

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

DECEMBER 2015

PLANT QUESTIONS

How can I get rid of five red tip photinias, 10 feet tall, planted next to the house in a row? Can you get your hands on a front-end loader? Otherwise, I guess that you will have to cut off the branches and grub out the roots, which sounds like a lot of work!

Why is it best to prune in dry weather? Avoids the spreading of pathogens which might be present via the water medium. Also, who wants to prune in the rain?

My live oaks are splitting along the top surface of a large limb. Is there something that I should place within the split or a treatment to arrest this process? It sounds like the limbs are getting too large to be supported by the tree. The best way to prevent this problem would to reduce the length of the limbs. Do not just “top” the limbs in the middle of the branch.

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.



Mexican Petunia is also called **Mexican Ruellia**, attracts butterflies, hummingbirds, and evening hawk moths. Not picky about soil, just likes it to be well-drained- prefers full sun. Very hardy, drought tolerant and heat tolerant. Flowers from late spring till frost. This is a plant which some consider “invasive.” So, if you want to control how far it spreads, place it in a pot or use edging or a border of some kind to keep it contained.

WINTER GARDENING EXPERTISE

Your Winter Garden Beds

By Juan Soulas, Conservation Planner for SAWS

Perennials are reliable, resilient staples of a water-saving landscape. Perennials live more than one year. Through careful selection and proper care, perennials will keep your garden looking great year round – and for a long time. The key to a perennial’s true resilience and value is its life cycle: After germinating, a perennial establishes itself, first through the roots and then the stems and leaves. Firmly established in the second year, most perennials will flower and set seed. Others may take a few more years before blooming.

(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 to sign up. We respect your privacy and we will not share your address or information with anyone not associated with this newsletter.

DECEMBER GARDENING EVENTS

Sat., Dec 5 10am til 1:30pm

Milberger's Holiday Blood Drive, give the gift of life this Holiday Season. Conducted by South Texas Blood & Tissue Center. To support this drive Milberger's will offer a \$10 gift certificate to each person willing to donate.

Sat., Dec 5 all day

Milberger's Annual Christmas Open House. Swing 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. Photo with Santa. Ride the Little Red Choo-Choo. Caroling with the Sweet Adelines. Hot chocolate, wassail, candy canes. Fresh cut Christmas trees. Garlands, wreaths, Poinsettias, decorations and unique gifts for the gardeners on your list. (210) 497-3760.

Sun. Dec 6- all day

Milberger's Annual Cowboy Christmas. Cool Music and Hot Chili. Live music with the Texas Weather Band from 11am 'til 3pm. Chili by Prize Winning Chef Mark Hoffman (Donations to the Food Bank are matched by Milberger's). Hot chocolate, pop corn, wassail, Moon Bounce and Choo-choo rides in an Western-theme Holiday celebration 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**



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
December Features**

You are invited to our
**Annual Christmas
Open House Weekend**
Saturday, Dec 6

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.



**HOT CHOCOLATE ~ WASSAIL ~ CANDY CANES
FRESH CUT CHRISTMAS TREES ~ DECORATIONS
GARLANDS WREATHS ~ POINSETTIAS**
And Unique gifts for the gardeners on your list
Visit our web site for details, times and updates



**MILBERGER'S
COWBOY
CHRISTMAS**
Sun., Dec 6 **Cool Music
and Hot Chili**



Enjoy a bowl of delicious Hot Chili prepared by Prize Winning BBQ chef, Mark Hoffman. Noon until the pot runs out. \$1.00 donation, all proceeds go to the San Antonio Food Bank.

Music by The Texas Weather Band 11am 'til 3pm

Santa Claus, train rides, pop corn, and hot chocolate, hot wassail.

