

# MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

NOVEMBER 2019

## PLANT QUESTIONS

**Is it too early to plant snapdragons?** November is a good time to plant snapdragons. It gives the plants time to develop some size before cold weather arrives.

**My mature crape myrtle has flower buds that never did open this past season. Should they be snipped off or just leave them alone?** It is merely a matter of aesthetics. Sometime between now and when they start new growth next spring you will probably want to clip off any of the old seed pods and dead, unopened flower buds (which they will be after the first freeze).

**Does it make any difference if you water your plants just before the freeze arrives?** In most cases, no. A well-watered healthy plant or lawn can withstand cold weather better than a stressed plant. The watering, however, needs to occur on a regular basis to keep the plant healthy, not just before the freeze.

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** are blooming machines for winter color. Pansies have become the most popular cool season annual used to provide a dependable winter and early spring color display through the winter and into next spring. Their versatile use in the landscape, easy culture and abundant blooms make them quite worthy of their popularity.

## GARDENING EXPERTISE

### Cool Weather Color

By Dr William Johnson, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Even though they might look delicate, pansies are tough plants as they are one of the few flowers that withstand cold temperatures and still provide a spectacular show when temperatures warm up. Pansies thrive during our mild winters. They will continue to provide blooms through the spring season, which is their peak performance period.

For diversity in your landscape you can plant your pansies in massed beds of single colors on one foot centers (one foot apart), or in borders two or three plants wide. Pansies are also excellent container plants. They do best in full sun, but tolerate up to half shade.

(MORE COOL WEATHER 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.

## NOVEMBER GARDENING EVENTS

**Sat, Nov 2 – Starts at 10:30**

### Lawn and Landscape TO-DO List for Winter.

Get your yard and garden beds ready for winter. Free Adult Earth-Kind Educational Seminar presented by David Rodriguez, Extension Horticulturist for Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension Service at Milberger's. 210-497-3760

**Sat., Dec 7 – 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 8 – All day**

**Milberger's Annual Cowboy Christmas.** Hot chili and cool music. Live country music with the Texas Weather Band. Face painting & Balloon artists. Photos with Santa. 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.

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  
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3920 North Loop 1604  
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(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 November Features



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



**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7**

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   
POINSETTIAS • DECORATIONS *the gardeners on your list*



And Come on Down to our

**Cowboy  
Christmas**



**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8**

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](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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Our Writers have the answers: **Dr. Jerry Parsons** is a well renowned 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](mailto:mhess@hctc.coop).

## GARDENING EXPERTISE

## Cool Season Color

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

While you have many color choices in pansies there are two basic types of bloom, clear-faced or monkey-faced. The clear-faced pansies have flowers that are a single color. The monkey-faced selections have a black interior area surrounded by the colored petals. Both versions come in a wide selection of colors including blue, purple, white, yellow, salmon, orange, and lavender. Pansies are not xeriscape plants. They require watering every two days for the first week and then once per week through the winter. Pansies are a favorite deer food. Plant them where the hungry pests can't reach them.

Closely related to pansies are the **Johnny jump-ups** and violas. They have smaller flowers than pansies



Hardy **cyclamen** are one of the few flowering plants that will grow in the dry shade, one of the most challenging spots in any garden. Cyclamen roots are noncompetitive and can be planted among the roots of trees and large shrubs, both deciduous and evergreen. Cyclamen flowers are white, red, pink or lavender. They seem to glow with color even in the shadiest planting.

“When selecting your pansies look for compact plants with deep green foliage. Take a look at the roots. Plants that are leggy or root-bound have a hard time getting established. Purchase nice, full and pretty plants. Deadhead the faded blossoms to extend flowering.”

~ Paul Rodriguez, Texas A&M Extension Agent

and nearly as many colors. You can grow them just like pansies.

If you are looking to get some color in the shady areas of your landscape consider primulas and cyclamen. (Primulas are also called primrose.) Primula, pansies and cyclamen last until the warm weather arrives, usually the end of April. Keep all of the winter annuals well-watered and fertilize on a regular basis.

There are two main selections of primulas on the San Antonio market.

- **Acaulis primulas** grow low and flat like pansies. They have kelly green crinkly leaves and intensely colored flowers. The red, blue, purple, white, pink, yellow, and bi-color blooms are as bright as the grease paint that circus clowns use to color their faces. This selection is used to best effect as a container plant near the door or on a shady patio.
- On the other hand, **Obonica primulas**, are more upright with pastel colored blooms. The pinks, white and blues are especially attractive.

Whichever primula is most attractive to you, protect them from the slugs and snails. The prospect of a meal of primrose motivates snails and slugs to become speedy.

