

# MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

JULY 2015

## PLANT QUESTIONS

**My St. Augustine lawn is not as thick as it once was. The trees have grown larger, and it is shadier. What can I do to make the lawn thicker?** If shade is causing the thin lawn, there is not much you can do. Even St. Augustine grass requires 4 to 5 hours of sun to prosper.

**We like okra but we're afraid it will take over our garden.** Okra can be huge. Some selections reach 14 feet tall and 3 feet around. A variety like Oscar, however, will only grow 6 or 7 feet tall.

**Besides live oaks, red oaks and elms what are some different options for high-quality shade trees?**

Consider Mexican sycamore, Chinese pistache, Montezuma cypress, Chinquapin oak, Mexican white oak, Lacey oak and or Bur oak. All do well in our area and produce long-lived, high-quality shade trees.

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.



Large, colorful **Tropical Hibiscus** blossoms create an eye-catching display during summer, attracting hummingbirds and butterflies and providing the look of a tropical paradise.

## SUMMER COLOR

### The Tropics of Central Texas

There's nothing more breathtaking than the bright colored blooms and elegant foliage that tropical hibiscus plants provide through the spring and summer months. Tropical plants give us the opportunity to enjoy the exotic look of the tropics in your own front or backyards. Along with their awesome color displays they also offer many unique choices for foliage in various colors, shapes and sizes. But they need a lot of light to bloom and perform well but they can't tolerate full sun from dawn to dusk in our usually dry summers. As its name suggests, tropical hibiscus is not cold hardy and requires protection when temperature go below 45 degrees F. This makes it practical to grow tropical hibiscus in containers.

(CONTINUED 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.

## JULY GARDENING EVENTS

**Thurs., Jul 16 – 9:30am 'til 11:30am**

**Bexar County Master Gardeners Summer Camps for Kiddos, Grands, Nieces and Nephews.** Art in the Garden for Ages 5-8yrs. Learn about plants, insects, and other garden life while creating art for your garden(s). 3355 Cherry Ridge, Suite 208. \$20 per child. 210 467-6575

**Sat., Jul 25 – 10:00am 'til Noon**

**Fall Vegetable Gardening for Kids.** Your children will have fun learning the basics of vegetable gardening. This popular class will include "little" hands-on planting and seeding tips as well as craft activities. At Milberger's Nursery. FREE but space is limited. Reserve your kid's spot. 210-497-3760

**Sat., Aug 1- 10:00am 'til 1:30pm**

**Milberger's Blood Drive.** Your opportunity to give the gift of life. Conducted by South Texas Blood and Tissue Center To support this drive Milberger's will offer a \$10 gift certificate to each person willing to donate. 210-497-3760

### Now taking Applications

**Fall 2015 Children's Vegetable Garden Program.**

Apply early as space is limited. Children (8 to 13yrs) must be able to attend the Children's Vegetable Garden Program every Saturday, August 22 through December 5, from 9am to Noon. To register, visit the San Antonio Botanical Garden (SABOT). <http://www.sabot.org/education/childrens-education/childrens-vegetable-garden-program/> or contact Timothy Roan at 210-207-3278 or [timothy.roan@sanantonio.gov](mailto:timothy.roan@sanantonio.gov)

**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 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](http://www.milbergernursery.com)  
[nursery@milbergersa.com](mailto:nursery@milbergersa.com)

## Milberger's Nursery July Features



MILBERGER'S  
LANDSCAPE NURSERY

★★ Wishes You A ★★

**Happy and Safe  
Independence Day**

Visit the nursery for  
**HOT** holiday specials...

JULY FEATURES GREAT SPECIALS ON

**ANNUAL AND  
PERENNIAL COLOR.**

BLOOMING TROPICAL HIBISCUS  
*and* BOUGAINVILLEA *are*  
**ABSOLUTELY BEAUTIFUL**  
AND **LOVE** SOUTH TEXAS WEATHER.

**FOR INSTANT COLOR** ✨  
✨ **ALL SUMMER LONG**

Select **BEAUTIFUL COMBINATIONS**  
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**PLANTERS** containing **colorful recipes**  
of **blooming color** at Milberger's  
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[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 renown Horticulture Specialist who is retired from the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in San Antonio; **Dr. Calvin Finch** is the Urban Water Program Director for the Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources. The Gardening Newsletter for South Central Texas is edited by Marc Hess [mhess@hctc.coop](mailto:mhess@hctc.coop).

