

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

FEBRUARY 2015

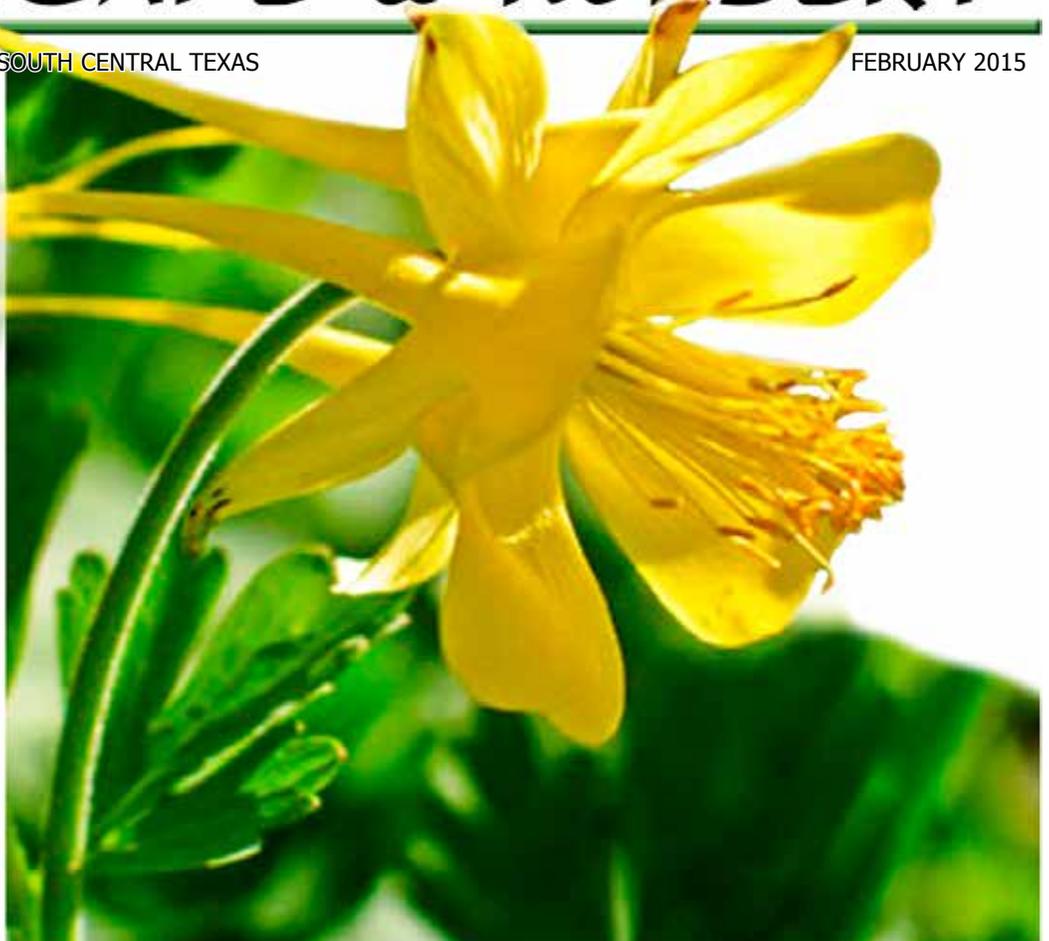
PLANT QUESTIONS

Is this the correct time of year to prune crape myrtles or is it too late? Crape myrtles need little, if any, pruning. However, if you need to prune yours, now is the time to do it.

Which flowers can we plant in the garden now? The cold weather annuals such as snapdragons, pansies, cyclamen, and primulas will bloom until the end of April. Petunias are probably the best choice. They can tolerate a light freeze.

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

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.



GARDENING EXPERTISE

Columbines Larkspurs and Crossvines

By Dr. Calvin Finch, Director of Water Conservation, A&M

Texas Gold columbines are perennials with yellow shooting star blooms that rise above the lush soft green foliage. They bloom in March and are a favorite of the migrating hummingbirds. They are one of my favorite plants because of several other desirable characteristics. "Texas Gold" columbines are shade tolerant. They grow best in mottled shade under deciduous trees, at the edge of landscapes or under high live oak crowns. In addition to the great blooms, "Texas Gold" columbines are a good groundcover for shady areas. The foliage resembles maidenhair fern. It is attractive in the spring, autumn, and winter.

