

# Concha Valley Horticulture Update

October 2020

## Dividing Perennials

Now that we have had some weather that feels like fall, it's more encouraging to get outside in the yard and work on autumn landscaping and gardening tasks. One item to consider adding to the to-do list is to divide spring-blooming clumping perennials. Plant division is best be done in the season opposite of blooming, so wait until spring to divide fall bloomers like oxblood lilies, mums and spider lilies. But now is prime time to dig and divide spring flowering plants like irises, daylilies, purple coneflowers, daisies, and phlox. If circumstances require dividing in the blooming season, it is still worth doing but they will be set back and miss a year of blooming.

Digging and dividing these types of flowers is a good way to spread them around into other parts of the landscape and increase them in the yard, or share with friends and neighbors. 'Pass along plants' are a fun part of gardening and are a great way to meet new friends and get to know people in the neighborhood. Also, division helps keep clumping perennials in better shape for good health and flowering; after several years many perennials become overgrown and crowded, and won't bloom as well. Division refreshes and allows them to flower more abundantly. Division is beneficial every few years for many perennials, but some can go longer – just divide when performance starts to decline.

To divide clumping perennials, use a shovel to dig them up and lift from the ground. Be sure to get stems and roots from healthy, vigorously growing parts of the plant. Some plants can be pulled apart by hand, for others just cut the roots into smaller sections with a sharp knife. If the stems and roots are woody and tough, use only the more tender shoots from the outer part of the clump for replanting. Discard the center of the clump if it looks weak and is woody. For irises, divide into individual rhizomes – retain at least a few inches of the rhizome and one fan of leaves; cut the fan about halfway down.

Have the new planting site ready to go if possible; mix compost into the soil ahead of time, plant immediately and apply mulch afterward. If the divided plants can't be put in their new permanent spot right away, they can be 'heeled in' which just means to temporarily plant in a holding bed or a container with potting mix until ready to go in the new location.

## October To-Do's

- Harvest cold-sensitive herbs such as basil
- Plant cool season annuals (latter half of the month)
- Adjust irrigation schedule for cooler weather
- Plant trees, shrubs and vines

## Pecan Update



Pecan Weevil: Pecan weevil can still be an issue in areas with weevil that have drought hardened soils which can result in a drought delayed emergence.

Producers with adult emergence traps should monitor traps until the latest maturing cultivar has reached shuck split.

## Fall Pests

Plants in the Concho Valley are breathing a sigh of relief now that fall is here, with rain and cooler temperatures. Perennials are already popping with color and everything is starting to look healthier, happier, and more attractive after the stress of late summer.

But there are also pests to watch out for in the fall, that also thrive in the cooler, wetter climate. For example, the fall armyworm is a caterpillar that can quickly devastate a lawn (or farm crop). They are hard to predict and come through fast, but they tend to follow fall rains. For more info, see this factsheet: <https://citybugs.tamu.edu/factsheets/landscape/lawns/ent-1007/>. Like the article mentions, armyworm outbreaks are pretty limited and are not likely to affect an entire neighborhood or large geographical area; their outbreaks are small in scope. But they can have a significant impact on a particular lawn they choose to feed on, if there are no natural enemies around to keep their numbers down. If armyworms are feasting on your lawn, try treating with Spinosad or Bt.

Another pesky caterpillar is the fall webworm. Webworms cover the branches they are feeding on with webbing to protect themselves from predators. The simplest way to control them is use a long stick to tear open the webs and let the birds have their own feast. For larger trees that can't be easily reached, try a hose

-end sprayer with spinosad or Bt.

A very common fungal disease of St. Augustine turf, take-all root rot is also active in the fall. While symptoms may be more noticeable in the spring and summer, the disease is active in the fall and if there is a history or suspicion of the disease, now is a good time to apply peat moss and azoxystrobin fungicide (some example trade names include Scott's DiseaseEX and Heritage).

Of course after the wonderful rain that is so refreshing to our landscape plants, weeds are also popping up more. Pre-emergent can be applied to well-established lawns to prevent cool season weeds, but don't use it you intend to overseed with ryegrass, wildflowers or any other newly planted seeds.