## SUMMER COLOR

# Tropical Hibiscus

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Most hibiscus varieties have one-day flowers: the blossoms open early in the morning and wilt late that afternoon. Flowers of a few varieties remain open for two days. Most hibiscus are odorless, but a few varieties are slightly fragrant. Summer is the season for tropical hibiscus. Few summer-flowering shrubs surpass the tropical hibiscus for glossy, dark green foliage and nonstop flowers in shades and blends of pink, yellow, orange, white, lavender and scarlet.



With proper care, **Tropical Hibiscus** can provide almost non-stop blooming from spring through the fall. When planted in containers they can be easily protected from cold weather.

“*Tropical Hibiscus are probably the most recognizable and popular tropical plants used in today’s landscapes. Tropical Hibiscus offers a wide array of colors and blooms types including single and double reds, pinks, yellows and oranges. They can also be trained into patio trees, used as bushes, there’s even some that have braided trunks.*”

Tropical hibiscus can be grown in the ground. They also adapt well to container culture, which also makes their protection from unfriendly weather convenient. Common container diameter sizes are 9-inch, 12-inch and 14-inch. Usually, a 14-inch pot is the largest size that mature plants will need. Pot tropical hibiscus using a light and porous potting mixture to provide good water drainage. There also are “custom” hibiscus planting mixes.

Tropical hibiscus prefer a sunny location and well-drained soil high in organic matter and nutrients. Along the Texas Gulf Coast, hibiscus can be planted in the ground if winter protection is provided when temperatures are expected to drop below 40 degrees. Tropical hibiscus like frequent water rations to stay very moist, but they can’t stand wet feet, which means good drainage is essential.

During our hot summers when rainfall is low, hibiscus in pots have to be watered almost every day to keep the top of the container soil lightly moist. Once it is established, a hibiscus can be watered deeply once or twice a week during dry spells.

While tropical hibiscus can occasionally survive our typically mild winters, growers should plan early to protect and protect them in the winter.

# Texas Natives in Containers

By D. Hairlloyde, The Occasional Gardener

Growing natives in containers is a clever way to add native color to your landscape and attract wildlife activity to an area of your yard that may not be appropriate for planting in the ground, such as on a patio or table, or along a front walk or porch. In gardens with lush vegetation, small, delicate plants such as scarlet pea, lace cactus, Dutchman's breeches and blue-eyed grass may be overwhelmed. Containers or shallow pots is often just the right solution. These same garden miniatures may also be better viewed at eye level.

With natives in container natives you can move the location of the plant without disturbing its delicate root system. As arrangements transition into their off-season, they can be replaced with fresh plants. Transportability allows gardeners to protect plants from weather extremes including hot sun and freezing temperatures.

With some native plants, pots also help maintain specific growing requirements such as soil type, pH, and moisture levels. Perhaps your landscape is

designed to thrive without supplemental water but you are willing to pamper a few special pots.

Containers made of clay or other porous materials will dry out more quickly than plastic or watertight ones. The size of a container and degree of root binding will also affect how quickly the plant will dry out. Select a container that will accommodate the full sizes of the plants it will house. It should

provide ample root space and have a substantial base to offset top-heaviness—both visually and in terms of stability.

Style will no doubt influence your selection of a container. A fancy pot may nicely complement a specimen plant but too

much detail may prove distracting for a complex arrangement.

It is important to select plants compatible with each other for a given container garden. You may venture out to areas that have similar habitats and observe what plants are growing together in the wild.



Flowering annual container plants such as **penta**, **salvia** and **verbena** provide lots of nectar and to feed native bees, hummingbirds, butterflies and other welcome garden visitors and if you allow late season plants go to seed, you can even watch birds such as goldfinches, chipping sparrows and chickadees dining on the seeds.

## SUMMER GARDEN BEDS

# Gaps in Your Gardens

By Sam Blankenship, Smith County Master Gardener

We've all got them ... those ugly bare spots in the garden. They practically scream at you every time you visit the garden. Sometimes you can't decide what to plant or you don't have the finances to splurge on mature plants. Maybe you've put in a new garden and it's incomplete. Herb and annual seed packets are valuable tools for this dilemma. They, also, offer the opportunity to experiment with various color and textural schemes.

Seeds are inexpensive and provide a plentiful choice. Most packets contain a large quantity of seeds and are relatively easy to grow. When choosing your seeds, read the label. It will give you all the information you need to succeed. Just because it's in stock



Herbs are great for filling out the gaps in your garden and are a nice bonus for your kitchen. Annual herbs can be colorful and low maintenance.

“When you first start out trying to grow fresh herbs, I recommend you begin by trying to grow from seedling or transplants rather than planting your own seeds. These great little starter plants are widely available for the same price as a packet of fresh herbs from the produce section.”