(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.

FEBRUARY GARDENING EVENTS

Feb 9, 2015 – Last Day to Register

Master Gardener's Registration. Bexar County Master Gardeners and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will offer Master Gardener Intern Training Class #59 from February 25, 2015 to May 27, 2015 (Noon - 4 pm, each Wednesday) at 3355 Cherry Ridge, Suite 208, San Antonio. Registration for Class 59, is open NOW through February 9, 2015. For more information, call 210 467-6575.

Thurs., Feb. 12 – 6:30 pm

Cooking Cajun with Herbs presented by the San Antonio Herb Society. Dave Saylor, owner of Acadiana Café will demonstrate roux for gumbo and crawfish etouffee, discuss the important aspects of Cajun cooking, the historical mixture of Native American, African, and Spanish ingredients and show how each dish interacts with other ingredients. Free and open to the public At the San Antonio Garden Center, 3310 N. New Braunfels. 210-826-6860 or mbelisle@satx.rr.com

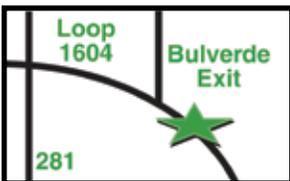
Tues., Feb. 17 – 8 am 'til Noon

Prune Roses with Ed Bradley, Rosarian with the San Antonio Rose Society. At the San Antonio Botanical Gardens. San Antonio Botanical Gardens, 555 Funston at North New Braunfels. 210-207-3270. www.sabot.org

Sat., Feb. 28 – 10 am 'til Noon

Kids Gardening Class at Milberger's. A hands-on, fun-in-the-garden workshop on vegetable gardening designed for children 5 to 10. 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

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www.MilbergerNursery.com

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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 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 mhess@hctc.coop.

HOLIDAY GARDENING EXPERTISE

Columbines, Larkspurs & Crossvine

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Larkspurs and columbines are two spring blooming plants that you can naturalize in your landscape. Plants are available now at area nurseries.

The bed of “**Texas Gold**” columbines spread by seed. Plant a few transplants in good habitat and the bed will spread. At my former home in the Village of Westcreek the columbines prospered under the closely growing but thin crowned live oaks. Every winter the beds spread into the zoysia grass lawn, but only lasted until May when the hot sun quickly destroyed those plants that germinated outside the shade of the live oaks.



Larkspurs bloom in March and April. The flowers are pink, blue, white, and purple. The flower

“I originally planted my larkspurs in a raised bed garden. They return every year amongst the snapdragons, pansies, and stocks. By March they can outgrow the largest, sturdiest snapdragon.”

~ Dr Calvin Finch, Director of Water Conservation at The Texas University System

spikes can be four feet tall on good soils, but are only one foot tall on rocky or heavy soils. Area nurseries have “bunny bloom” larkspur transplants now. Plant them 18 inches apart for maximum bloom development. As the flowers on the spike die, they drop seeds that will germinate next year.

The “bunny bloom” larkspurs come in white, pink, and pastel blue. They are single flowers with the face of a rabbit, complete with ears, if you look into the flower. Some years you can find double larkspurs. They are often purple. They also reseed. Every year fewer and fewer are doubles.

If you prefer to plant larkspur seed, do it in the autumn.

Crossvine is another early spring bloomer. It has a burnt red color flower that will cover the vine in March. The selection “Apricot Beauty” has a more orange bloom that I find superior to the native selection. Hummingbirds like the crossvine bloom. Crossvine is one of the best vines for San Antonio landscapes. The flowers are very showy in the spring and a few bloom through the autumn. The foliage is evergreen and vigorous enough to cover a fence, block a bad view or cover an unsightly pile, but it will not grow to the top of trees or to the end of the block.

WATER GARDENING

When to Drain Your Water Garden

Dr. Douglas F. Welsh, Texas AgriLife Extension Service

With spring time upon us it's a good time for water gardens to reemerge as refreshing focal points. After winter ends it is time to evaluate the cleanliness of your water garden. Debris that settles at the bottom of a pond or pool is the archenemy of clear water. Keep it out with regular skimming.

