

# MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

FEBRUARY 2019

## PLANT QUESTIONS

**Is this the correct time of year to prune crape myrtles or is it too late?** Crape myrtles need little, if any, pruning. However, if you need to prune yours, now is the time to do it.

**Which flowers can we plant in the garden now?** The cold weather annuals such as snapdragons, pansies, cyclamen, and primulas will bloom until the end of April. Petunias are probably the best choice. They can tolerate a light freeze.

**I want to get a fast start on my lawn this spring. Is there an advantage to fertilizing now?** None at all. The weeds will benefit, but not your lawn. What you can do for your lawn now is to aerate and top dress with compost. It is very effective in increasing lawn health.

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.



**Larkspur** will spike up your cool weather garden with feathery leaves and layers of thumbnail-sized flowers that attract lots of bees. Larkspurs are super easy to grow. Sprinkle them around perennials that go dormant in winter for pop-out color until warm weather bloomers return.

## GETTING A JUMP ON SPRING

### Early Blooming Plants to Plant in February

Larkspurs and columbines are two spring blooming plants that you can naturalize in your landscape. **Larkspurs** bloom in March and April. The pink, blue white and purple flowers spikes can be four feet tall on good soils. As the flowers on the spike die, they drop seeds that will germinate next year. By March your larkspurs can outgrow the largest, sturdiest snapdragon, so be prepared to thin out those that are overwhelming other flowers that you want to keep blooming. **“Texas Gold” columbines** bloom in March and are a favorite of the migrating hummingbirds. They are perennials with yellow shooting star blooms that rise above the lush soft green foliage. The foliage of **“Texas Gold” columbine** resembles maidenhair fern. It is attractive in the spring, autumn, and winter. Both larkspurs and columbines are available this month at Milberger's Nursery. (MORE LARKSPURS AND COLUMBINE 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.

## FEBRUARY GARDENING EVENTS

### Sat., Jan 26 10 – 10am 'til 1:30pm

**Milberger's Blood Drive.** Take advantage of this opportunity to give the gift of life. To support the South Texas Blood and Tissue Center. The nursery will offer a \$20 gift certificate to each person who offers to donate.

### Sat., Feb 16 – All Day

**Milberger's Rodeo Weekend.** Join the Rodeo Fun at the Nursery with Texas Music, Texas Food and Texas Fun for the entire family. The 2019 Rodeo Tomato will be announced and available for sale. (Proceeds from Saturday sales of the 2019 Rodeo will be donated to Bexar County Master Gardener Programs.) 210-497-3760 See Facebook or our website for more details.

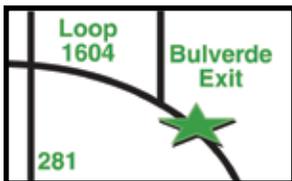
### Sat., Feb 16 -10:30am 'till Noon

**Spring Clean-Up in Your Landscape.** Get your landscape ready for the spring with this Free Adult Seminar with Bexar County Extension Agent, David Rodriguez. 210-497-3760. See Facebook or our website for more details.

### Sat., Feb 23 -10am 'til 11am

**Spring Vegetable Gardening for Kids.** Your children will have fun learning the basics of vegetable gardening. This class will include "little" hands-on planting and seeding tips as well as craft activities.. 210-497-3760. See Facebook or our website for more details.

Find more Gardening Events visit [www.MilbergerNursery.com](http://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](http://www.milbergernursery.com)  
[nursery@milbergersa.com](mailto:nursery@milbergersa.com)

## Milberger's Nursery

### February Features

# No Better Time TO PLANT TREES AND SHRUBS

and you can take advantage of the **CPS Green Shade rebates**

**\$50 PER TREE**

UP TO FIVE TREES Just ask one of the South Texas Tree Experts at Milberger's




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Selected each year at the **San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo**

THE **2019 RODEO TOMATO**

Will be announced and **ON SALE** at **Milberger's** on **SAT., FEB 16.**

Watch for our weekly sale specials in **The San Antonio Express-News** or at [www.MilbergerNursery.com](http://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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## GETTING A JUMP ON SPRING

# Larkspurs and “Texas Gold” Columbine

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Swaths of larkspurs are totally lovely, but thin crowds to allow ample airflow in humid springs. Plant them 18 inches apart for maximum bloom development. Although water is welcome, don't over water. Blooming for weeks outside you can regularly cut few of their lovely spike and bring them indoors or to dry. After flowering, let the seed pods turn brown. Dry and store them in a cool place then scatter the seeds in the autumn for pop-up surprises next year.

“Texas Gold” This columbine is a Texas native from the Big Bend region and a Texas Superstar™ plant. “Texas Gold” columbine produces bright sunny yellow flowers from mid to late spring.

