

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

APRIL 2017

PLANT QUESTIONS

What cut flowers should I grow in the garden? Zinnias and cosmos do well as cut flowers. Gladiolas are outstanding, but it is getting too late to plant them. Consider some of the tough roses.

Which is the best lawn grass for a high-traffic situation? We have two dogs and three children. If your lawn is in the sun, Bermuda grass has the most traffic tolerance. Zoysia grass is also traffic tolerant and has some shade tolerance.

The milkweed that we planted for monarch butterflies is loaded with aphids. Should we try to control them? Just leave them be. The milkweed should survive fine despite the feeding aphids. Hopefully, lady bugs and other predatory insects will reduce the population. Some gardeners spray aphids off with water from the hose. Any insecticide that controls aphids will also probably interfere with monarch egg laying, hatching and feeding processes.

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.



Wax-leaf begonias make wonderful bedding plants. The uniformity of their size and shape makes them perfect for mass plantings. They are especially good in shady areas where few other plants will bloom.

GARDENING EXPERTISE

Wax-Leaf Begonias

Wax-leaf begonias are prized for their constant bloom and the uniformity of size and shape within each variety. These plants grow from six to eighteen inches tall with a spread of six to twelve inches, depending on the variety. The foliage can be green, bronze, or red; some varieties are variegated, and a few have white leaves. The flowers come in shades of red, pink, and white, and a few varieties have double flowers. The wax-leaf begonia (*Begonia x semperflorens-cultorum*) is a desirable blooming plant for Texas landscapes because they tolerate sun and shade as well as temperature extremes. It is a perennial plant along the coastal regions of Texas and grown as an annual in the rest of the state. The plants are usually purchased in the spring as bedding plants. Many varieties of wax-leaf begonias are available, blooming in red, yellow, orange, pink or orange. Some varieties have dark green leaves while others may have red, burgundy or even variegated leaves.

(MORE BEGONIAS 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.

APRIL GARDENING EVENTS

Sat., Apr 1 – starts at 10:30am

Turf Grass 101: Do's and Don'ts for your lawn. David Rodriguez from the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will discuss the basics of lawn maintenance through proper nutrition, mowing, weed control and irrigation. This seminar is very popular so arrive early for best parking and seating. Seminar is free. 1.5 CEU's for Master Gardeners who attend. 210-497-3760

Thurs., Apr 13 – 6:30pm

Baking Up A Storm With Herbs with the San Antonio Herb Society. Featuring Suzanne Parker, CEO of Powerhouse Bakery. Suzanne will be demonstrating herbs used in the healthiest ways. Please join us. San Antonio Garden Center is located at the corner of Parland and New Braunfels www.sanantonioherbs.org.

Sat., Apr 22

Milberger's Fiesta Texas Celebration. Join the Fiesta fun at the nursery while you pick out the colorful plants that will liven up your landscape. At the nursery. Keep your eye on our website for details. 210-497-3760

Sat., Apr 29 – 10 'til 11am

Milberger's Kids Class: Texas Free-tailed Bats! Your kids will learn about the benefits and habits of this Texas treasure. Designed for children 5 to 10. Milberger's Nursery provides the materials and classes are free but call to reserve a spot because class size is limited: 210-497-3760.

**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 April Features

APRIL is one of our most colorful months.

Trucks arrive almost every day with blooming

BLOOMING ANNUALS and **PERENNIALS** in every imaginable color. Milberger's puts different plants **on sale** every week.

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**Watch for our weekly sale specials in
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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 known 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.

GARDENING EXPERTISE

Wax-leaf Begonias

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

In tropical or subtropical climates, the wax begonia is a perennial plant that can grow to the size of a small shrub. In cooler climates, it is grown as an annual. It has been popular in gardens since the Victorian era, and it is one of the most common plants in commercial cultivation today.



With large leaves on large plants and enormous flowers held well above the foliage for a showy display, the **Whopper begonias** live up to their name. Shown here at Texas A&M AgriLife Research Center in Overton. Whopper begonias were tested in the field around the state for three years before being designated as a Texas Superstar™ plant. Texas A&M AgriLife Research photo by Dr. Brent Pemberton.

“Almost all homes have a place suitable for begonias. As a dependable summer flowering plant they do as well in containers as they do in garden beds.”

