, locally produced compost to the soil, and amend with an organic starting fertilizer that contains mycorrhizal fungi and humate. This will go a long way toward producing healthy plants and abundant fruit with few problems. Mycorrhizal fungi benefit plants in many ways, but the most relevant to our Texas growing conditions is their ability to act as nature's water conservationists.

(MORE TOMATOES 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.

APRIL GARDENING EVENTS

Sat., Mar 30 – 10am 'til 1:30pm – FREE

Milberger's Blood Drive. Take advantage of this opportunity to give the gift of life. 210-497-3760.

Sun., Mar 31-12:30am-1:30pm – FREE

It's All About Them Birds! Milberger's Kids Class. Calvin Finch will host a hands-on, fun-in-nature event about feeding and attracting our local and migratory bird population. Milberger's Kids Gardening Classes are free and we provide all the materials, but be sure to call to reserve your spot because class size is limited. 210-497-3760.

Sat., Apr 20 – starts at 10am – FREE

Turf Grass 101: Do's and Don'ts for Your Lawn.

Extension Agent David Rodriguez will go over the basics of lawn maintenance: proper nutrition, mowing, weed control and irrigation. Seminar is free. 1.5 CEU's for Master Gardeners who attend. 210-497-3760.

Sat., Apr 20 – All Day – FREE

Milberger's Fiesta Celebration. A day of Fiesta food and fun activities. Donations will be made to the San Antonio Food Bank. Everyone wearing a Fiesta Hat to the Nursery will be awarded a free 2019 Milberger's Nursery Fiesta medal and non-hat wearers can purchase Milberger Fiesta medal for a \$7.00 donation to the Salvation Army. 210-497-3760.

Sat., Apr 27-10am 'til 11 – FREE

Kids Class: All about Bats. Your kids will learn about the benefits and habits of this Texas treasure. This free class will talk about the benefits bats provide to local agriculture, as well as some of the concerns the public may have regarding safety and health issues related to the bat population. Crafts exercise for the kids. A very interesting and popular class. 210-497-3760

**Find more Gardening Events, visit
www.MilbergerNursery.com**



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 April Features

APRIL is one of our most colorful months.

Trucks arrive *almost every day* with **BLOOMING ANNUALS** and **PERENNIALS** in *every imaginable color*. Milberger's puts different plants **on sale** every week.

**APRIL IS THE LAST MONTH
to Get Paid to PLANT
with CPS Green
Shade rebates **A TREE**
\$50 PER TREE**

UP TO FIVE TREES
REBATES PROGRAM
EXPIRES APRIL 30
Just ask one of the
**South Texas
Tree Experts
at Milberger's**



**Keeping a green lawn
in San Antonio is a lot easier
with turf grass from Milberger's.**

St Augustine, Bermuda Grass,
Zoysia and Buffalograss.

**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



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210-308-8867 or
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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.

VEGETABLE GARDENING EXPERTISE

Tomatoes ~ Get 'em in now

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Transplant your tomatoes in the evening or on a cloudy day to keep them from drying too much and wilting. Before placing transplants into the soil, fill the transplant holes with water and let it soak in. Plant each transplant slightly deeper than it had been growing. Pack the soil loosely around the plant. Leave a slightly sunken area around each plant to hold water.

If you plan to grow single plants, dig a hole two feet wide and 10 inches deep. Refill the hole with half soil and half organic matter.

““*Summertime rainstorms are wonderful for clearing dust and dirt from your plant' leaves, but when you're watering, be sure to concentrate on the base of plants rather than spraying the leaves and fruit.*””

~ Gretchen Heber, *Gardener's Path*

Water your tomato plants slowly and deeply to help them develop a strong root system. Do not let the tomatoes wilt severely, or yields and fruit quality will be low.

For the highest yields, place mulch around the tomato plants. Spread a two- to three-inch layer of organic material such as compost, leaves, or hay around the growing plants. Mulching will help stop weed growth and water loss from the soil.



It is a good idea to plant your second crop of fresh tomatoes in July. These “fall” tomatoes will grow the balance of the summer, then deliver their fruit in fall's cooler weather. Planting that early is critical for maximum yield. Use the same varieties that worked for you in the spring.