Bare soil and thinned turf is an invitation for weeds, so summer-stressed lawns may see an increase in weeds. Encourage a thicker, dense lawn to outcompete weeds. For planting beds, replenish mulch to a depth of four inches. Broadleaf weeds can be controlled while they are still small and young with many different options of herbicide, just be sure to use one that is labeled as safe for your particular species of lawn. Large weeds that are flowering or that have gone to seed are best pulled by hand.

## Plant Spotlight

### Beebrush

*Aloysia gratissima*

This very tough, drought tolerant native plant is great for local bees, and they can make delicious honey from the vanilla-scented white flowers. Beebrush flowers from March through November, especially after rain (it is blooming prolifically right now). Grows 4-8 feet tall and wide. In the landscape, it makes a nice background plant or informal screen.





## Showy Fall Plants

Most landscape plants perk up and look better in the fall than spring, but there are some particularly nice plants that can be used in the landscape for bright, vibrant color and interest this time of year. For example, flowering senna is a beautiful shrub with yellow flowers that looks wonderful this time of year. It is often available at the Master Gardener's annual plant sale, so give it a try and pick one up next April!

Fall is a great time of year to plant most types of plants, including trees, shrubs and perennials; they will have the chance to get established and grow a good root system through the fall, winter and spring before summer hits. It's good landscape design to include a variety of plants that have blooms in all the different seasons. If you don't have a lot of fall color, keep an eye out in the neighborhood to see what looks nice in the fall and plant some. With the exception of desert plants that prefer dry, rocky soil, plants will tend to perform better with some planning ahead – incorporate compost into the planting bed before planting, install drip irrigation around the plants, and finish with a three to four inch deep layer of wood mulch.

Other great fall color perennials and shrubs to consider include fall aster, autumn joy sedum, salvia, Mexican bush sage, roses, turk's cap, Mexican mint marigold, American beautyberry, hardy mums, and spider lilies. Some, like fall aster and mums, really put on their best show just in the fall. Others, like salvia and turk's cap will bloom off and on throughout the summer and into the fall.

The cooler fall temperatures will help reduce the number of some common summer pests like spider mites. If you have struggled with marigolds, for instance, try planting them fresh in the fall and they will be less prone to spider mite damage. Other annuals that are beautiful for autumn include cosmos, dusty miller, dianthus, and ornamental cabbage and kale. Soon it will be time for pansies, snapdragons, stock but wait until there are no more hot days.

With good plant selection (utilizing plants that are well adapted to the local climate and soil), and proper timing of planting, landscapes can thrive and shine all year long. Do a bit of research and work ahead of time to plan and select the best plants – this will ensure the best success.

## Don't Bag It

Well fall is here, and leaves will start coming down soon; three words to remember when it comes to leaves and other plant debris are “don't bag it.” Organic matter is essential to a healthy, productive landscape and garden, so don't send this valuable material to the landfill. I want to challenge all to utilize leaves instead of throwing them away, and there are several ways to use them.

The “Don't Bag It” plan is part of the Earth-Kind Landscaping system recommended by Texas A&M University. There are four simple suggestions that will keep leaves and yard trimmings from taking up room in landfills, and can also provide benefits to soil and plants. First, light layers of leaves can simply be mowed. If there are not a ton of leaves on the yard, mow over them and let them break down.

The next option to consider is using the leaves as mulch in beds or in the vegetable garden. Mulch benefits plants in many ways - it moderates soil temperature, conserves water, protects plants during freezing temperatures, and prevents weeds. A good depth for mulch is three to four inches.

Another solution is to compost the leaves - compost is extremely beneficial in the landscape or vegetable garden. Along with fallen leaves, other organic matter from the yard can be composted, as well as kitchen scraps such as coffee grounds, vegetable peelings and fruit scraps. Just avoid adding meat, dairy products, fat/grease, or noxious weeds to the compost.

The fourth option is direct soil improvement, but this should only be done in areas that will be bare for the winter season. Raw materials should not be incorporated directly into beds that will be planted right away (otherwise, they can rob plants of nitrogen while they break down). But if leaves are worked into garden soil in the fall, by the time spring planting time comes they will be broken down and decayed, providing good soil improvement.

Nearly any species of tree leaves can be beneficial to the landscape, the only exception would be black walnut; it produces a substance that inhibits the growth of other plants.