“One of my favorite plants is “Texas Gold” columbine because it grows best in mottled shade under deciduous trees, at the edge of landscapes or under high live oak crowns. In addition to the great blooms, “Texas Gold” columbines are a good groundcover for shady areas. They are attractive in the spring, autumn, and winter.” ~ Dr. Calvin Finch

The neat rounded growth habit will work well in a formal landscape or a mass planting will provide a spectacular spring show. The spurred flowers are visited by butterflies, bees, and moths. The fine, fern-like soft blue green foliage provides a nice contrast with surrounding plants. Provide this perennial-to-biennial with a moist, semi-shaded location for the best results



“Texas Gold” columbines are perennials with yellow shooting star blooms that rise above the lush soft green foliage. Morning sun and filtered midday shade seem to make this a good choice for east facing sites that are shaded in the hottest portion of the day in hot summer climate regions.

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](http://www.milbergernursery.com).

## WILDLIFE IN YOUR LANDSCAPE

# Elements of a Butterfly Garden

By Janis Merritt, SAWS Conservation Consultant

It is a nice coincidence that most Xeriscape gardens are also great butterfly gardens. You can attract even more migrating butterflies to your landscape by adding basking places, shelter, food and water to your garden. In addition to growing plants that will attract butterflies to your garden you can create basking places for them. Leave or add trees and shrubs for perching. Trees and shrubs will provide protection from blustery weather.

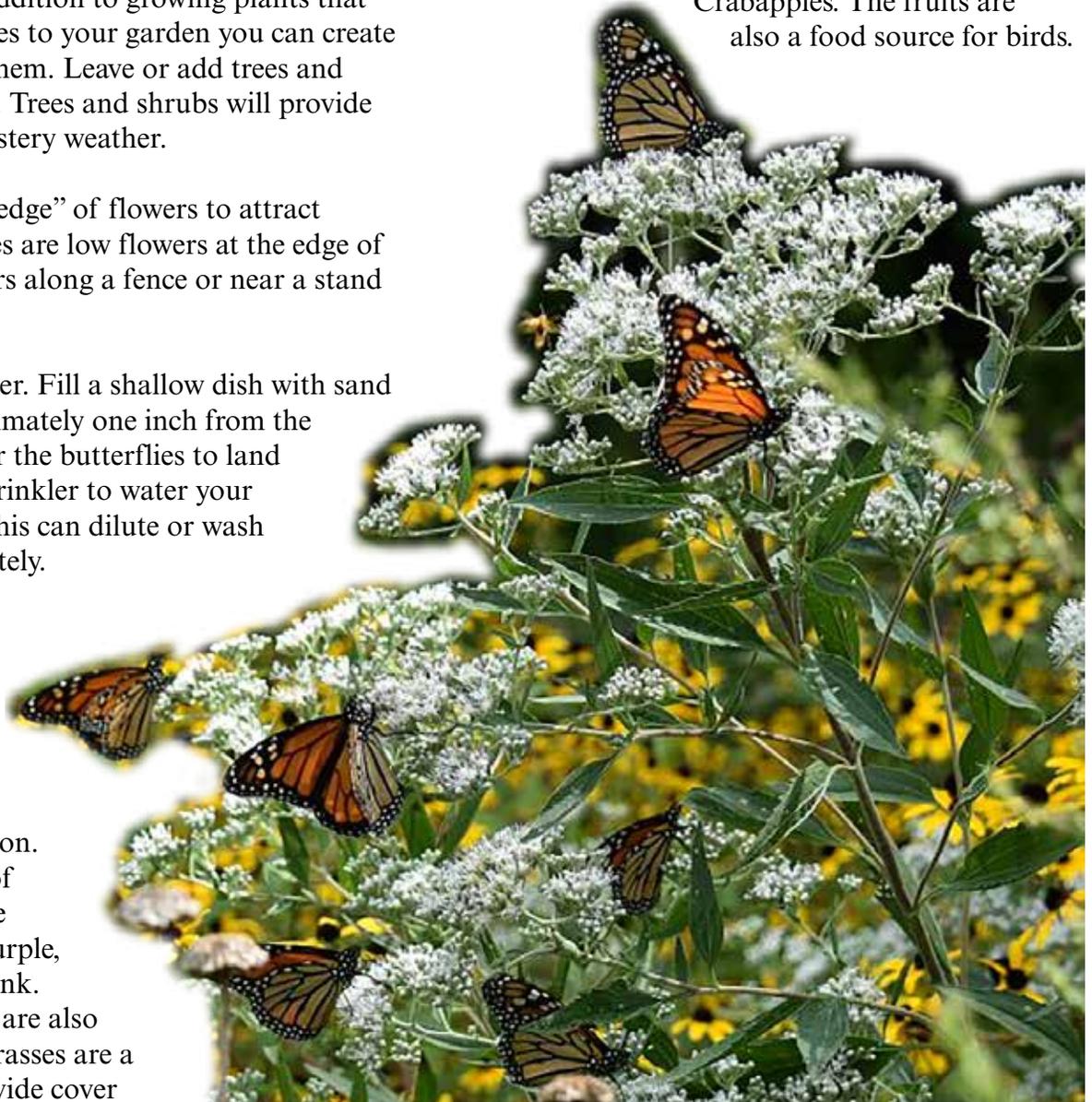
You can create an “edge” of flowers to attract butterflies. Examples are low flowers at the edge of lawns or high flowers along a fence or near a stand of trees.

