

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

NOVEMBER 2016

Our soil has dried out and ended up with deep cracks. Should we top dress and fill in the cracks? It does not hurt to top dress but I think if you check your yard now after the late October rains, the moisture has allowed the soil to expand and fill the gaps. One inch of rain will usually do the job.

Small green caterpillars are ravaging our newly planted broccoli and cabbage. They might be cabbage loopers. Is it okay to spray with Sevin? Sevin will control loopers. Another option to consider for cabbage loopers (and other caterpillars) is Bt. Bt is an organic control that is applied to the foliage where caterpillars are feeding.

Our new home does not have any trees, our soil is over 8" deep, and we have two large dogs. What grass do you recommend?

Bermuda grass prospers in full sun and has the best traffic tolerance (dogs!) of the turf choices. Bermuda grass is also drought tolerant and easy to mow. It can be very attractive.

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.



Pansies at Milberger's. These may be the most popular annual flower in Texas. They're beautiful, they're easily grown, and there isn't a lot of competition of plants willing to thrive through our winters. (PHOTO BY DAVIS BLACKMON)

AUTUMN GARDENING EXPERTISE

The Many Faces of Pansies

By Kieth Hansen, A&M Extension Horticulturist

Without a doubt, the number one bedding plant flower for winter and early spring color is the pansy. These are tough plants, even though they may sound and look delicate. One of the few flowers that can take it down to single digit temperatures, fall-planted pansies make a spectacular show the following spring. Plant them in large drifts or masses, or as pockets of color to brighten up a dreary winter landscape. Use them in containers to spotlight a path, porch or wall. The pansy has one of the widest color ranges of any garden annual. Colors you'll find include red, purple, blue, bronze, pink, black, yellow, white, lavender, orange, apricot and mahogany.

(MORE ON PANSIES 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.

HOLIDAY GARDENING EVENTS

Thurs., Nov. 10 – 6:30 'til 8:30
San Antonio Herb Society: Winter Gardening in South Texas. Mark Fanick will address your plant questions on both organic and conventional methods of gardening in South Texas. Free and the public. The San Antonio Garden Center, 3310 N. New Braunfels. sahs@mail.com or www.sanantonioherbs.org.

Sat., Dec. 3 – All day
Milberger's Christmas Traditions Open House. Carolers, ride our Little Red Choo-Choo. Face Painting & Balloon Artists. Photos with Santa. Roasted corn, pop corn, hot chocolate and Milberger's famous Christmas wassail. Free at the nursery. 210-497-3760

Sun., Dec. 4 – All day
Milberger's Annual Cowboy Christmas. Hot chili and cool music. Live country music with the Texas Weather Band. Face painting & Balloon artists. Roasted corn, pop corn, hot chocolate and Milberger's famous Christmas wassail. All day at the nursery. 210-497-3760

Holiday Break: There is no Kids Gardening Class in November or December. Classes will resume in January and continue on the last Saturday of each month throughout the year.

for More Gardening Events Visit
www.milbergernursery.com

**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 Valero 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
 November Features**



You are invited! **Annual Christmas OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND**

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3
 Come and get into the holiday season. Let the kids enjoy some fun activities while you pick the perfect Christmas tree, poinsettia, decorations or gift for the holiday.

VISIT OUR WEB SITE FOR DETAILS, TIMES AND UPDATES

HOT CHOCOLATE WASSAIL CANDY CANES **FRESH CUT CHRISTMAS TREES**
 GARLANDS • WREATHS and Unique gifts for *the gardeners on your list*
 POINSETTIAS • DECORATIONS



And Come on Down to our
Cowboy Christmas

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4
 For some Hot Chili and Some Cool Music with the **Texas Weather Band**



CHRISTMAS TREES

Milberger's offers the most reliable selection of fresh cut Christmas Trees, displayed and kept in water.

**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 [@milbergerssa](https://twitter.com/milbergerssa)
 call 308-8867 or 1-866-308-8867
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AUTUMN GARDENING EXPERTISE

Pansies for Winter Color

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Now is the right time to be planting pansy transplants. Pansies require soil temperatures between 45 degrees F and 65 degrees F for best growth. Pansies planted after soil temperatures go below 45 degrees F show stunted, pale green leaves, little growth and, most importantly, little or no flowering. Cold-stressed root systems are less efficient in taking up nutrients.

