



Concho Valley

September 2021

HORTICULTURE UPDATE

Fall and Winter Vegetables

We are lucky that in the Texas climate we are able to grow food pretty much any time of year, we just need to adjust the crops based on the season. Warm season crops like tomatoes, squash, cucumber and peppers can do really well in the fall before the first freeze of November but have to be planned ahead of time and get planted in the late summer. Then when temperatures start to drop, it will soon be time to focus on winter crops like spinach, kale, and carrots— for the most part, all the leafy greens and root crops.

Some of the cool season fall- and winter-planted vegetables that we can grow include artichoke, asparagus, beet, bok choy, broccoli, brussels sprout, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, chard, collard greens, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mustard, onion, snap pea, radish, shallot, spinach, and turnip. What a list! There is something there for just about any household to enjoy. And these cool season crops don't have to be planted in a large garden plot, they can also be incorporated into the existing flower beds around to home. Many of them are very showy and pretty, bringing some fresh greenery to an otherwise dormant winter landscape.

Most should be planted around late September through early November, and again in February. Although some can be planted any time – even in the middle of winter. Radish, spinach, lettuce, kale, and chard are particularly cold hardy and even young new plants can handle cold weather. Onions should be planted around October if starting from seed, and sets (transplants) are planted in January. Asparagus crowns should be planted in January. For more info on growing a specific crop, visit <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/> to see a list of helpful info sheets. Start looking at the different crop options and choose a few to include in the home landscape - a few winter vegetables incorporated into flower beds can provide some good home-grown, healthy food!

The Concho Valley Master Gardeners are excited to announce that they will be offering a Fall Vegetable Plant Sale for the first time this year. Stop by on Saturday, September 25th from 8am to 12pm (or when sold out) for a selection of winter crops like kale, spinach, broccoli etc. for \$2 each. The sale will be held at the Tom Green 4-H Center, 3168 N US Highway 67. Check out the attached flyer for details, or keep an eye out at <https://txmg.org/conchovalley/>.

September To-Do's

- Purchase bulbs while selection is good, but wait until November to plant
- Plant wildflower seeds
- Divide spring blooming
- perennials such as iris and daylily
- Adjust irrigation as
- temperatures cool down
- Apply Pre-emergent weed control for winter weeds

Pecan Update

Late season pests to keep an eye out for:

- Pecan Weevil - timing depends on variety, treat when nuts enter dough stage and repeat 10 days later
- Stink bugs/leaf-footed bugs: pyrethroids give best control
- Black Pecan Aphid: continue to monitor and control through September

Order Strawberries Now



Gardening in Texas is quite a bit different than other parts of the country. We must be selective in choosing spring bulbs if we want them to rebloom each year, as traditional tulips require colder winters. We can grow food all year round, and there are abundant choices for cool-season vegetable crops to grow through the winter. There are many benefits to gardening in the south, and it's important to realize that the best success doesn't always come from doing things like they do in other states.

Strawberries are usually available for purchase and most commonly planted in the springtime, but in Texas they are much more productive if planted in the fall. If you'd like to try growing some tasty ripe strawberries, then see if local nurseries have any transplants available or can order them – or try catalogs and websites for delivery. It gets too hot, too soon for spring-planted strawberries to grow well in Texas and many gardeners only get a few berries before the plants give up. But the cooler weather and rain that comes in the fall is the perfect setting to establish new plants, and then in the early spring they will produce early enough to get a better crop.

Plan ahead and have a good system in place that is convenient and effective for freeze protection. Strawberry plants (with no flowers or fruit) are cold hardy and can withstand freezing temperatures, but cold weather will slow down growth. A small hoop house or 'low tunnel' structure is a good choice; clear plastic can be secured snugly around the structure when needed to trap warmer air and protect from cold winds. Be sure to remove the covering promptly when temperatures warm up, otherwise it quickly gets to hot inside when the sun comes out. In the late winter, when the plants start to flower and make fruit, they need to be protected from even just a light frost.

