

# MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

FEBRUARY 2020

## PLANT QUESTIONS

**I want to get a fast start on my lawn this spring. Is there an advantage to fertilizing now?** None at all. Only your 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.

**We protect our hibiscus and bougainvillea in a greenhouse from the cold. Now the aphids have taken over. What can we do?** Insecticidal soap will work. I use a pyrethrin spray. It is potent, but a relatively safe organic control. For proactive insect control use Bonide Systemic Granules.

**The bluebonnets we seeded last fall have germinated, but do not seem to be growing. Do we need to water them?** No, for a few more weeks the bluebonnets will be in a "rosette" stage. Then they will then begin growing aggressively. It is best to not irrigate once they have germinated.

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.



Many Texas tough roses, both modern hybrids and old garden roses, have been designated as Earth-Kind roses. Earth-Kind is a special designation given to select rose cultivars by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service based on the results of extensive research and field trials and is awarded only to those roses demonstrating superior pest tolerance, combined with outstanding landscape performance. You can find a wide selection of Earth Kind roses at Milberger's Nursery.

## GET YOUR ROSE GARDEN READY

### Texas Tough Roses

Roses, the iconic symbol of Valentine's Day, are some of the most popular and beautiful flowering shrubs grown in South Texas. Starting a rose garden may seem daunting to new gardeners. However, growing roses doesn't have to be a stressful endeavor. In fact, choosing the varieties that do well in our area, and with proper planting and care, nearly anyone can become a successful rose gardener.

(MORE ON ROSES 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 25 ~ 10am**

**Planting Shade Trees.** FREE Adult Seminar. Shade trees are a great way to cool things off. They add value to your property, save money on your utility bill and they are beautiful. Bexar County Extension Agent, David Rodriguez, will share his experience and expertise in growing shade trees in your yard.

**Sat., Jan 25 ~ 10am 'til 2 pm**

**Milberger's Blood Drive.** Give the gift of life. The South Texas Blood and Tissue Center will be here at the nursery to conduct our regularly scheduled January Blood Drive. Your donation could save the life of someone in need.

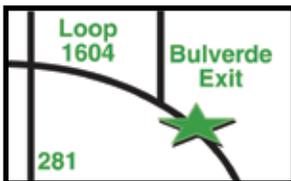
**Sat., Feb 15 ~ all day long**

**Milberger's Rodeo Weekend Celebration.** The 2020 Rodeo Tomato will be announced and available for sale. Free Chili Fritos and Drinks from 11am until the pot runs out. Country music, face painting and balloon artist. Check our web site for schedule of events.

**Sat., Feb 15 ~ 10am**

**Spring Clean-Up "To Do's" for Your Lawn and Landscape.** FREE Adult Seminar. Get your landscape ready for the spring with this seminar with Bexar County Extension Agent, David Rodriguez.

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)

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](mailto:mhess@hctc.coop).

## Milberger's Nursery February Features

# SUPER BOWL WEEKEND

Before you settle down to the **BIG GAME** stop by Milberger's and score



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THE **2020  
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Will be announced and **ON SALE** at **Milberger's** on **SAT., FEB 15.**

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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## GARDENING EXPERTISE

## Texas Tough Roses

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Nothing compares to a rose bush laden with blooms sending their heavenly scent into the evening air. But growing roses can be intimidating for the casual gardener. They're prone to problems like black spot, powdery mildew and mites. To help Texas gardeners avoid such drama, Texas

“Growing your roses in pots, tubs, barrels, planters or other containers extend the scope and possibilities of gardening. Portable roses give you a decorative addition to any part of the outdoor living area and an easy way to change the look of the landscape from month to month or year to year.”

~ Dr. Jerry Parsons

A&M University horticulturists have designated varieties that work in our climate as Earth-Kind Roses. These shrubs and climbers are Texas tough. They are also the most environmentally responsible varieties, requiring minimal chemical treatments, fertilizers and pruning.

