

Concho Valley Horticulture Update

August 2019

Summer Lawn Care

Lawns are an integral part of home landscapes but are not always easy to keep healthy in west Texas. Some of the key maintenance tasks to keep up with in the summer include fertilization, mowing and irrigation. Mowing is often overlooked in importance, but it plays a huge role in creating a dense turf cover - contributing to a beautiful, healthy weed-free lawn.

The Aggie Turf website from Texas A&M has a lot of great resources for lawn care, visit <https://aggieturf.tamu.edu/publications/> to see a list of topics. There is a brand-new fact sheet on mowing written by Extension turf specialist Dr. Becky Grubbs-Bowling titled "Mowing Recommendations for Warm-Season Turfgrass." It has a lot of great info that can help get a lawn back in shape. The two big factors for good lawn mowing technique are height and frequency. Check the chart on the fact sheet for recommended mowing heights. The most common types of turfgrass in the Concho Valley include common bermuda which should be cut 1.5" to 3" high, hybrid bermuda: 1" to 2.5", and St. Augustine: 2.5" to 4". St. Augustine can be stressed if mowed lower than 2.5" and hybrid bermuda will not look green, dense and healthy if mowed too tall.

Mowing frequency is very much tied to mowing height. Never cut off more than 1/3 of the height of the grass - so the shorter the mowing height, the more often it needs to be mowed to stay healthy. Many homeowners only mow about twice a month, when weekly or even every 5 days would help keep the grass thicker and keep weeds out more effectively. To sum it all up, grass should be mowed at the recommended height based on species, and should be mowed frequently.

Fertilization is best when done based on a soil test. It's not a recommended practice to apply fertilizer simply based on a calendar schedule; submit a sample to the soil lab at Texas A&M University once per year to find out exactly what the nutrient levels are in the soil, and what kind of fertilizer is needed and how much. Contact the Extension Office for info, or visit <http://soiltesting.tamu.edu/> to learn more.

And the third task to keep on top of is irrigation. We have been lucky and able to save a lot of water so far this year because there was a lot of wonderful rainfall. But now it's hot and dry, and it's time to pay close attention to the water needs of turfgrass. One inch of water applied one day per week is adequate for a well-established lawn, when there is no rain. Be sure to keep the irrigation system well maintained and efficient so it doesn't waste water.

August To-Do's

- Lightly prune shrub roses and perennials to stimulate a fall flush of blooms
- Provide water for backyard wildlife - songbirds, butterflies etc.
- Continue to deadhead annuals to stimulate new flowers
- Plant spring-blooming wildflower seeds

Pecan Update



Watch for pecan weevils which usually emerge in mid to late August

Visit pecankernel.tamu.edu for more info.

Rainwater Harvesting

When it rains a lot, it's a great motivation to harvest rainfall; when it's not raining, it's STILL a great time to install a rain barrel because we can see how nice it would have been to catch it when it had come before. So no matter what the weather is doing, it's always a good idea to have a rainwater harvesting system in place!

It may not always rain as often we would like in the Concho Valley, but when it does rain sometimes it really comes down hard! Whether it's a downpour or a light sprinkling, harvesting rainfall can really help the landscape during dry periods - and also conserve potable water, which will save money on the water bill. In addition to providing a source of stored water when needed, rainwater harvesting has the potential to reduce stormwater runoff and keep fertilizers, debris and other pollution out of the rivers so it's also good for the environment.

Rainwater harvesting just means collecting rainfall off a surface (usually the roof but could be pavement or other surface) and diverting to a storage tank for later use. Harvested rainwater is often used for landscaping but can be treated and pressurized to use inside the home. It's possible to col-

lect quite a bit of water from rainfall, more than many might think. One inch of rain provides 0.6 gallons of water per square foot of catchment area. So a 1,000 square foot home has a roof that could collect 600 gallons of water for every inch of rain – that's more than 12,000 gallons of water in an average rainfall year.