– Skinnygourmet.blospot.com

at your favorite store doesn't mean it will grow in your location. First, find the zone in which you live and choose only those designated to grow successfully. You won't succeed growing Zone 3 plants in Zone 8.

Next, observe sun and shade patterns in those areas and make a note of it. Then take photographs of the areas you need to fill and take them with you on your shopping expedition. Determine the size of the space you need to fill and compare that with the mature plant size stated on the packet. Think about whether or not your plants will receive enough sun or shade and water. Evaluate your existing watering method because it may not be enough or too much to produce healthy plants. An existing flower bed should already have sufficient compost; however, a newly dug area might need to be amended. Whether it's a new bed or an old one, you should till/dig the top six inches so the tender new roots won't struggle to grow. Follow the instructions on the packet as to depth and spacing to plant your seeds then water in gently.

**The San Antonio Herb Society** can help you fill the gaps in your garden beds with a plethora of herbal options. Monthly information and education programs are held the second Tuesday of each month and they sponsor the Herb Market every October and the San Antonio Herb Garden Tour. Find out more at [www.sanantonioherbs.org](http://www.sanantonioherbs.org).

## WATER GARDENING

# Enjoying Your Summer Water Features

Day-to-day care of water garden plants during the summer is mostly a matter of grooming. If there is an over-production of foliage, trimming is necessary. All discolored or torn leaves or dead blossoms should be cut and removed, stem and all, close to the roots.

Summer is a critical time for your fish in your water garden. It is possible for them to suffocate in the summer when oxygen levels are low. Be sure to check your pond early in the morning, if you observe your fish at the surface gasping for air then it's time to take action. You can add an aeration system, build another pond or thin out your fish population. If you don't take action under these circumstances then Mother Nature will thin your fish population for you.

Clear water is usually the primary goal of any water gardener. In a new pond, however, the water is seldom clear for very long. This can be rectified easily if the pond is of the correct depth, has a good filtration system, and correctly chosen plants and wildlife are stocked in

sufficient numbers. Given enough time the new pond water will clear.

During the summer, the level of the water should be checked at regular intervals and brought up to its maximum. The plants should be washed once a week with a strong spray of water from a garden hose in order to dislodge any accumulation of aphids which may have come to the pool.

If algae has become a nuisance, much of it can be washed down the drain or over the sides of the pool by using the garden hose and a rake. During the summer one should watch that other plants such as the submerged aquatics do not grow too rampant and take over the bottom of the water feature.



Compared with other types of gardens, water gardens require a minimum of attention. There is very little weeding, certainly no watering, and there are fewer insects or diseases which attack the plants.

The worst thing to do is change the water. Replacing the water will only delay the developing balance of the new pond's ecosystem. Only nature can correct. When fertilizing the lawn, take care not to contaminate the pond.

## JULY GARDENING AND LAWCARE TIPS

# Gardening in the Heat of Summer

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

**Plant:** For summer color and fall beauty, plant Texas' tough annuals and heat-loving tropicals in beds and containers. To brighten a landscape in the heat of the summer, plant lantana, bougainvillea, mandevilla vine, allamanda, hibiscus, salvia, periwinkle, marigold, zinnia, portulaca, purslane, copper plant, and Bush Morning Glory.

**Prune:** Roses (except climbing varieties) should be pruned early August to insure fall bloom. Remove one third of the bush with old canes, dead canes, spent bloom stems comprising the majority removed. This will stimulate vigorous new growth and abundant fall blooms.

Keep tree pruning to a minimum during summer especially on oaks.

**Fertilize** hanging baskets and other containerized plants regularly with a water-soluble fertilizer. If you failed to make a second application of fertilizer to your lawn in June and moisture is available, do so now.

**On the Lookout:** Insects to watch for include white flies, spider mites, webworms, tent

caterpillars, aphids and grasshoppers. Symptoms of chinch bug damage can appear anytime in healthy St. Augustine lawns. Look for dry, burned-looking patches in the hottest parts of the lawn. Control with any contact insecticide.

Trees and shrubs may experience some leaf drop this time of year, caused by summer's heat and dry weather stress. There is nothing which can be done except mulch and hope for cooler weather. Fall webworms may appear on pecan, mulberry, ash, persimmon, and other trees.

**Odd Jobs:** Give special attention to water requirement of leafy garden plants such as coleus, caladiums and elephant ears during hot, sunny periods.