Roses need to be grown in full sun. They like to be in soil that is well amended with organic matter and has good soil drainage. A raised flower bed with additional compost is a great place for a rose; starting with healthy soil will prevent you from needing to fertilize much later on. Newly-planted roses will appreciate watering around twice a week throughout the first growing season, and a two to three-inch layer of mulch helps quite a bit. Right now is a great time to plant roses. Milberger's Nursery is receiving fresh stock of roses on a weekly basis from the end of February to the end of March.

It is also the best time to prune most roses. Shrub roses can be pruned way back, leaving nothing but four to six-inch stubs. Pruning back in February helps to clean out any deadwood that may be on your plant and prevents disease. Caution, it is not the time to prune climbing roses, such as Seven Sisters or Lady Banks rose, that only bloom in the spring. If you prune climbers now, you will be cutting off all the blooms for the year. Instead, prune those after they have finished flowering.



**Knock Out Roses** are a family of modern roses that are resistant to almost all rose diseases and don't require any deadheading to keep in bloom all season long. Introduced in 2000, Knock Outs promise everything to the rose grower: they are showy, continuous bloomers with a compact growth habit; tough-as-nails and no need to spray for black spot disease. They have been called "the perfect rose selection for the lazy gardener" and Milberger's has lots to choose from.

Rosarians from the **San Antonio Rose Society** will be at Milberger's to talk about roses in your landscape on Saturday, March 21st from 11am until 3pm. Milberger's regularly carries over fifty varieties of Antique and Modern roses that are recommended by Texas A&M and the San Antonio Rose Society.

## GARDENING EXPERTISE

# Texas' Best Annuals

Annuals are a common solution for many gardeners who need flowers that are quick growing and are an easy to fill solution for flowerbeds. A good mix of annual plants can offer vibrant colors for your garden. There are many options to choose from to plant in your garden, therefore it may not be a simple task choosing the right annuals for particular sun or shade situations.

When putting your transplants in your garden beds or containers be sure that the soil is moist before installing the plants. And be sure the transplants have been watered before they are put in the ground. Your new transplants may need water once a day in warm weather. Once they become established, you can gradually reduce watering.

When planting your annuals for Texas, carefully prepare your soil with compost and top dress with

mulch. Fertilizing with appropriate water soluble or slow release fertilizer will insure a good start.

Digging out any weeds, and adding a three-inch layer of compost or other organic amendment will benefit your annuals' growth.

Since South Texas is one the hottest parts of the state and has sunshine for most of the year, one can find a huge variety of annuals that thrive in full sun. From flowering annuals to decorative shrubs and grasses, as well as large bushes. There are many to choose from. You will find that some annuals last longer than others. Hardy annuals, such as snapdragon, are often among the earliest and the latest to be planted in many Texan gardens. Often one batch can start soldiering in the cold of late February and then a new batch can brave the cold from early October.



**Zinnias** are one of the easiest annuals to grow quickly, and bloom heavily. They make a massive burst of color in your garden. Zinnias have bright, solitary, daisy-like flower heads on a single, erect stem. The most common zinnia is "dahlia-flowered" and grows up to three feet. Other types of Zinnias are "cactus-flowered."



The **Wax-Leafed Begonia** is probably the most popular annual for shade gardens and container growing. They're one of the few annual plants that flower well in part shade. Not only are the flowers attractive in shades of white, pink, and red, but some varieties have red or bronze-tinged, glossy leaves making them an attractive plant even when they aren't in bloom.

## GARDENING EXPERTISE

# Perennials for Texas

Your Perennials are going to come back year after year, spreading and filling in your garden beds. Start your perennial beds with a plan and choose plants accordingly, giving large perennials plenty of room to mature and arranging for many perennials to be planted en masse for greater effect. For the sunny perennial garden it is best to choose plants that bloom at different times of the year to create a dynamic garden with successive waves of color. For shady perennial gardens where flowering perennials are limited, focus on choosing plants with different foliage textures and colors.