On the other hand, pansies planted too early and exposed to warm temperatures often appear yellow; the stems stretch and the new growth will appear as small rosettes at the ends of stems. As a result, the plants flower poorly and are more susceptible to frost damage or disease.

Plant pansies and violas in full sun for best flowering displays. They will tolerate partial shade,

“Pansies are the best flower for winter gardens in South Texas. If you have four hours or more sun reaching the flowerbed, they will perform admirably.”

~ Calvin Finch, retired Director of Water Conservation and Technology, Texas A&M

especially if the shade is from a tree that drops its leaves in winter to let more light through.

Like other types of seasonal color, pansies must have well-drained soils and do not tolerate wet feet. Planting pansies on elevated beds several inches above the existing grade will not only ensure good drainage but will improve the visibility of the color display. Mix in generous amounts compost will slightly raise the soil level and provide the needed drainage.



There are two main types of pansies: clear-faced and monkey-faced. The monkey-faced varieties have a dark blotch in the middle of the face. Pansies are available in blue, yellow, brown, white, maroon, and orange.

Visit our nursery to find the winter blooming plants that will thrive in your landscape. Take a look at our web site www.milbergernursery.com or look for our ads in the **San Antonio Express-News** to find which plants are on sale. For expert advice on plants and trees and take advantage of South Texas' warm winters to improve your landscape.

IN YOUR LAWN

Winter Lawn Care

By Jeremy Griffin

Whether you're new to Texas or have lived here all your life, you might be wondering how to keep your grass healthy throughout winter so you have a lush, green lawn come spring. If you need a few pointers, just follow these guidelines below and give your lawn the care it needs to thrive all year round.

Tailor your watering to the season. Since we don't get any snow in Texas, Be sure to water your lawn if it's been a few weeks without rain, as it's probably thirsty. In terms of when and how to water your lawn, early morning is best so it can dry throughout the day and stave off lawn diseases. Also, most experts agree that deep, infrequent watering is the most beneficial for deep root growth.

Try to stay off the lawn. It may be tempting to walk across your lawn as a shortcut, but use the designated walking paths if

possible. Although grass is pretty resilient, it can still get worn down if it's repeatedly trampled on. Likewise, try to keep your lawn clear of stray objects or children's toys so it can breathe. And of course, if you park a car or truck on your lawn, your grass may not fare so well.

Use stray leaves to your advantage. A few stray leaves won't be enough to kill your lawn, but if there are so many leaves that you can't even see your grass anymore, you may have a problem on your hands. Not only can a solid blanket of leaves suffocate your lawn, but they can provide warmth and shelter for a variety of lawn nuisances like rodents, fungi, and insects. When spring rolls around, you could find yourself with



The most reasonable need for a winter lawn is to protect your soil from erosion. A newly graded yard left without cover is subject to erosion, especially if there are any slopes.

all sorts of critter damage. Leaves can actually be a great source of nutrients for your grass if you turn them into a mulch. This can be easily done with a mulcher or by simply mowing over the leaves. You'll be left with a natural fertilizer to feed the grass.

BASICS OF LANDSCAPING

Backbone Plants

By Erin Conant, SAWS Conservation Consultant

“Backbone” or “anchor” plants establish a solid framework for your landscape that’s essential to achieving balance with an attractive flow. They typically consist of large trees and shrubs, whose thoughtful placement is the first step in creating a design that works.

“Mid-level foundation shrubs join the small and large plants into a unified landscape. They are especially important for wildlife if that is one of your interests. The majority of birds need small trees and large shrubs for nesting cover and sources of food.”

~ Dr. Calvin Finch



Agarita is a rounded shrub with beautiful gray-green, holly-like foliage and clusters of fragrant yellow flowers from February through April. The fruit that follows is a bright red berry that is a magnet for birds and small mammals and which makes a delicious jelly. Agarita is low maintenance, drought tolerant, evergreen, and hardy to 15 degrees F. It is adaptable to other soils as long as they are well-drained. It forms its best shape in full sun, but will grow in light shade.