Wax-leaf begonias prefer dappled or bright shade. Most varieties can tolerate heavy shade, and a few varieties have been developed to do well in full sun. Their tolerance for shade makes them suitable for use as houseplants as well as in the garden.

They are not fussy about soil pH, but they do need good drainage. The soil should be kept evenly moist for the best flower production, but the plants will tolerate dryness once they are established.

Wax begonias are heavy feeders. Regular fertilizing will encourage all-summer bloom. Frequent pinching results in fuller plants and heavier bloom.

To plan begonias locate an area in the garden that receives from four to six hours of sun each day. Most varieties tolerate some shade but bloom best with at least four hours of direct sunlight. In Texas, exposure to morning sun is best because of the intense heat of the afternoon sun. Add water as needed to keep the planting bed moist, but not wet, until the plants are established and actively growing. Then water deeply once a week during the hottest part of the season to encourage deep root growth. Don't allow the plants to wilt from lack of moisture, because some of the foliage may not recover and will have to be removed.

Ask the gardening experts at Milberger's Nursery for more suggestions that will help get your garden into full bloom. You will find healthy plant stock, good advice and creative suggestions for your summer landscape and gardening needs from the experienced nursery staff. To see what is on sale each week visit our web site at www.milbergernursery.com or look for our ads in the **San Antonio Express News**.

LAWN CARE

Spring and Summer Weed Control

By Dr Jerry Parsons

By April, spring application of preemergent herbicides for the control of summer annual weeds should have been applied. However, if they have not been applied, application of a preemergent herbicide at this time will still control a majority of the summer annual weeds. Application of preemergent herbicides should be used on St. Augustine grass and centipedegrass lawns with caution in the spring. While these herbicides are selective for turfgrasses, they can cause root pruning in these particular grasses, especially if they are under stress. Also, bermudagrass and/or zoysiagrass areas that were not watered during the winter months should be treated with caution.

The summer grassy and broadleaf weeds are just starting to appear in turfgrass sites. For the broadleaf weeds, use one of the two-way or three-way hormone herbicide combination products.

The two most troublesome summer weeds are sandburs and Bermuda grass. Sandburs are a special

problem in many landscapes and controlling them is not easy. You can be successful controlling sandburs by applying a pre-emergent herbicide in March or April. Follow the instructions closely. If the product is applied haphazardly, you will be disappointed in the results. Then apply a second dose two months later. Follow this procedure for two years running, and you should win the battle with sandburs – at least until your pets track in new burs.



Mowing starts in earnest this month. Mow St. Augustine at 3 inches tall, Bermuda at 1.5 inches, zoysia at 2 inches tall and buffalo grass at 5 inches. Mow frequently enough that only one-third of the grass blade is removed at every mowing. Once per week is usually sufficient.

Bermuda grass is the turf we use on golf courses and ball fields. Bermuda grass is also a major weed. The grass is perennial and lives with traffic and drought. There is hope, however. There are many herbicides that work well to kill Bermuda grass. Follow the label instructions exactly as written.

Chlorotic grass is a common symptom of St. Augustine grass. It appears in spring when the soil is too cool for the roots to pick up iron. Chlorosis will address itself with time and a change in weather or you can apply an iron product by hose-end sprayer or spread a granular product like Iron Plus.

GARDEN BEDS

Pruning Your Flowers for Spring

If you have a garden full of gorgeous flowers and blooming plants, chances are you would do whatever it takes to keep them healthy and beautiful. While cutting back your blooms might seem a bit harsh, seasonal pruning is beneficial to many plants and flowers for a number of reasons.

According to Texas A&M University, gardeners use pruning to train their plants, maintain the health of their bounty and improve the quality of spring flowers, fruit, shrubs and leaves. While you might think that plants survive just fine in the wild without such methods, natural pruning does actually take place. Whether it's an animal breaking off a branch, dead leaves and twigs blowing off in a storm or competition for a light source that results in part of a plant dying, most greenery experiences pruning in one form or another.



Pruning flowers include deadheading, cutting back, pinching, disbudding and thinning. Basically, you'll just need to remove dead flowers, leaves and branches and reduce the size of your plants to make room for new growth.

“Pruning back your flowers in the early part of spring can extend the blooming time of your flowers, regenerate your plants and encourage hardy new growth.”

Besides encouraging new growth you can use flower pruning to control the flower size and the number of flowers on your shrubs, trees and landscaping designs, as well as the size of your houseplants. Pruning is also an effective way to keep plants from invading the space of others, and it can even help control pests and diseases.