## 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. That should be once every three weeks from now until May. 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.



Leaving leaves in their place can seem like a great way to enhance the soil and give it rich nutrients. In fact, dead leaves can catch excess moisture and leave wet spots on the lawn. When this happens, moss, mold, and other destructive plant life can wreck your grass. Gather all of your leaves from your lawn and get rid of them. If you want to ensure nutrient-rich soil, create a compost pile using the raked leaves as the start. That way, you can control how the leaves get dispersed over the lawn as fertilizer.

### 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 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.

## XERISCAPE GARDENS

# How do you say zîr' i-ska p' ?

A landscape is a xeriscape if it needs little extra water or other assistance to look its best. Fortunately, many plants thrive in San Antonio with these low-care conditions. This leaves a wide range of landscape styles at your fingertips. San Antonio low-water landscapes are cool, inviting and lush. They burst with color during every season of the year.

A xeriscape is a landscape theme that greatly reduces or even eliminates the need for extra watering from an irrigation system. The reason why xeriscapes work well in any environment is because xeriscapes use native or adapted plants that thrive in the local ecosystem without too much extra landscape maintenance care or watering.



Xeriscape means expansive, beautiful perennial beds with zero hassle. Hardscape that's practical and eye-catching. Extended outdoor living spaces. Most importantly, a successful xeriscape incorporates plant material that uses less of our precious resources, particularly water.

“It's not just cactus and rocks. Xeriscaping is all about extending exciting new perennial beds in landscape with less hassle and even less water.”

~ Erin Conant, SAWS Conservation Consultant

Turning your lawn into a xeriscape can help you lower your water bill costs, decrease the amount of time you spend on weekly yard work, and reduces the number of toxic fertilizers and pesticides you use on your property.

You will find lots of choices of xeriscape plants to select from. Warm-weather annuals, cacti and succulents, herbs, palms, perennials, roses, vines, shrubs, and ornamental grasses do well and thrive on a relatively low amount of water. You can use a variety of these Texas-friendly plants to give your yard texture and interest.

The best way to water your xeriscapes plants is by hand. Your plants will not require much water and hand watering gives you the most control over your water use. We have enough plants to choose from that we can have a lush green look, 12 months of color or even all groundcover and still not use much water.

Visit our web site to find the **Seven Xeriscape Steps**. And then visit our nursery to talk with the South Texas Gardening Experts who can discuss the plants that would be suitable for your xeriscape. You will find the Seven Xeriscape Steps on our website under the tab that reads GARDENING EXPERTISE.

## TREES AND SHRUBS

# The Best Shrubs for your Landscape

Shrubs serve many functions in the landscape. They provide the transition between shade trees and the lawn or other ground covers, and they provide the same transition between the house and lawn. Shrubs also cover unattractive views and form hedges to provide border delineations. The right shrubs can provide color for the landscape and/or wildlife cover or food.

When selecting shrubs, consider how big the plant will be when mature. Though they might be only two feet high in a one-gallon container, photinias or elaeagnus grow too large to be placed in front of windows two feet off the ground.

The shrubs you select must also have the right tolerance for light. A photinia does not work in deep shade, but a viburnum will.

It can be tricky to choose native substitutes for the cookie-cutter evergreens that populate so many suburban property lines. With this in mind, here's a few native screens and hedge-like plants that retain their leaves in winter.

## Some Shrubs to Consider:

**Texas mountain laurel** is a sentimental favorite, with mind-boggling purple flowers every year in time for Texas Independence Day. Mountain laurel is right at home in Hill Country rock. It's usually grown as a single tree, but in Laurel Heights and older neighborhoods you'll see it sculpted into hedgerows. Left on its own to reseed, it forms thicket-like masses of lustrous dark green.



**'Green Cloud' Cenizo** is an evergreen, with smooth, dusty-green leaves that contrast with the typical silverleaf cenizo. Lavender-colored flowers appear sporadically during hot humid weather. Thriving in full sun with very low water requirement 'Green Cloud' Cenizo (also called Texas Sage, or Barometer Bush) is a deer-resistant Texas native that attracts birds and pollinators.

**Yaupon holly.** Its red Christmas berries are ubiquitous in irrigated residential and commercial landscapes across the North Side, since yaupon can be endlessly sheared, topiaried or trained up as an ornamental tree. In the wild it's native from East Texas all the way to Bastrop, so it doesn't mind growing in clay, but it does prefer moisture more than rock.

**Wax myrtle** is a fast-growing coastal shrub, that grows well in clay loam or sandy soils (like those of southeastern Bexar County from Highlands all the way to Floresville.) It makes a great "instant hedge" and a native alternative to photinia and ligustrum.