## Plant Shrubs in the Fall

Fall is an especially good time to plant shrubs. Evergreen shrubs are an important part of a good landscape design – shrubs and trees are the foundation for everything else. So for a new landscape, or an older landscape that needs to be rejuvenated, this is a good time to evaluate what kind of shrubs are best for the location and how to place them.

Large shrubs are usually best planted at the corners of the front of a home and help make it look wider, for example a full size yaupon holly shrub or a Texas Mountain Laurel tree would be good. For areas that have full sun and a lot of reflected heat, a juniper or Texas sage would do well.

For shrubs across the front of the home, go with a dwarf shrub. Shrubs should not have to be constantly pruned, so plant one that grows to the desired size and shape instead of one that has a mature size that is too large and covers up windows. Dwarf yaupon holly, dwarf Indian hawthorn, boxwood and dwarf abelia are some good choices.

Don't stagger large shrubs with smaller ones across the front of the home - this can create a haphazard look. Plant smaller shrubs across the front middle, and increase size towards the edges of the home. Smooth lines and continuity are a better foundation for most home landscapes.

One good shrub in particular that should be considered is Lynn's Legacy Cenizo, *Leucophyllum langmaniae*. It is similar to a Texas sage, but has some special features that make it stand out. Lynn's Legacy Cenizo blooms more often than other sages, attracts hummingbirds, and does not get overgrown and leggy. It has a natural size of about 5 feet tall and wide, with a dense, thick canopy. It's a beautiful, drought tolerant, hardy plant and has earned the designation of being a 'Texas Superstar Plant' by the Texas A&M Agrilife Research and Extension Service. Texas Superstars are plants that have been through extensive testing and research, and have been proven to do well throughout the state of Texas. To see more Texas Superstars, visit the website <http://texassuperstar.com>.

## Plant Garlic and Onions

If you'd like to try growing some food but don't want to start with a big extensive vegetable garden, try growing some garlic and onions throughout the landscape. And if you do have an extensive vegetable garden - onions and other alliums are a great addition to plant now. They are pretty easy crops to grow, and are used a lot for cooking.

Many people plant onions in January, and that's the right time for planting transplants – also called onion sets. But if you want to start from seed, plant in October. Onions are biennial plants, meaning it takes two years to achieve maturity. While that does seem like a long time to get a crop, there are benefits with starting from seeds – they're cheaper, and you can plant them thick and close together so that in the first spring you can harvest small green onions for meals. Leave some a second year to grow full sized onion bulbs.

Onion seeds don't last very long in storage, so make sure any seeds you purchase are no longer than one year old. It's best to find fresh seed if you can.

Also, be sure to buy short day onions for growing in the Concho Valley– they are the types that grow best here; long day onions are better further north. Onions do need some good nutrition, so plant in well prepared soil with compost and fertilizer.

Garlic can simply be started with some cloves from the grocery store. Just plant individual cloves about an inch deep and three to four inches apart and next May you'll have plenty of new garlic to harvest.

Fall is a good time to plant other related crops, such as leeks, chives, elephant garlic, and multiplying onions. Leeks are larger than onions and have a mild flavor and are best started in the fall from transplants. Elephant garlic is a larger, more mild garlic bulb. Chives are considered a herb but are in the onion family, and you can plant either garlic chives or onion chives depending on the preferred flavor.



# Upcoming Events

October 2020



As we resume in-person educational programs, we are making safety a priority—social distancing will be followed. For the most up-to-date info, follow the Facebook Page [“Tom Green County Horticulture.”](#)

Thursday, October 8, 2:00pm-4:00pm

## **West Texas Gardening 101—Rainwater Harvesting**

**Location:** People/Plant Connection Headquarters, 416 South Oaks St, San Angelo

**Cost:** Free, donations accepted

**Speaker:** Ron Knight, Concho Valley Master Gardener

Hosted by the People/Plant Connection; Learn how to collect rainfall, the best quality water you can give plants! Reservation required: Call Susan Stanfield 325-656-3104

Friday, October 9, 12:00pm

## **Lunch N Learn Class - Fall is for Planting**

**Location:** People/Plant Connection Headquarters, 416 South Oaks St, San Angelo

**Cost:** \$5

**Speaker:** Allison Watkins

Hosted by the PPC; Fall is the best time to plant wildflowers, spring bulbs, butterfly plants and herbs! Let's discuss some fall gardening.

Reservation required: Call Susan Stanfield 325-656-3104

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



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