Strawberries prefer high-quality, well-drained soil so amend with compost if planting in the ground and create mounds so the plants can grow on top and have better drainage. Black plastic mulch helps keep the soil temperature up to help encourage growth during the winter. A steady, even fertilizer and irrigation regimen will help encourage healthy plants. For a helpful guide on fall planted strawberries and instructions with photos for creating a low tunnel, visit <https://tomgreen.agrilife.org/horticulture/> and click on "Strawberry Growing Guide."

Plant Spotlight

Almond Verbena

Aloysia virgata

This perennial plant has a lovely fragrance, is good for bees, butterflies and hummingbirds, and is deer resistant. It's a wonderful addition to the landscape! Plant in full sun or light dappled shade, and leave plenty of space - it grows several feet wide and can grow quite tall.



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Fall Landscape Pests

Fall is a great time of year for the landscape.

Perennials perk up with new color and everything starts 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.

Fall To-Do List

There is nothing like a deep soaking fall rain to encourage some gardening and landscaping! Now that the ground isn't parched and the heat isn't beating down quite so hard on the gardener, it's time to get outside and get to work. Depending on your goals and needs, there are a number of tasks to consider starting in September.

Pre-emergent needs to be applied to turfgrass now if it has not been done yet, but don't apply to newly planted lawns – only well-established turfgrass. Pre-emergent in early fall can help prevent cool season weeds like rescuegrass. It is also time to apply the last bit of nitrogen fertilizer for the year to warm season turfgrass to help the lawn come back strong next spring.

Irises can be dug and divided now and should be done every few years promote vigor and blooming, and also provide rhizomes to share with friends. Early fall is also an excellent time to dig and divide daylilies. Pass-along plants are such a treasure to have in the landscape and can be a nice reminder of the friend or family member that gave it.

If you would like a nice pop of color in early spring, purchase spring bulbs like daffodils now when they are available but hold on to them until November. Planting in warm soil causes the bulb to rot. Another way to plan ahead now for spring color is to plant spring wildflower seeds like bluebonnets.

Next month the monarch butterflies will make their way through the area on their annual migration – it's a good reminder to plant butterfly-friendly plants to provide nectar to help them on their way. Many culinary herbs provide the double benefit of being good for pollinators and also for cooking, and fall is a great time of year to plant many herbs. Parsley and cilantro are cool-season herbs that do best planted now and will grow through the cool season. Evergreen herbs like rosemary, sage, oregano and thyme are also great choices. When it cools down a bit more, in October, plant garlic cloves.

Replenish mulch in planting beds to help prevent evaporation, moderate soil temperature, prevent weeds and more. A three- to four-inch deep layer of wood mulch really helps plants grow better.



Collecting Seeds

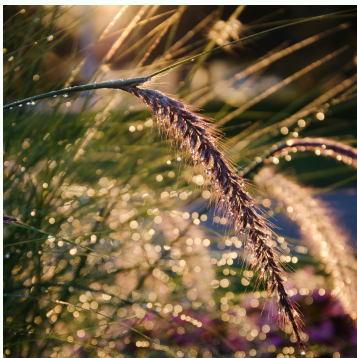
Autumn is on the way! As the warm season winds down, it's a great opportunity to look for seeds to save for sharing with friends and neighbors, and for planting next year. Saving seeds can have many benefits – it can reduce the cost of purchasing seeds or plants the following year; it can be an interesting plant breeding experiment to try and save the very best seeds each year to improve plant quality and production. And preserving seeds can also be a fun way to create a family tradition – passing down seeds for the next generation so that our family members have a living heirloom.

To collect seeds from perennial and annual flowers, stop deadheading the blooms. Deadheading is recommended through the blooming season to allow for more abundant flowering but doesn't allow seeds to form. Allow the flowers to fade, seeds pods to form, and wait until the seeds are fully mature. Seed pods that are green and moist are not ready – wait until the pods turn brown and dry out. But don't wait too long or the seeds will drop/disperse and be gone. Many species have seeds that don't mature at the same time, but at staggered intervals – so keep an eye out every day.

For the vegetable garden, save seeds from the best tasting, nicest quality fruit. But be aware that not all crops will produce 'true to type' seed. For example, hybrid varieties are more likely to have changing characteristics from generation to generation. Seeds that come from vegetables that are old fashioned or true to type varieties are much more likely to retain the same flavor, color, size, etc. from year to year.