Butterflies need water. Fill a shallow dish with sand and fill it to approximately one inch from the top. Add pebbles for the butterflies to land on. Do not use a sprinkler to water your butterfly plants as this can dilute or wash nectar away completely.

Nectar and larval food will attract butterflies. Plan your butterfly garden to provide blooming plants throughout the season. Use large splashes of color. Butterflies are most attracted to purple, white, yellow and pink. True blues and reds are also appealing. Native grasses are a larval food and provide cover during cold nights and from rainstorms. They also provide seeds for birds.

Some butterflies prefer rotten fruit. You can provide native plants that drop fruit such as Grapes, Dewberries, Mexican Plum, Texas Persimmon and Blanco

Crabapples. The fruits are also a food source for birds.



Establishing a butterfly garden at your home or workplace is a rewarding approach to attract these exquisite insects while simultaneously aiding their conservation. While butterflies evoke lovely images of graceful, jeweled wings, a butterfly's contribution goes far beyond its good looks. They contribute to the ecosystems of South Central Texas by pollinating the flowering plants that desperately need this service to survive.

Planning a butterfly garden for your landscape? The butterfly garden at Milberger's is certified by the North American Butterfly Association. You may stop by the nursery and see exactly how you can transform a portion of your landscape into a beautiful haven for butterflies and hummingbirds. [www.milbergernursery.com](http://www.milbergernursery.com)

## IN YOUR VEGETABLE GARDEN

# Potting Up Your Tomatoes

Have you ever wondered how the gardeners who harvest the first tomato beat everyone else? The usual trick is to “pot up” tomatoes in February and then plant the result of the “potting up” into the vegetable garden about April 1 when the soil and air temperatures have warmed up enough to support tomato plant growth and fruit setting.

To “pot up” your transplants, fill a one to three gallon black plastic container with a high quality potting soil. Enrich the potting soil with a slow release granular fertilizer made especially for containers. Be generous with the fertilizer,

“Potting up maintains the fast growth rate established at the nursery. Place the potted up tomato in full sun in a location out of the wind. A greenhouse is ideal, but many locations on the patio or the south side of the house also work well.

~ Calvin Finch

tomatoes are heavy feeders if you want maximum fruit production. Place the transplants in the container. They can be planted deeply; tomatoes are one of the few plants that can tolerate deep planting. Roots will form along the whole stem. This is especially important if you transplants are leggy or top heavy.



When planting your new tomatoes in the garden set them fairly deep in the soil again and trim off lower leaves so that no leaves are touching or are near the soil so that soil borne fungal and bacterial diseases are less likely to be transferred to the plant. Wait to mulch until the soil warms and the stems are tougher.

It is important to keep the tomatoes well-watered. Watering every other day is not too often. The high quality potting soils are very well drained so they usually will not become soggy. Reduce watering when the weather is overcast and/or cool.

If you do everything as described your “potted up” plants will be quite large and may even begin blooming by April when they can be transplanted to the vegetable garden.

Get your homegrown tomatoes ready for **Milberger’s Top Tomato Contest** come up on June 9th. Get your transplants ready now and the tomatoes from your home garden may be selected a winner in one of five judging categories. You will find the 2019 Rodeo Tomato available at Milberger’s on February 16. Keep yourself updated on our web site [www.milbergernursery.com](http://www.milbergernursery.com).

## TREES AND SHRUBS

# To Prune or Not To Prune

February is the best time to prune most plants, but do not prune for the sake of having something to do. Prune to control plant size, remove unsafe branches, remove dead wood and, in some cases, to shape or maximize production of flowers. Pruning paint is not necessary except in the case of live oaks and oaks in the red oak family (Schumardi, Texas red, Spanish, etc.) Paint the wounds over one-inch in diameter within 30 minutes of pruning to protect the plant from oak wilt.

**Thinning cuts are the best.** A thinning cut occurs when you follow the offending branch to its origin on another branch and cut it there. (See the diagram below.)