Catching rainfall can be simple or extensive – some homeowners are incorporating large systems with tanks that hold thousands of gallons, and others are starting with a small rain barrel. Whether large or small, rainwater harvesting systems can really help conserve water and keep plants alive during drought. For more info, including a helpful calculator to determine tank size, gutter size etc. visit rainwaterharvesting.tamu.edu.

There are also rainwater harvesting demonstrations created by the Concho Valley Master Gardeners that are open to the public located at the Tom Green 4-H Center, 3168 N. US Highway 67. Stop by to see the tanks and how they are set up and get ideas for a home system.

Plant Spotlight

Coral Glow Texas Yucca

Hesperaloe parviflora Coral Glow

Red yucca is a popular and hardy plant in the Concho Valley, and while not actually a true yucca it is a great drought tolerant plant. Did you know there are different colors and styles available? Ranging from yellow ones, to 'Brake Lights' which is more compact and deeper red, to this one—Coral Glow is a lovely newer introduction that performs wonderfully.



Summer and Fall Weeds

Weed growth matches rainfall, or lack thereof – when it rains, more weeds pop up. Now that it has gotten hot, and isn't raining so much, weeds slow down a bit – but no matter the weather, there is always something that will come up.

During the dry times, there are some weeds that are better able to take advantage of the situation and pop up when others don't. Mesquite trees are one example, and often pop up in landscapes and gardens in the summer.

Mesquite weeds can be controlled using a mixture of the herbicides Reclaim and Remedy, when doing a leaf spray, or using Remedy mixed in diesel fuel when doing a stem spray. It may take many repeat sprayings to get full control.

For more details on how to control mesquite, visit <https://texnat.tamu.edu/about/brush-busters/mesquite/>

We often have a rainy fall, which would be wonderful, so be sure to apply pre-emergent herbicide to the lawn around late September to prevent cool season weeds from taking over later. But only apply pre-emergent on a well established lawn, not a newly planted yard.

Pre-emergent herbicide is weed-control that kills germinating seedlings. It doesn't prevent seeds from germinating, but kills them when they do. So the weeds seeds are still there, waiting in the soil for some rain to come so they can germinate. So remember that pre-emergent does not kill existing weeds, it only helps prevent more from coming up.

There are many different products to choose from. Some of the brand names that help with grassy weeds include Dimension, Halts or Balan. Certain broadleaf weeds can be prevented with products like Gallery and Pendulum.

There are many different weeds that can get into landscapes and gardens, for help identifying and controlling problematic infestations, contact the local Extension Office.

House Plant Tips

House plants are a great way to decorate the inside of a home and bring a lot of life inside. Here are some basic tips for growing healthy house plants.

First, choose the right plant. Not just any kind of plant can thrive in the low-light conditions inside a home, but most nurseries have a specific section of plants that do well indoors.

Then, be careful with watering. Don't drown house plants - roots need air just as much as water. Fungus gnats, small insects that looks like fruit flies, are a sign that houseplants are being overwatered. And just like the outdoor plants, house plants need a rest in the winter time and do not need as much water and fertilizer then.

Many houseplants are tropical plants and like high humidity. You can help by grouping plants close together, and regularly misting with a water bottle.

If you see insects, pick them off manually before they create a hard to manage infestation.

Every couple of years, houseplants can start to look bad for no apparent reason. This might be due to the plant being root bound, and the solution is to repot. If the roots are a matted, hard mass that tightly match the shape of the pot, it's time to repot.

Repotting should be done in the warm season. Water the plant well, wait an hour and take it out of the pot. Loosen up the rootball by carefully pulling away some of the matted roots. Place some potting mix in the bottom of the new pot, place the plant in, and fill in the sides with potting mix. Water again and it's good to go.

Also, before buying be sure to inspect the plants. Only buy healthy plants that look full for the pot and have no damaged leaves.



Some examples of plants that are good choices for growing indoors include Sansevieria, dracaena, pot-hos ivy, philodendron, and croton. Again, check out the house-plant specific section of your local nursery or garden center for more options.