If your water garden rests under deciduous trees, place a net over it in fall. You don't have to drain your pond every year. If you have been skimming and plant pruning, you'll only need to drain your pond every three to five years.

Whether you remove decomposed debris by netting or draining depends upon the size of the pond and the amount of debris at the bottom. Netting is the least invasive method, but if there is too much muck you may need to drain it. Most ponds or pools aren't equipped with plugs, so you'll have to pump out the water with an

existing submerged pump or by siphoning. Transfer most of the old water to a five-gallon bucket, clean garbage can or kiddie wading pool. As you're

pumping, remove plants. Keep them moist and out of direct sun. If you have fish in your pond, pump down to less than six inches of water to make them easier to catch.

With the pond mostly empty give the walls a quick rinse but do not wash away most of the algae. Algae is important for a healthy pond environment. Use a wet/dry shop vacuum to remove the last bit of water. Refill the pond. Wait several hours, or un-

til water temperatures stabilize before returning fish to the pond. The new water should be within three to five degrees of the water you have kept your fish in so you won't shock the fish. Add a neutralizer chemical to speed dechlorination.

Regular plant pruning enhances pond appearance and controls algae.

Keeping water gardens clean is a

matter of preventive maintenance. Following these simple steps makes your water garden a clearly beautiful asset of your landscape.



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 garden.

ROSES

Time to Prune Your Rosebushes

By Donna Fossum, Conservation planner for San Antonio Water System

Depending on the type of rose, pruning is typically done to remove damaged or dead branches, renew plant vigor and encourage growth. This year while you're showering your loved one with roses for Valentine's Day, consider the roses in your landscape as well.

February is a good time to show them a little love — and prune them in preparation for spring.

🌿 Depending on the type of rose, pruning is typically done to remove damaged or dead branches, renew plant vigor and encourage growth. There are several things to keep in mind when pruning roses:



If you don't have any **miniature roses**, plant some this spring. You will be surprised at the wealth of blooms such a small plant can produce. Use the miniatures in groups of 3's, 5's, or 7's to make a real splash. The miniatures also work well as a border plant along the front of a shrub bed. And finally, try some miniatures in clay pots and decorative containers to add color to decks, patios and apartment balconies.

“ Prune to an outside bud. This means when picking the point on a given cane to cut back to, make sure there is a good bud on the cane facing toward the outside of the plant. This will insure the growth of the new bud is to the outside, therefore keeping the center of the rose bush clear and open for air circulation.”

— Dr. Jerry Parsons, South Texas Celebrity Horticulturist

🌿 Remove dead canes to the crown. Dead canes will be brown and shriveled inside and out.

🌿 Remove portions of canes damaged by frost. When cutting through the cane, the wood should be white clear through. If there is any brown discoloration, remove more of the cane.

🌿 Remove spindly canes (those smaller in diameter than a No. 2 pencil).

🌿 Remove any suckers completely, not just where they emerge from the soil.

🌿 Always make your pruning cuts at an angle about 1/4-inch above a bud that points toward the outside of the plant. The angle should slope away from the bud.

Roses typically require a little more care to keep them beautiful and producing flowers. But it's very rewarding when you cut them for use in your home or give to others for their enjoyment.

From climbers and shrub roses to miniatures look for our fresh stock of roses for 2015 that will be arriving in late February and March.. Visit our new website www.milbergernursery.com for an up to date list of the varieties that we have brought in. Come into the nursery to see the quality of our stock and get free advice from the rose-growing experts at Milberger's.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Pruning Your Shrubs

By Julie Day

Well pruned shrubs and trees are a hallmark of a carefully tended yard or garden. Foundation plantings are lush and full, and blooming shrubs display their blossoms on shapely branches that accentuate each plant's unique style. Pruning is easy—a basic understanding of plant growth, and a few simple techniques, and you'll be ready to go. Most pruning jobs will involve a combination of these pruning techniques.

Pinching back: Simply use your fingers to pinch off the terminal bud of the branch. This will encourage lateral branches to form.