“Annuals are plants that bloom, set seed, and die in a single growing season. Perennials, on the other hand, are plants that return year after year—some may only come back for two or three years while others will keep returning for decades. Some perennials are evergreen, but most go dormant in the Fall and return in the Spring from the roots.”



**Blue Plumbago** is a hardy, excellent choice for a landscape design in need of a groundcover-type plant. The plant loves the heat, can survive long, humid summers, and is drought tolerant. The bush with beautiful blue blooms not only attracts the eye but its scent attracts butterflies.

Your perennials won't need as much water as annuals but they should be watered deeply to encourage the roots to go down rather than out. Be sure to keep the bed dressed with a three-inch layer of shredded wood mulch to curtail water evaporation and to choke out weeds. Shredded wood mulches also have the added benefit of decomposing over time, which puts more nutrients into the soil.

South Texas is notorious for dry alkaline, clay soil. You can add two things to fix this: expanded shale and compost. Expanded shale is a gravel-size rock that has been heated to a high temperature to create air pockets within that help to break up and aerate clay soils, aid in moisture retention and soil drainage. Expanded shale only needs to be added when you are first creating your perennial garden bed. Compost, on the other hand, should be added on a regular basis—at least once a year. Compost is organic matter that has undergone an accelerated decaying process in order to be used as a fertilizer and soil conditioner. Compost can be made at home or can be purchased in convenient bags at Milberger's Nursery.

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Planning for a water garden? February is a good time to get started. Whether you want to install your own water garden or have it installed by professionals, Milberger's has the materials and expertise to help you add a water feature that will add value to your landscape. Visit our web site [www.milbergernursery.com](http://www.milbergernursery.com) for ideas and information.

## TREES AND SHRUBS

# Cold Nights for Your Backyard Citrus

Winter means colder nights and drier days for your backyard citrus tree. With the proper precautions, you can be sure your backyard tree not only survives, but thrives, during the colder winter months.

**Plant your tree in a smart location.** If you're about to plant a citrus tree in your backyard, it actually matters where. If at all possible, plant your tree on the southeast corner of your home. Here's why: the killer freezes in South Texas often come with a strong northwesterly wind. If your tree is planted near your house's southeast corner, your home acts as a shield to block a direct hit from damaging winds.

**Protect your tree during a hard freeze.** An effective protection for radiative frosts is to cover the plants with sheets, blankets, or commercial spun-bound polyester frost-blanket materials, also called row covers.

**Nourish your tree.** For the best in tree nutrition during the winter, apply a one-two punch of

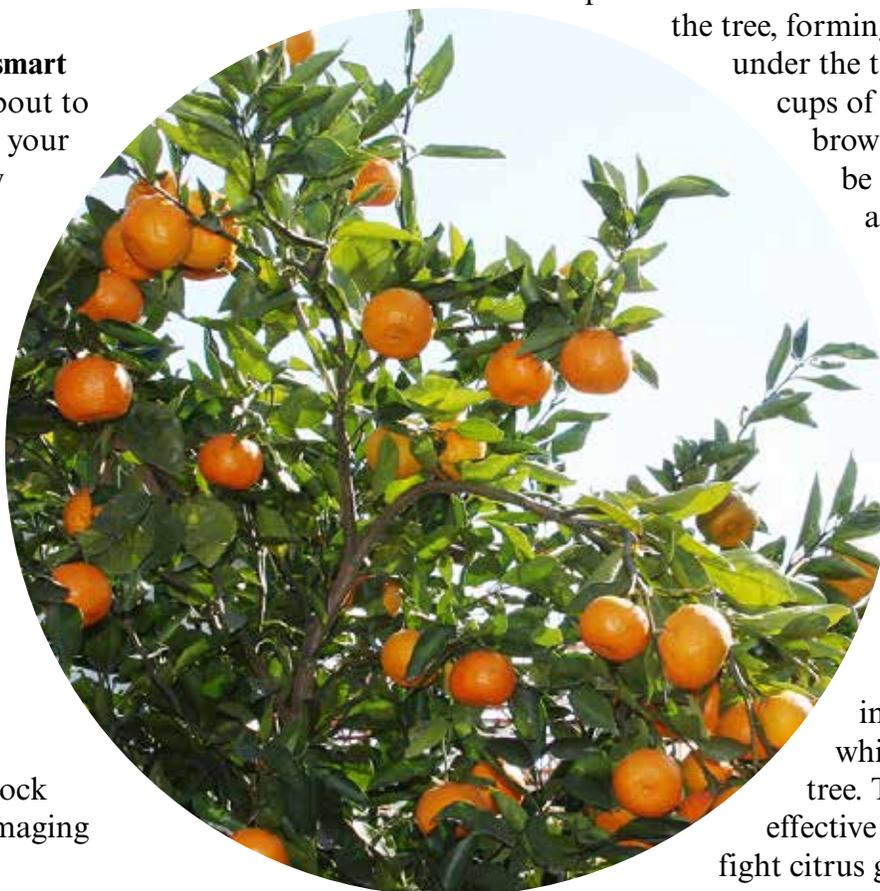
compost and molasses. February is the best month to apply compost. Apply a 40 lb bag of compost under each citrus tree in your yard. Do not press the compost against the trunk of the tree but