You can let tomatoes grow on the ground or support them with stakes or cages. When you stake tomatoes, put the stake in shortly after transplanting to lessen root damage. A six-foot-long stake set 10 inches deep in the soil will work well. As the plant grows taller, tie it loosely to the stake every 12 inches with pieces of rag or twine.

Prune the staked tomatoes to produce a more orderly vine. Remove the small shoots that grow out of the point where each leaf joins the main stem. Remove the shoots by bending them sideways until they snap. For best quality, pick tomatoes at full color. If you pick them when they are pink, let them ripen at room temperature. They may be stored in the refrigerator after they reach full color.

Milberger's Top Tomato Contest is June 8th. Bring your finest homegrown tomatoes and/or a bowl filled with your best garden vegetables to Milberger's Nursery before noon and fruits of your garden may be selected a winner in one of five categories: Every entrant will receive a free \$10 gift certificate redeemable at Milberger's on the day of the contest only. Judging Starts at Noon.

LAWNCARE

Mow High, Mow Often

By Mark Peterson, SAWS Conservation Project Coordinator

Often, we're asked about lawn mowing and its relation to maintaining a healthy, drought-tolerant lawn. Although we discourage expansive areas of grass, there are ways to reduce how much water your turf needs.

Of all the suggestions and recommendations you may hear, there are two key factors that will help make your lawn more drought-tolerant: mowing height and mowing frequency.

Although a variety of mowing heights are recommended for each turf species, our rule is always to mow at the high end of the range. In general, the higher the mowing height, the deeper the roots; and the deeper the root system, the more drought-tolerant the turf becomes.

Just as important as how high you mow is how often. Turf responds favorably to frequent mowing. The general rule is to never cut more than 1/3 of the total blade. This roughly translates to a once-a-week mowing schedule.



Wait until after April 1 to fertilize the lawn or until you have mowed real grass two times. St. Augustine, Bermuda, zoysia, and buffalo grass are warm weather grasses. They do not grow well or pick up nutrients efficiently until the soil and air temperatures are warm.

Gene R. Taylor II, Texas A&M Turfgrass Specialist reminds us that “it is best not to bag grass clippings. Grass clippings decompose quickly and return significant amounts of nutrients to the soil. If you do bag the clippings, consider composting them for use in the landscape.”

The best adapted turf grass species for our area include:

- 🌿 **Bermuda:** Unless you're mowing a putting green or sports field, we suggest mowing it at 2 inches.
- 🌿 **Buffalo and all native grasses:** Mowing twice a year is sufficient for native grasses; set the mower at the highest setting.
- 🌿 **St. Augustine:** Maintain the mower level at 3 inches.
- 🌿 **Zoysia:** A mowing height of 2 1/2 inches is ideal.

Looking for turf grass? Visit Milberger's sample lawn areas. You are invited to examine and walk on these sample lawn areas to help you determine the look and feel of the turf you prefer. We also have information and specification sheets on the different sods. Visit www.milbergernursery.com.

SUMMER COLOR

Caladiums for Color in the Shadows

In the middle of summer some plants start to look stressed, but not caladiums – they thrive on heat and humidity. Caladiums are tropical perennials with colorful, heart-shaped leaves that sport prominently colored midribs and contrasting margins.

“While most of your spring planting has been completed, planting most beautiful of the non-flowering ornamentals—the caladium—should be delayed until April.”

~ Dr. Jerry Parsons, Bexar County Horticulture Specialist



With their big, heart-shaped leaves, **caladiums** display amazing color combinations of white, pink, red and green. They thrive in hot, humid weather and grow best in full to partial shade. Although though caladiums rarely flower, their beautiful leaves guarantee a colorful show wherever they are planted: between shrubs, beneath trees, in perennial borders or in containers.

Caladiums have no stems; the leaves are borne on long petioles which arise directly from the underground tuber. You can use caladiums to add color and texture in shade gardens and in containers for decks and patios. Caladiums are heavy feeders, so need regular fertilization during the growing season, especially container-grown plants. Use a low-nitrogen or balanced formulation, as too much nitrogen can affect leaf color.

These tropical plants thrive in the hot and humid conditions of summer, but will start to droop and lose leaves as temperatures cool. If the tubers are to be kept over the winter, they must be brought in before the first frost (or before soil temperatures drop below 55F). Lift any tubers in the ground, remove most of the soil, and allow to dry for a week in a warm, shady spot before cutting off the leaves and storing in dry sphagnum moss or a mesh bag under mild conditions (55-60F) for up to five months.