Mulch heavily. Maintain a heavy (two to four inches) mulch throughout your landscape and gardens to reduce water needs and eliminate weeding. Water plants when needed and not according to the calendar or day of the week. Water (soak) thoroughly rather than applying frequent light sprinklings.

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.

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**.

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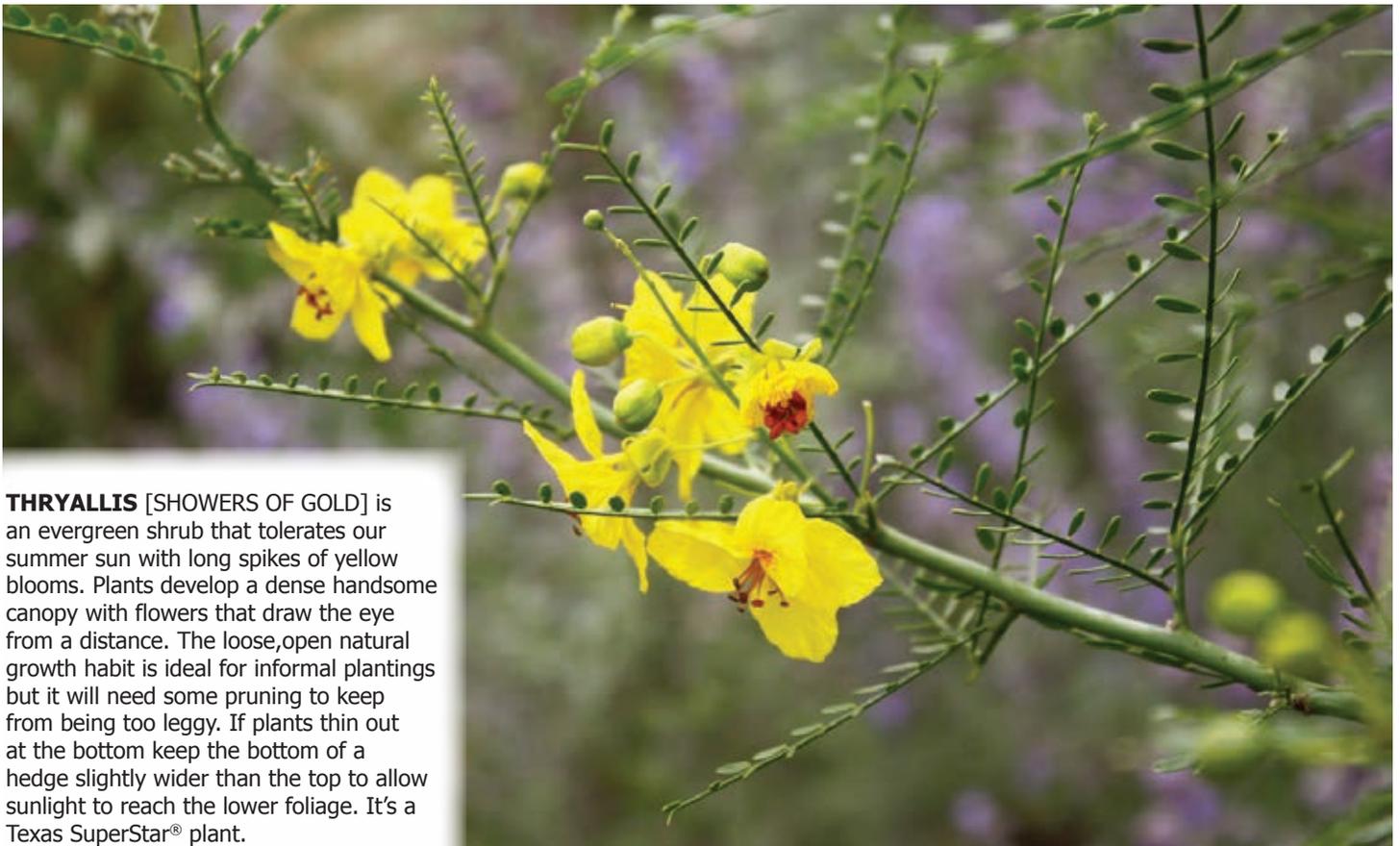
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**THRYALLIS [SHOWERS OF GOLD]** is an evergreen shrub that tolerates our summer sun with long spikes of yellow blooms. Plants develop a dense handsome canopy with flowers that draw the eye from a distance. The loose, open natural growth habit is ideal for informal plantings but it will need some pruning to keep from being too leggy. If plants thin out at the bottom keep the bottom of a hedge slightly wider than the top to allow sunlight to reach the lower foliage. It's a Texas SuperStar® plant.