**Hedging cuts are less desirable** because they disrupt the tree's hormonal control. Hedging cuts are cuts that remove part of a branch, a cut that leaves a stub. See Pruning Guide for diagram of contrast between hedging and thinning cuts.

**Crape myrtles** are the species most savaged by our urge to prune. They bloom on the new wood that grows in the spring so the theory is that heavy pruning stimulates lots of new wood. The theory is correct, but to get the maximum bloom you do not need to hack off the tops to leave stubs. If your crape myrtle is relatively young and growing in full sun, it may put on enough new growth that pruning is unnecessary. In other situations, some of the thinning cuts we describe later in this article will do the job without leaving an ugly plant.

**Roses:** Old-fashioned roses often are only pruned when they get "out of hand" but the modern hybrid tea roses are blooming machines that do best when they are pruned every year. Select three or four main stems that are finger- to thumb-size in diameter. They should be spread around the plant arising above the graft and radiating at a 60-degree angle. Remove everything inside this frame so the middle is open to air and light. Also remove wounded wood, tangled wood and wood growing inward or straight up. Old wood should also be removed in favor of green young wood.

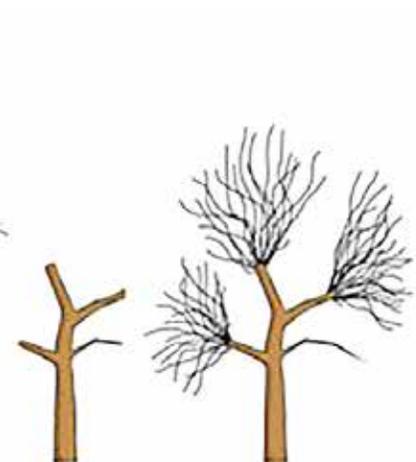
### A Look at Pruning



Before Pruning



Well-Pruned, Open Head



Topping produces clumps of uncontrolled growth

GOOD

NOT GOOD

## FEBRUARY GARDENING TIPS

# Preparing and Planning for Spring

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

**Plant:** Select ornamentals and trees for adaptability, permanence and durability, not just for fast growth. February is the month to begin spring gardens with crops such as asparagus, beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower (transplants only), Swiss chard, collards, kohlrabi, lettuce (leafy), mustard, onion plants, Irish potatoes, radish, spinach and turnip. A good method of getting the jump on the normal spring season is to grow portable transplants of recommended tomato and pepper varieties. Try the virus-resistant tomato variety named 'Tomato 444'. Use disease-free transplants of recommended short-day onion varieties such as 1015Y, Granex (Vidalia) and Grano.

Look for this year's Rodeo Tomato that will be announced at the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo this month.

**Prune:** Finish pruning started in January in February. Do any major fruit or ornamental tree and shrub pruning. Spring pruning of roses in South Central Texas is normally done between the third week of February and the first week of March.

**Lawncare:** "Scalp" the lawn late in the month to remove winter-killed stubble. Set the mower down one or two notches. Remove browned tissues from Asian jasmine, liriope and mondo grass. Reshape lanky nandinas by pruning the tallest one-third of canes back to within 2 inches of the ground. New shoots will fill in from beneath.

**Fertilize:** February is the ideal time to fertilize healthy trees. Fertilize winter bedding plants. Wait at least another month to fertilize the lawn.

**On the Lookout:** Wait for a time period which will ensure temperatures above freezing for at least 48 hours to apply a dormant oil spray to euonymus, hollies, oaks, pines, pecans, and fruit trees which are prone to scale.

**Odd Jobs:** If you want to treat for ball moss, February is the ideal month. Ball moss does not kill trees. Divide summer and fall-blooming perennials, including cannas, mallows, fall asters, mums, coneflowers, lythrum and perennial salvias before growth begins.

For more detailed and complete Gardening Tips for this month visit [www.MilbergerNursery.com](http://www.MilbergerNursery.com).

## 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.

TO RECEIVE this free newsletter, complete this form and return it to **Milberger's Nursery** or by calling (210) 497-3760. You can sign up on-line at [www.milbergernursery.com](http://www.milbergernursery.com).

**We respect your privacy. Your name will not be shared with anyone not associated with Milberger Nursery.**

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## Milberger's Tree Lot

has the largest selection of healthy, well rooted, ready-to-plant-trees In the area. To find the specific tree for your landscape talk to the tree experts at Milberger's Nursery or visit our on-line Tree Lot at [www.milbergernursery.com](http://www.milbergernursery.com)



**Geraniums** are among the showiest plants you can add to your garden beds and its not too early to get them into your garden beds. Go to our web site [MilbergerNursery.com](http://MilbergerNursery.com) to see this photo in stunning color as published in the on-line version of this newsletter.