Night Blooming Plants

Gardening is more of a morning and daytime hobby, and most people focus on having a showy landscape with vibrant colorful flowers and greenery that pops in the light of day. But if you like to go out and enjoy the yard at night, either just enjoying it privately or hosting cookouts and evening get-togethers, it's a good idea to remember to include flowers that provide night time interest.

One way to provide night time interest is to be sure and include white flowering plants. Colorful flowers really fade away in the dark, but white flowers can reflect moonlight and really pop in the night. Adding landscape lighting is certainly an option, but white flowers are really the best bet for being noticeable at night. Blackfoot daisy, star jasmine, white lantana, and white salvia are some examples of good perennials with white flowers.

There are also plants that only bloom in the evening and night time, and it's good to include some of them as well. The moonflower vine is related to the well-known morning glory but while the morning glory always blooms early in the day, the moonflower vine opens up in the late afternoon and evening.

There is also a bush moonflower, and while it has a similar name, the bush and vine moonflowers are not in the same plant family. The bush moonflower can get very large, so be sure to allow enough room when planting. Bush moonflowers are poisonous so don't plant if there is a concern of small children or pets accidentally chewing on the plant.

Bush moonflower also produces prolific seeds, so it can easily get out of control and spread.

Four o'clocks are another flower that open late in the day and provide some evening interest, they prefer shade and good moisture.



Summer and Fall Pecan Care

The pecan crop around the Concho Valley is looking good, many trees have a load of good size pecans on them. Homeowners often call in this time of year with questions and concerns about pecans and leaves falling from their landscape trees; this is called August Drop and it's a physiological response to stress.

Trees that are overloaded with pecans or have not been attentively cared for will abort small nutlets in an effort to be able to bring others nuts to maturity.

There are also cases of insect damage - both the pecan nut casebearer and pecan weevil can damage nuts, and the walnut caterpillar can damage leaves. Some trees have had bad infestations of walnut caterpillars this year so keep an eye out for defoliation. They don't kill trees, but the effort of having to re-leaf out can stress the tree and reduce pecan quality.

For nut pests, it's too late to spray for casebearers, but it's just about the right time to spray for the other common pecan pest - weevils. Mid August is when most pecans are changing from the water stage to dough stage, and are susceptible to the weevil. Cut open a few nutlets to track the progress, to determine the best time to spray. Carbaryl is a good insecticide to use for control.

There have also been cases of birds damaging the nuts—occasionally they will peck into the developing nuts and can destroy some of the crop.

Apply a nitrogen fertilizer now to trees with a good crop, at the rate of 1 pound per inch of trunk diameter, but don't go over 10 pounds of fertilizer per thousand square foot in the lawn or it will burn the grass. Be sure to water in well so it reaches the tree roots.

Now is the time that pecans need water the most, so irrigate three inches every two weeks at the drip line. Watering the lawn is not enough for a loaded pecan tree to produce good pecans.

Upcoming Events

August 2019

Thursday, August 8, 2:00pm

Gardening Seminar—Lawn Care

Location: People/Plant Connection Headquarters, Wells Fargo Building Basement, 36 W. Beauregard

Cost: \$20

Speaker: Monte Sims, Owner—Bes-Tex Supply

Hosted by the People/Plant Connection; Learn how to manage the lawn in the west Texas climate! Please call to RSVP: Susan Stanfield 325-656-3104

Friday, August 16, 12:00pm

Lunch N Learn Class - Growing and Cooking with Herbs

Location: People/Plant Connection Headquarters, Wells Fargo Building Basement, 36 W. Beauregard

Cost: \$5

Speaker: Allison Watkins

Hosted by the People/Plant Connection; find out what herbs grow best in the Concho Valley, and get inspiration on how to utilize them for meals!. For more info call Susan at 325-656-3104

Saturday September 7, 8am to 3pm

Fall Landscaping Symposium

Location: Texas A&M Research Center, 7887 North US Highway 87, San Angelo

Cost: \$30, pre-registration required

This is a great opportunity to hear from speakers all over the state on a variety of topics!

Don't miss it, register now! See flyer or visit <https://txmg.org/conchovalley>

FMI call 325-659-6522

For more information on any of the topics, or to ask questions please contact:



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