Large trees and shrubs do more than just create structure – they make the spaces throughout the landscape more intimate. A bench placed in the back corner of your lot is nice, but put a couple of flowering shrubs and an anaqua tree next to it, and you have a warm, cozy spot that’s much more inviting.

leafless and dormant.

Backbone plants are easy to place when you have a blank slate, but established landscapes can be amended too. Make your own backbone changes to an already established space.

Backbone plants also aid in the smooth transition from one part of the landscape to another. Think of them as large, attractive flags that mark the transition from one space to another. Large shrubs or trees at the corners of your home or at focal points anywhere in the space define and clarify changes to each new area.

Your options for choosing backbone plants are nearly limitless. But choosing evergreens as often as possible can have more impact, especially in the winter months. Evergreen and semi-evergreens plants like Rosemary, agarita and live oaks leave your landscape looking less barren and dry in the winter time when everything else is

TREES AND SHRUBS

Best Shade Trees for South Texas

Texas is hot. Planting large shade trees not only adds value to your home, but it can also offer respite from the heat, shade your home to reduce energy costs, provide a home for habitat, and add beauty to your landscape. When you live in an urban environment, it's even more important to provide shade to homes and surrounding areas – all that extra concrete from roadways, sidewalks and buildings significantly increase temperatures in the city. Shade trees are a great way to cool things off.

Fall is the best time to plant a shade tree. You'll save yourself a lot of work by planting when we have cooler temps and rainfall, instead of waiting until the heat returns.

Choosing a health a tree that is recommended for our area and proper planting is key to a long and healthy life for your tree so that it can be enjoyed for generations to come. While there are many other great shade trees for Texas, here are a few of our Texas-tough favorites:

Cedar Elm is highly drought tolerant once established. This large, native tree sports small, deep green leaves in spring that turn to a golden hue in autumn. Grows large, up to 90', to offer a wonderful amount of shade.

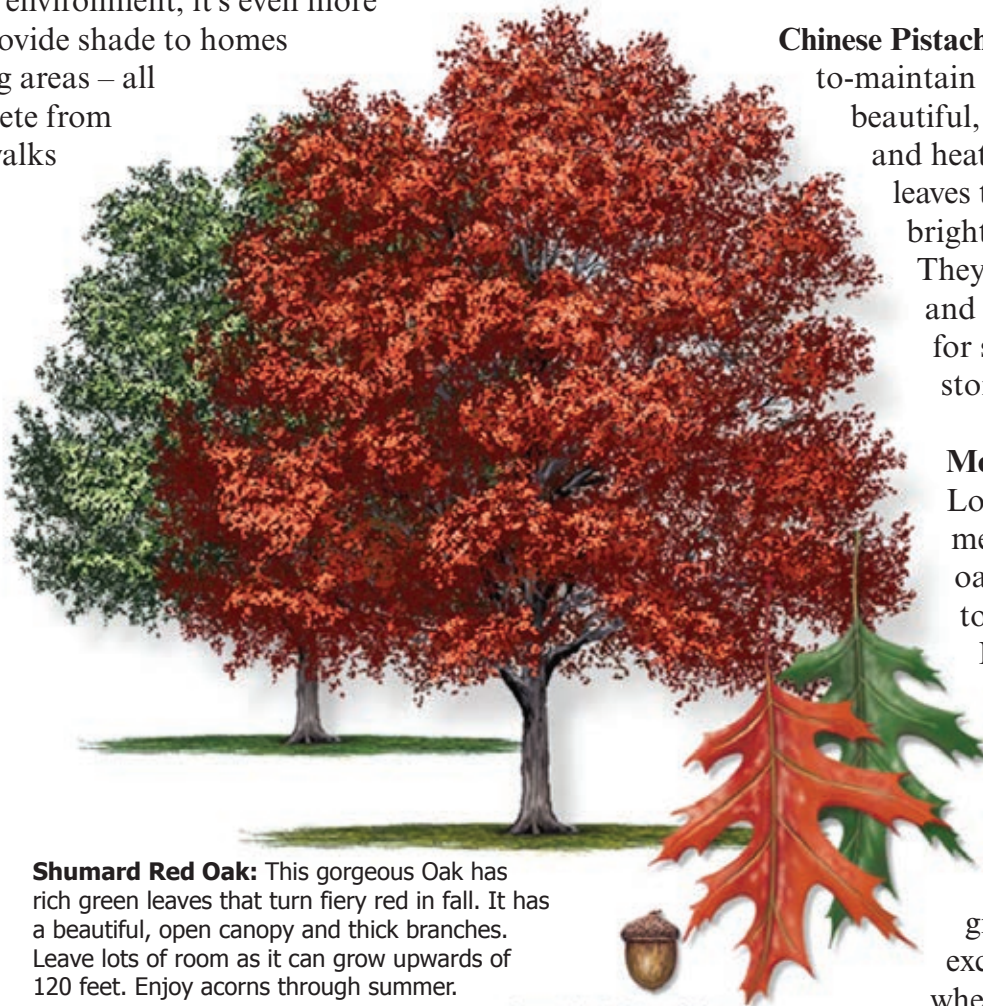
Chinese Pistache: These easy-to-maintain trees are not only beautiful, but also pest and heat tolerant. In fall, leaves turn magnificent, bright orange to red. They grow 40'-50' tall and 30' wide. Perfect for shading a one story house.