Begin watering again when new growth appears in the spring.

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 www.milbergernursery.com

IN YOUR ROSE GARDEN

Texas' Best Climbers

By Bonnie Grant

Climbing roses provide a colorful accent that can be trained onto trellises, around windows and doors or along eaves. The old-fashioned blooms have new life with today's modern hardscapes and landscape structures. Roses need lots of sunlight every day, and our Texas climate provides that in spades. Climbers can flower just in spring, or flower repeatedly, giving a color show well into fall.

Roses in older gardens are often cultivars that don't exist anymore. They can be found creeping over walls and fences or even in cemeteries with no one to care for them. These climbers are being preserved through cuttings and reintroduced into cultivation. Mutabilis, Katy Road Pink and Old Bush are examples of some of the old garden roses that Milberger's stocks on a regular basis. Old roses, which are any variety produced before 1867, are resistant to many



Like most roses these **Pierre de Ronsard climbing roses** need full sun, which we consider to be six or more hours of sunshine per day. Roses are susceptible to fungal diseases, which means that watering with a sprinkler system, having them in too much shade, or bushes too crowded for good air circulation could negatively effect health of the roses.

common rose problems and can be trained as an espalier or trellis form. Lady Banks grows 20-foot-tall canes, and Cecile Brunner is not far behind with 15- to 20-foot canes. Either would be excellent choices for their old-fashioned pastel blooms and hardy climbing nature.

A lot of new cultivars were introduced in the 1950s. One of these, Climbing Pinkie, is an 8-foot-tall bush with semi-double pink flowers.

The canes are thornless and the blooms carry a light fragrance. Don Juan Is a citrus-scented red rose that blooms fully even in the worst Texas heat. For vigor you can't beat Dortmund, a 1955 introduction. It can grow up to 30 feet tall and bears deep red flowers with a white center and bright yellow stamen.

The roses have overlapping petals that give the blooms a frilled appearance. The thorns on this bush deserve respect as they are large and sharp.

APRIL GARDENING TIPS

April Gardens Are Blooming

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

April is usually the best month of the year for snapdragons. Keep them well watered. Resist the urge to cutback the wildflowers, larkspurs, columbine, and other naturalized flowers too early. The seeds must mature if you want a regrowth next year. Roses should be blooming now. Old-fashioned roses benefit by sprays and irrigation, but it is less necessary.

Plant: In the vegetable garden, plant tomatoes, and peppers by transplants; and okra, southern peas, and melons by seed. The spinach, Brussel's sprouts, carrots, and beets are still producing. If you planted potatoes, you can begin harvesting them when the flowers appear. There is nothing better than a mess of new potatoes boiled and buttered. The onions will be ready to harvest when the leaves fall over. It will probably occur in May.

April is a good month to plant esperanza, lantana, the blue salvias, and Pride of Barbados for hot weather blooms. They require full sun. Crepe myrtles are available in every form from miniatures to 40' trees.

Plant caladium tubers after mid-month.

Lawncare: If you have been anxious for action on the lawn, this is your month. Our grasses respond to the warm weather, and begin serious growth in April. Fertilize with slow release lawn fertilizer late in the month. Keep the grass mowed to help the lawn grass compete with the winter weeds that want to form seed heads. It is not too late to aerate and top dress the lawn.

Prune: Prune pillar or climbing roses, wisteria, and Carolina jessamine as soon as they have finished flowering. Vigorous landscape shrubs will need frequent pruning.

Fertilize: April is the ideal time to fertilize lawn grasses after the lawn grass has been mowed twice.

Be on the lookout for: Weeds, snails, fireants and aphids.

Odd Jobs: Thinning vegetables is one of the most important follow-up activities in gardening

For more detailed and complete Gardening Tips from Jerry Parsons go to www.MilbergerNursery.com and follow the newsletter link that reads "Monthly Gardening Tips."

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE FREE

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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Planning for a Water Garden?



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



August Beauty Gardenia

are rounded shrubs with waxy dark green leaves and blooms a beautiful, fragrant, double-flowered bloom several times a year starting in late Spring. Noted for their beautiful foliage and large fragrant white flowers gardenia are amazingly hardy given their delicate look.