## NOVEMBER GARDENING TIPS

# Planting, Pruning and Time to Fertilize

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

**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](http://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.

**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.

For more detailed and complete Gardening Tips from Jerry Parsons go to [www.MilbergerNursery.com](http://www.MilbergerNursery.com) and follow the newsletter link that reads “Monthly Gardening Tips.”

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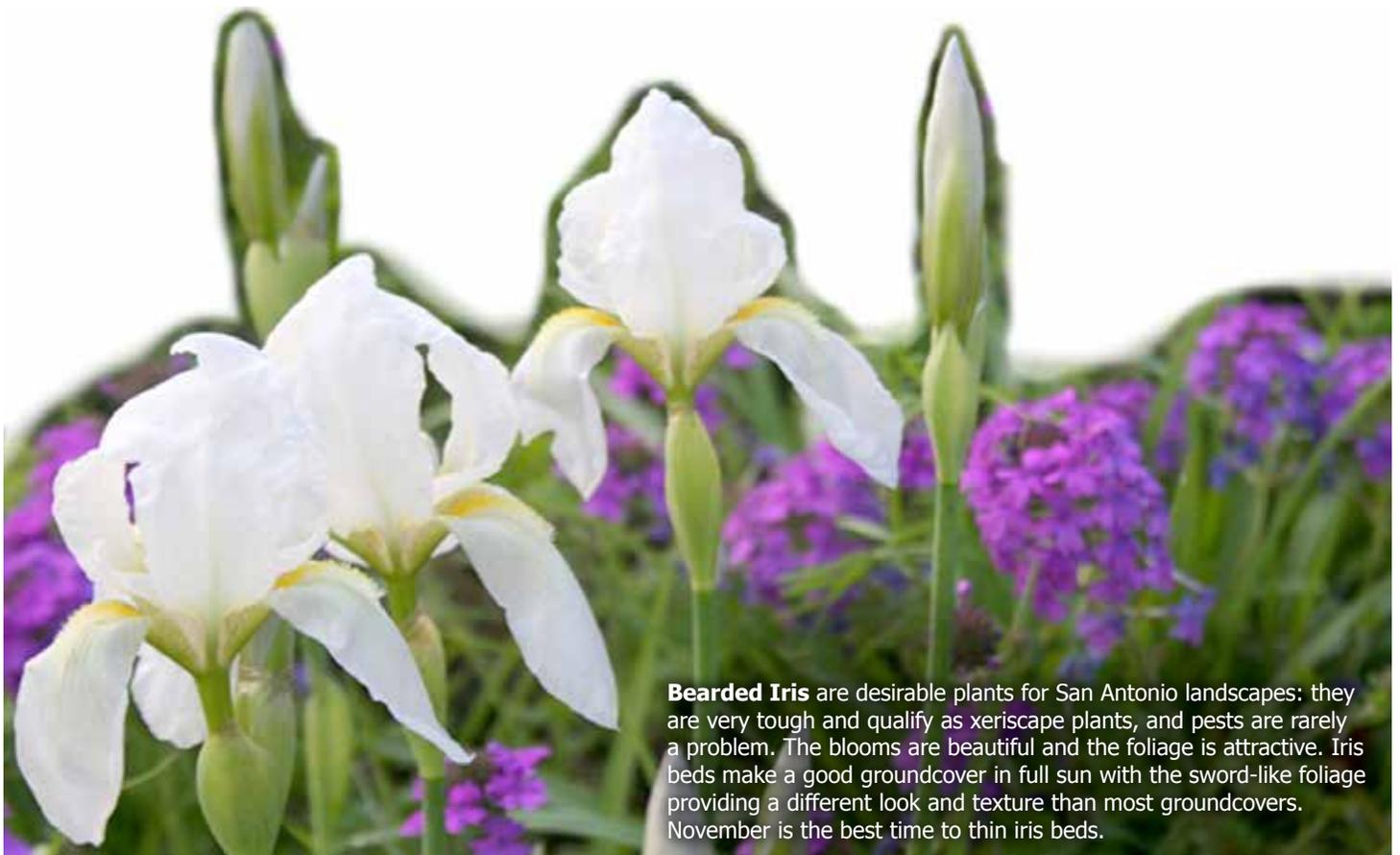
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**Bearded Iris** are desirable plants for San Antonio landscapes: they are very tough and qualify as xeriscape plants, and pests are rarely a problem. The blooms are beautiful and the foliage is attractive. Iris beds make a good groundcover in full sun with the sword-like foliage providing a different look and texture than most groundcovers. November is the best time to thin iris beds.