**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

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WINTER GARDENING EXPERTISE

Winter Garden

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

As winter approaches, a perennial begins to prepare for dormancy. But before the plant completely dies back or drops leaves, it develops buds for next year and stores energy in the roots. In the spring when temperatures warm, the plant bursts anew with flowers, leaves and shoots. Evergreen perennials are slightly different. Rather than going dormant in the winter, they slow down photosynthesis and respiration. They need very little water; most of the time seasonal rainfall is

“Perennials can be highly useful and attractive in the home landscape. They not only persist for many years but usually require less maintenance than annuals.”

~ Dr. Jerry Parsons, Bexar County Celebrity Horticulturist

sufficient. Select and plant your perennials wisely and you'll be happy with your landscape for many years to come.

Fill in the Green

Take this time of year to look at your landscape, and imagine what evergreen plants can be added to enhance the view. In winter, evergreen plants that change very little throughout the year are the showstoppers of your landscape. Winter is the best time of year to determine where you might want to add some of these plants come spring, and how they'll integrate into your landscape.

When integrating backbone plants into your landscape:

- ☞ Determine their function – screening, backdrop, turfgrass replacement, wildlife habitat, architectural focus, or all of the above.
- ☞ Be thoughtful about placement – keep structural plants such as yucca or cactus away from walkways.
- ☞ Consider your soil type – deep (central and east Bexar County), shallow (northern Bexar County) or sandy (south Bexar County).



WATER GARDENING

Winter Pond Care

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Your pond plants have grown lush throughout the summer and fall and your fish are thriving and eating heartily. As days shorten, the water temperature in your pond will start to cool and as your pond water temperature moves from the mid-70s to the mid-50s, it is an excellent time to winter-prepare your pond plants and fish. You can help your pond transition from late summer and fall to winter.

Clean falling leaves from nearby trees and bushes, as well as leaves from your pond plants, can quickly build up on the bottom of your pond. Settling to the bottom, the decaying vegetation can increase

levels of dissolved organic compounds and rob water of oxygen, stressing your fish that are already struggling to deal with fall temperature swings. If you have a great deal of leaf-fall you can drape a pond net over your pond to prevent the majority of leaves and twigs from getting into the water.



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. 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.

Repotting pond plants is not just for spring. Many plants such as water iris, and submerged marginal plants can be divided successfully and repotted in the mild temperatures of our South Texas winters. However, it is best to repot water lilies and lotus in the spring. Repot your plants early this month to allow sufficient time for them to adjust before winter dormancy.

Prune long-stemmed, “leggy” plants to improve their appearance and encourage growth. By thinning and shaping, you make way for new growth, and more importantly, you prevent fallen leaves and stems from decaying in the water.

Make space for your plants. When the average water temperature is below 50°F, or before the first hard freeze, place hardy pond plants deeper in your pond and bring subtropical and tropical plants indoors.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Plant A Tree. Save Energy. Save Money

With CPS Energy Green Shade Rebates

Not only are trees aesthetically pleasing, they also increase property value, provide cooling shade to your home's interior and exterior, remove pollutants from the air, reduce storm water runoff and improve the environment for a sustainable future.