Also be aware of cross-pollination. Vegetables like cucurbits (squashes, melons, cucumbers, etc), peppers, carrots and corn readily cross pollinate so if there are multiple varieties in the same garden or vicinity, there will be some genetic variability. It's best to physically separate from other plants or grow one variety at a time if reliable seed collection is important. Crops like peas, tomatoes (if not planted adjacent to each other), and most beans do not readily cross pollinate.

After collecting the seeds, correct storage techniques are important to ensure they last until the next growing season and longer. The seeds should be kept very dry and stored at cool temperatures. The silica gel packs that often come when purchasing vitamins, electronics or leather shoes, etc. can be used to help keep the seeds dry.



Ornamental Grasses

Grasses can provide a very unique aesthetic element to the landscape – they have very upright, vertical leaves with feathery seed heads that provide a natural, peaceful look. As grasses sway in the breeze, the movement draws interest and attention. Ornamental grasses can be successfully incorporated into just about any kind of landscape design, but work particularly well with rock gardens, dry creek beds and drought tolerant designs. They look very striking against evergreen shrubs, and even in the winter when they go dormant and turn brown they still hold their shape and keep a nice architectural aspect.

Many ornamental grasses are perennial, but some are annual. Purple fountain grass is a good example of a beautiful annual grass, and is best re-planted each spring. But for those wishing to try overwintering it, dig it up and pot it up just before the first fall frost, prune down to about 12 inches, and store in a protected area that stays above freezing (such as a garage). Replant after the last spring frost, around April.

Perennial grasses do well when planted in spring but can also be planted in the fall. Some nice small to medium sized options would include feathertop grass, little bluestem, 'Blonde Ambition' blue grama, little bluestem, and the state grass of Texas – sideoats grama.

Some larger ornamental grasses options include maiden grass, zebra grass, gulf coast muhly and pink flamingo muhly. Then the very large pampas grass is a popular landscape plant, but make sure there is plenty of room as it can grow up to ten feet tall and six feet wide.

Some grasses may need to be thinned out after a few years. If they spread out too far, dig and divide to get back into place. Dig up the whole plant, cut the clump into halves or thirds, and replant one section. Share the rest with a friend or plant elsewhere in the yard.

Ornamental grasses should not be cut right after they freeze in the fall. Not only because they still provide interest because they keep their structure, but many will perform better if the old winter-killed growth isn't cut off until early spring when new leaves just start to come back from the ground.



UPCOMING EVENTS

September 2021

Thursday, September 9, 2:00pm-4:00pm

West Texas Gardening 101—Energy Alternatives

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

Cost: \$20

Speaker: Representative from Concho Valley Electric Coop

Hosted by the People/Plant Connection; Are you thinking about solar panels and have questions before you invest? Are you wondering if a generator will help in emergencies? This is the seminar where your questions can be answered. To reserve a spot visit [Click Here](#) or call Susan Stanfield 325-656-3104

Saturday, September 11, 8:00am-3:15pm

Fall Landscaping Symposium

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

Cost: \$30

Speakers: Felder Rushing, Dr. Becky Bowling, and John R Thomas

Hosted by the Concho Valley Master Gardeners

Join us for a fun day of learning! Pre-registration required, deadline September 8th to sign up. Visit <https://txmg.org/conchovalley/> for more info and to register or call the Extension Office at 325-659-6522

Wednesdays, September 15 through October 13, 6:00-9:00pm

Earth-Kind Landscape School - Seminar Series

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

Cost: \$5

Speaker: Allison Watkins

This series will be five Wednesday evenings with a different topic each week. To register and see more details, visit <https://tomgreen.agrilife.org/> or call the Extension Office at 325-659-6528.

Friday, September 17, 12:00pm

Lunch N Learn Class - Rainwater Harvesting

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

Cost: \$5

Speaker: Allison Watkins

Hosted by the PPC; When it rains, catch all you can to save for later when it dries up again! Learn about rain barrels and larger rainwater harvesting systems. To reserve a spot visit [Click Here](#) or call Susan Stanfield at 325-656-3104

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



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