spread it out from the trunk to the edge of

the tree, forming a circle of compost under the tree. Next, take two cups of certified organic brown sugar (yes, has to be organic and brown!) and sprinkle it on top of the compost and then water

the mixture. The organic brown sugar acts as a food source for the beneficial microbes (aka bacteria) in your soil to break down the compost and release the nutrients in the compost, which in turn feeds the tree. This program is an effective way to help the tree fight citrus greening disease and pests, while producing delicious, nutrient-dense fruit.

**Don't over-irrigate.** Citrus trees do not go dormant over the winter but they do not need much water. Water your tree before a freeze not during. Too much water could cause your citrus to become susceptible to new growth damage should an unexpected freeze occur.



**Satsumas** are a variety of mandarin oranges, related to tangerines, clementines, and other citrus fruits. They are considered the juiciest of the family and have a balanced sweet-yet-tart flavor that makes them delectable on their own or used in savory dishes and desserts. Texans have been able to grow satsumas very successfully by planting them in patio containers or even in their landscape in South Texas. The 'Orange Frost' satsuma has more cold hardiness than others. Once established, it will tolerate more cold, meaning that it can be planted in the landscape. It is easy to grow in South Texas which is why it has been designated a Texas SuperStar™.

## FEBRUARY GARDENING TIPS

# Get Ready for Spring Planting

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

February is the month that kicks off the Children's Vegetable garden Program at the San Antonio Botanical Garden. The 16-week program runs from February through June. Each child is allotted a 3.5' x 28' garden plot and will have fun growing different types of seeds, vegetables, and ornamental annual flowers with the guidance of Master Gardener volunteers. Children can also earn their Junior Master Gardener certification by participating in fun, hands-on activities each week after they have tended their garden.

In order to gain the most from the learning experience and to help ensure successful growing, participants are required to attend all sessions (two absences are allowed). Families are welcome to share the gardening experience with their child.

**Plant:** February is the month to begin spring gardens and is the ideal month to prepare your rose beds; be sure to check all the antique and modern roses as they are freshly stocked at Milberger's from now through April.

**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:** Mid-February to Mid-March is the time to apply pre-emergent herbicides. Don't apply fertilizer to your lawn until you have mowed it two times.

**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.

Take advantage of CPS's Green Shade Rebate to save \$50 per shade tree for qualifying customers. Visit our web site [www.milbergernursery.com](http://www.milbergernursery.com) for a list of recommended Small Trees. You can also download information sheets on the varieties that are available and ready to plant.

For more specific details 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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## Planning for a Water Garden?



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



This is the month that **Texas Bluebonnets** will start popping up. The Texas state flower, Texas Bluebonnets are hardy plants that rarely suffer from insect or disease problems. Once established, Texas bluebonnets thrive in heavily disturbed, poor soils in South Central Texas and the Hill Country.