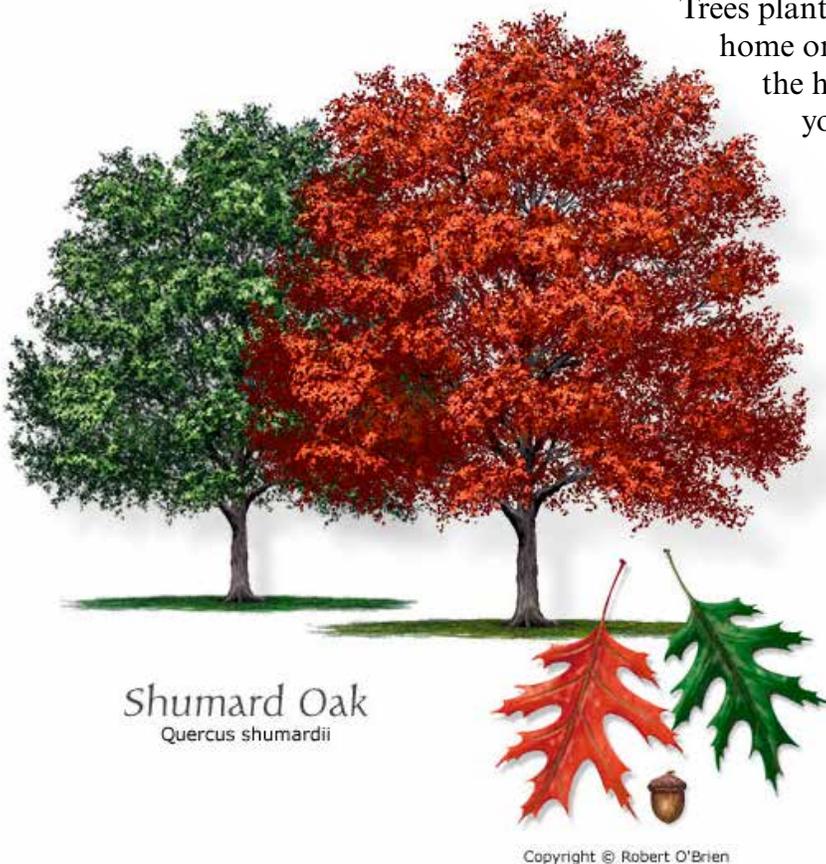
“December is a great month to plant trees and shrubs. The cool winter weather allows the plants to develop a root system before it gets hot again. For shade trees, consider live oak, bur oak, Mexican white oak, cedar elm, Chinese pistache, chinkapin oak, Montezuma cypress, Lacey oak, or Texas red oak.”

~ Dr. Calvin Finch, now retired Director of Water Conservation at Texas A&M.

Trees planted on the west, south and east sides of your home or building provide shade from the sun during the hottest times of the day, reducing the load on your air conditioning system. Shading from trees can reduce surrounding air temperatures as much as 9° F. This helps reduce the burden on your air-conditioning system, which helps you save energy. According to a study by the Houston Advanced Research Center, a mature medium or large tree planted within 10 to 30 feet of a building on the west, south or east side can save a home approximately 381 kWh per year, or roughly \$37 per year, in energy savings.

The Green Shade Tree Rebate program runs October through April. CPS Energy customers are eligible for a lifetime limit of 5 rebates per physical address toward the purchase of trees from the approved species list. Rebates are awarded on a first come, first serve bases and are available until funds are exhausted.

You can view complete information on the program and download an application at the CPS web site at <https://www.cpsenergy.com/en/my-home/ways-to-save/rebates-rebate/green-shade-tree-rebate.html>.



Shumard Red Oak (Quercus Shumardii) is one of the most popular landscape trees among professional landscapers in Texas. It can grow rapidly, possibly 50-60 feet at maturity, and will have a spread of possibly 40 feet at maturity. Its popularity is also driven by some wonderful autumn color. Quite possibly, the Shumard's biggest selling point could be its easy adaptability to our alkaline soils. On the down side, like the green ash, the Shumard can often be one of the last to re-leaf in the spring.

Milberger's has the largest selection of fresh, well-rooted trees in the area. Our South Texas landscape and tree experts can give you advice on which A&M recommended trees would be most suitable for your landscape. Visit our web site at www.MilbergerNursery.com and click through to our on-line tree lot for section and planting guidelines.

ATTRACTING WILDLIFE TO YOUR LANDSCAPE

Winter Bird Feeding

As winter approaches, many birds change some of their eating habits. Birds that usually eat insects may start to eat berries to supplement their diets. Birds will start to look for reliable sources of food for wintertime survival. And, in the fall, many birds begin forming flocks. Flocks of birds are better able to find food and protect themselves from predators. As winter approaches, you may need to change some of the foods you offer to birds. Providing high calorie and high fat foods can be important to the birds. The birds visiting winter feeders may be arriving in flocks or may come to the feeders as individuals, so you will need to provide different options for the birds.