Monterrey Oak: Looking for a medium, gorgeous oak that is tolerant to Oak Wilt?

Monterrey Oak is for you! It has wonderfully textural, dark to light gray bark and oblong, deep green leaves, except in spring when new leaves are a lovely peach color.

Grows to 40'. Great for urban landscapes.

Live Oak: This evergreen tree is an area favorite for many reasons. It has a dense, wide canopy, offering wonderful shade in summer; is very long-lived; has adapted to our clay soil; and has unique branches that over time drape the ground beneath.



Shumard Red Oak: This gorgeous Oak has rich green leaves that turn fiery red in fall. It has a beautiful, open canopy and thick branches. Leave lots of room as it can grow upwards of 120 feet. Enjoy acorns through summer.

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NOVEMBER GARDENING AND LAWCARE TIPS

Planting, Pruning and Time to Fertilize

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

PRUNE: This is the ideal pruning time for many trees and shrubs. If you have oak trees in need of pruning, begin now. It is especially critical in areas where the oak wilt fungus is a problem. Apply horticultural tree wound dressing on all oak cuts. Prune out dead, damaged or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Avoid topping or dehorning.

FERTILIZE: If you have procrastinated the application of the most important lawn fertilization of the year – the application of a “Winterizer” fertilizer to condition the grass for winter survival – do it before December. The fertilizers to use are the ones which have “Winterizer” on the bags and are complete (contains all three elements – nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium) analysis with 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratios.

ON THE LOOKOUT: Watch for pillbugs (sowbugs or rollie-pollies) eating seedlings and young transplants of flowering annuals such as bluebonnets, pansies, etc. Control with a barrier of an insecticide or by using baits until the plants are older and tougher. Scale and other hard-to-kill insect pests may be overwintering on your trees or shrubs.

ODD JOBS: Do not allow heavy accumulations of leaves to pile up on the lawn area. If they get wet and pack together, the grass can be damaged. It is best to rake leaves or pick them up with a mower and bagger and place them in a compost pile or spread them over the garden area and work them into the soil. Add additional fertilizer to assist in decomposition.

PLANT: November and December are the ideal months to plant trees and shrubs. It is the ideal time to move trees and shrubs as well. Planting now gives the plant time to establish its root system before the shoot growth develops in the spring. Also, usually little supplemental watering is required through the winter. Look around at the fall color and see which plants you would like to add to your landscape. Make certain your final choices are from the list of recommended trees and shrubs for this area found at www.milbergernursery.com.

Many of South Central Texas’ finest wildflowers can be seeded now and bluebonnets can be transplanted. Direct-seed the Wildseed seed mixes directly into the soil.

For more detailed and complete Gardening Tips from Jerry Parsons go to our newly redesigned website: **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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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.**

Your **cyclamen** will bloom in your shady areas all winter long. They are a tuberous plant with lovely showy flowers which flare upward from the stem with tender foliage with heart shaped green leaves mottled with silver. While dependable in your outside garden throughout the winter cyclamen do well as a container plant as well as a houseplant.