April—when the new growth and blooms have yet to appear—is a good time to start pruning your flowers. Some shrubs, like rosebushes, should be pruned right after the flowering season has ended. If you're unsure

of when to prune a specific species, it's best to do your research online before you begin. It can be a time-consuming process, but it's worth it if you want to enjoy big, gorgeous flowers.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Use Shrubs To Complement Your House

By Jim Gober and David Beaulieu

There is something unsettlingly stark about the intersection where house meets land—it begs to be softened with greenery. Foundation planting is done by installing plants around the foundation of a home to disguise open areas or bare cement, depending on how the foundation is built.

Having shrubbery right up against your house isn't good for the house, the shrubbery, or for you.

Locate good-sized shrubs (6 feet tall or higher at maturity) in such a way that their mature foliage will remain at least 5 feet away from the house.

You can get away with planting shrubs that stay shorter a bit closer to the house. In hot, humid climates, you'll want more air circulating between the house and the foundation shrubs, to discourage rot. Adequate spacing between the plants themselves, too, is important, to reduce disease and maintenance.

Shrubbery at the entryway to your house should inject a sense of welcome into such a critical area

of the property—that transitional area from outdoors to indoors. For that reason, special importance should be attached to the shrubbery in an entryway design during plant selection. Foundation shrubs in the entryway design should be you biggest attention-grabbers.

Smart plant usage at the corners of a house is important, too, since these plants can frame the

house, visually. Plant these foundation shrubs (or small trees) far enough away from the corners so that, even at maturity, they won't obscure the corners of the house.

The remaining foundation shrubbery in your landscape bridges the gaps in the foundation planting, between the entryway design and the corners.

You will find that the best foundation plants in South Texas are shade- and drought-tolerant plants that are evergreen, easily

maintained and have interesting foliage, flowers or growth habits.



If you are looking for some color, **Lynn's Legacy Cenizo** works well as a general purpose shrub where a touch of silvery foliage is desired. You can also use this Cenizo as a foundation shrub, in island plantings, xeriscapes or in mixed borders, it can be used in containers on sunny patios. It grows slowly to about 5 feet tall and wide, with a dense, rounded form. The sage green foliage makes a wonderful backdrop for the lavender flowers and it is a Texas Superstar™ plant.

APRIL GARDENING AND LAWCARE TIPS

April Gardens Are Blooming

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

April is usually the best month of the year for snapdragons. Keep them well watered. Resist the urge to cutback the wildflowers, larkspurs, columbine, and other naturalized flowers too early. The seeds must mature if you want a regrowth next year. Roses should be blooming now. Old-fashioned roses benefit by sprays and irrigation, but it is less necessary.

Plant: In the vegetable garden, plant tomatoes, and peppers by transplants; and okra, southern peas, and melons by seed. The spinach, Brussel's sprouts, carrots, and beets are still producing. If you planted potatoes, you can begin harvesting them when the flowers appear. There is nothing better than a mess of new potatoes boiled and buttered. The onions will be ready to harvest when the leaves fall over. It will probably occur in May.

April is a good month to plant esperanza, lantana, the blue salvias, and Pride of Barbados for hot weather blooms. They require full sun. Crepe myrtles are available in every form from miniatures to 40' trees.

Plant caladium tubers after mid-month.

Lawncare: If you have been anxious for action on the lawn, this is your month. Our grasses respond to the warm weather, and begin serious growth in April. Fertilize with slow release lawn fertilizer late in the month. Keep the grass mowed to help the lawn grass compete with the winter weeds that want to form seed heads. It is not too late to aerate and top dress the lawn.

Prune: Prune pillar or climbing roses, wisteria, and Carolina jessamine as soon as they have finished flowering. Vigorous landscape shrubs will need frequent pruning.

Fertilize: April is the ideal time to fertilize lawn grasses after the lawn grass has been mowed twice.

Be on the lookout for: Weeds, snails, fireants and aphids.

Odd Jobs: Thinning vegetables is one of the most important follow-up activities in gardening

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.

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When you need turfgrass and sod
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Turks cap is a great native shrubby plant that attracts butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds. It's an understory plant that can take some sun but doesn't prefer complete sun. This perennial dies to the ground in winter but emerges soon in early spring. It flowers from late spring to first frost.