Feeders should be located out of the wind. The east or southeast side of a house or near a row of trees is ideal. It is best to have a perching spot such as a bush or tree for the birds to use to survey the feeding area and provide sufficient cover for safe refuge from predators and shelter from the wind and weather. The feeders should be positioned near cover but in the open to allow birds to watch for danger. For ground feeding, an area near cover with a clear view of the surroundings is desirable.

Placing seed in a ground feeder entices birds such as sparrows, juncos, Mourning Doves, quail, pheasants, towhees and Brown Thrashers. Even the Red-bellied Woodpecker, which is thought of as a tree dweller, does some foraging on the ground. Platform and hopper feeders are especially good for attracting cardinals, wrens, chickadees, titmice, jays, and grosbeaks. Hanging



You will see the **Red-headed Woodpecker** anywhere east of the Rocky Mountains from extreme southern Canada to the Gulf Coast states. It is easily identified by its bold red, white and black plumage.

feeders, because they blow in the wind, are generally used by those species that are able to hang on while feeding such as chickadees, titmice, nuthatches and finches.

Oil sunflower is a great overall seed to offer in the winter. It has a high calorie/ounce ratio due to its high fat and protein content and its relatively thin shell. Oil sunflower has twice the calories per pound than striped sunflower and its smaller shells make less mess when discarded by the birds.

Suet is a great food to offer many of the birds that will visit backyards in the winter. Suet is a high energy, pure fat substance which is invaluable in winter when insects are harder to find and birds need many more calories to keep their bodies warm.

Suet can be fed in a variety of feeders ranging from a suet cage to a wood and cage feeder offering protection from the weather elements and designed to require the birds to hang upside down.

Peanuts are another great food to offer birds in the wintertime. Peanuts have high protein and fat levels and are often an ingredient in suet products. Offering peanuts in a peanut feeder can provide a good source of protein for birds.

Birds do need a source for water in the winter. You can help birds find water by providing an open source of water for the birds.

DECEMBER GARDENING AND LAWCARE GUIDELINES

Winter is an Ideal Planting Time

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

December is an ideal time to plant trees and shrubs. Planting now gives the plant time to establish its root system before the shoot growth develops in the spring. Less supplemental watering is required through the winter.

It is also an ideal time to prepare planting areas for spring planting. Temperate weather means that there is still time to plant or continue planting some of the cool-season vegetable crops depending on where you live.

Planting: It is not too late to plant pansies, the premier color plant for the winter here in South Texas. They're hardy, will bloom over a long season, and come in a wide array of colors. The old-fashioned face varieties have been steadily improved for better garden performance, and many new varieties with solid or bi-colors without a face are now available. You can get anything from bold orange, yellow and red, to pale pastels. You can also plant flowering kale, Dianthus, calendula, viola, Johnny jump-ups, alyssum, and snapdragons.

Lantana, mallow hibiscus, Esperanza and other cold sensitive plants will freeze back to the ground when it gets cold enough. After that cut them back and they'll bloom again when the warm weather returns. Most container plants react to the season by reducing growth rates.

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.

On the lookout: Watch for pillbugs (sowbugs, rollie-pollies) eating seedlings and young transplants of flowering annuals such as bluebonnets, pansies, etc. 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.

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.**"

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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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Christmas Trees

Milberger's offers the most reliable
Selection of Christmas Trees. Fresh cut,
Displayed and kept in water

Noble Firs

Nordmann Firs

Frazer Firs



Hollies are one of those plants that Texas gardeners dream of because it tolerates almost anything. It transplants without shock and thrives in soil that is wet or dry and alkaline or acidic. It needs very little pruning and insects aren't a problem. The tolerant nature of this shrub makes holly care a breeze.