Heading back: This method removes the terminal bud, resulting in more branches. The bud nearest the cut determines the direction the branch grows, with the outward facing bud usually resulting in the best shape.

Thinning: Thinning involves removing branches while leaving the terminal bud. Make the cut just outside the branch collar, which is the bulge where the branch meets the stem, but don't leave a stub.

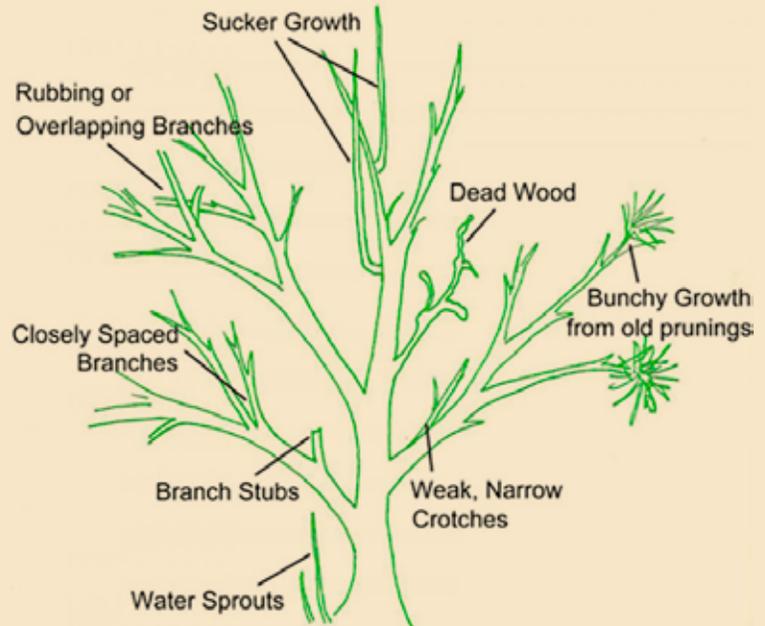
Renewal or rejuvenation pruning: Renewal pruning involves removing the oldest stems and branches at the base, then thinning or heading back the younger stems to promote regrowth.

Shearing: Shearing involves trimming off the tips of branches and is best used only for formal hedges.

“For most shrubs, pruning is a forgiving task – once you learn how each plant grows, you can correct previous pruning mistakes as you go. With a little practice, pruning becomes intuitive and is a quick way to revitalize your yard or garden.”

Choosing the Branches to Prune

Start by removing any of the branches that don't belong.



Next, look at your shrub with a critical eye while considering the following questions:

- What is this shrub's natural size and shape (rounded, arching, tree-like)?
- What is the design purpose of this shrub (hedge, foundation planting, specimen plant)?
- Does the plant growth need to be influenced to achieve that purpose?
- Is the shrub healthy and growing evenly?

A well-pruned shrub looks natural, and in most cases doesn't look like it has been pruned at all.

DECEMBER GARDENING AND LAWCARE TIPS

Pruning and Planting

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

IN YOUR GARDEN BEDS: 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. You can also plant flowering kale, Dianthus, calendula, viola, Johnny jump-ups, alyssum, and snapdragons.

PLANT: December is a good month to plant trees and shrubs. This is a good 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 on our web site.

PRUNE: Lantana, mallow hibiscus, Esperanza and other cold sensitive plants. Cut them back severely – to the ground. Over-plant the cut-back perennial area with winter annuals such as pansies, Johnny-jump-ups and dianthus (pinks), larkspur or bluebonnets rather than looking at the barren bed all winter. The lantana will come back next spring in May to provide beauty during the hottest part of

the summer. Most container plants react to the season by reducing growth rates. Cut back on the water and fertilizer until next spring.

PRUNE: Your 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.

LAWN CARE: 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 now.

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 for this month go to www.milbergernursery.com

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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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Whether in pots, hanging baskets or in the ground, **Geraniums** are among the showiest plants for your landscape beds and its not too early to get them into your garden beds. Few plants offer such variation in flower color, growth habit, leaf pattern, and scent. Wait to plant geraniums outdoors until frost danger has passed and the soil temperature reaches 60°F. Choose a site with lots of sunlight, ideally eight hours or better.