



# Concho Valley

June 2022

# HORTICULTURE UPDATE

## What to Plant Now

It's been a very discouraging year for gardeners and home landscapers – the early heat and lack of rainfall is making water conservation more important than ever. The recent rainfall and cooler temperatures it brought were much needed and will be a big boost to plant growth, but the damaging hail that came with it was unfortunate for those areas it affected.

As disheartening as it may be, there are still ways to grow food and make the yard beautiful with vegetables and colorful flowers – just focus on planting things that can take the heat and use water conserving methods to water.

Vegetables to plant this time of year include okra, cantaloupe, black eyed peas, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, winter squash, and watermelon. Summer heat is great for melons because it makes them sweeter, so get plants established now so they will start making a crop mid- to late-summer. Sweet potatoes also particularly love the heat, so start some slips – simply buy healthy looking sweet potatoes from the grocery store and scrub clean. Cut them in half and suspend over a jar of water with toothpicks so that they are half submerged in the water. Place near a window and shoots will form – carefully remove the slips and plant in well-prepared soil or in containers with good quality potting mix.

Keep an eye on spring-planted tomatoes for spider mite damage. Spider mites thrive in hot, dry weather and can reduce the crop or even kill plants if the pest population builds up enough. Be careful with pesticide use and don't overdo it, as killing beneficials can make spider mites more prolific. Monitor plants and check the undersides of leaves to catch them early, and use insecticidal soap to control.

For color to brighten up the landscape, plant annuals such as pentas, angelonia, lantana, periwinkle and moss rose. For beautiful color in shady spots plant begonias, impatiens and coleus. Consider tough perennials like rock penstemon, gopher plant, Pride of Barbados, Mystic Spires salvia, wooly butterfly bush and Jerusalem sage for permanent landscape additions. Take the opportunity this summer to observe local landscapes and see what plants are thriving in the tough conditions – note which you like and keep an eye out for them at local nurseries.

For bare spots in the yard or lawns that need to be totally replanted, now is prime time to plant bermuda seed or sod, and St. Augustine sod. Prepare the soil well first to encourage deep rooting so the lawn will be more drought tolerant once established.

## June To-Do's

- Deadhead flowers of annual color, perennials and roses
- Replenish mulch
- Keep beds weeded to eliminate competition for water, sun and nutrients
- Watch for chinch bug and grub damage in lawns
- Plant heat tolerant vegetables and flowers
- Plant warm season grass seed or sod

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## Pecan Update

No pecan nut casebearer sprays are recommended this year in most cases, to allow the pest to help thin the crop and reduce stress on trees that they will experience from the heat and drought expected this summer.

# Planting Bermudagrass seed



Early summer is a good time to plant warm season turfgrass seed like bermudagrass, since it germinates best in warm temperatures. So June is a good time of year to start a new lawn from seed or fill in a thinned-out lawn, but it takes a lot of attention to detail to be successful.

While bermudagrass seed germinates best in warm temperatures, this early summer heat also dries the ground out very quickly - and seeds need the soil to stay damp to sprout. So it is important to have a plan in place for keeping the ground damp for the first couple of weeks. One option is to run a sprinkler five to six times a day for a very short amount of time until the seeds sprout. This is not an excessive use of water since little water is used each time. But those in the city limits would need to request a variance from the city water department that allows for establishing new landscape plants and permits more frequent irrigation than is normally allowed under water restrictions. Hydroseeding is also a good option for establishing seed in the summer; it is a method of applying turfgrass seed that helps the seed germinate and reduces drying out.

Before applying the seed, prepare the site well. For a more in-depth guide for establishing a new lawn, see the publication "Turfgrass Establishment in Texas" which can be accessed at <https://tomgreen.agrilife.org/horticulture>. But in short, here are some tips: prepare the soil by tilling it to loosen and aerate. Turfgrass will grow better in soil that oxygen and roots can easily penetrate. Then grade and smooth out the soil to create a seedbed. When tilling, incorporate slow-release nitrogen fertilizer to provide nutrients as the plants establish. After tilling and grading the soil, irrigate several times to settle the soil, and repeat the steps to grade and smooth the soil. Then roll the soil with a lawn roller and lightly rake.

Once the site is prepared, apply the seed in a uniform manner at the rate recommended on the seed package. After applying the seed, roll it again to ensure good soil-to-seed contact. Water lightly, and continue to water lightly and frequently to keep the ground steadily moist for about two weeks. After the grass sprouts and starts to root in, begin to reduce the irrigation frequency but water more deeply each time. Eventually, get the lawn to the point where the grass is watered thoroughly (one-inch) once per week.

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## Plant Spotlight

### Pentas

*Pentas lanceolata*

Pentas are tough plants for the summer heat! They provide beautiful bright color and bloom all summer long into the fall.

Plant in full sun with late afternoon shade.





# Surviving the Summer

Summer came all too soon, and the combination of heat with very little rainfall was stressful to landscapes and gardens. Plants need a period in the spring with rainfall and cooler weather to put on lots of new growth for the growing season and they didn't get enough this year. Focus on good plants selection (plant things that are tough and can handle the heat and drought) and efficient irrigation (make the most of what water is applied instead of allowing it to evaporate) to help plants make it through the long summer.

If planting anything new, try to use larger transplants – they will have bigger root systems and can handle the stress of being planted in the heat better than small transplants. Flowering annuals establish more quickly and perform better if you can find some that are not yet blooming - find transplants with no blooms or at least not fully blossoming to have the best success through the rest of the season.

To make irrigation water go further and reduce evaporation, use drip irrigation in beds. Drip tubing used correctly is healthier for plants and conserves water. Replenish mulch in beds to a depth of three to four inches to further prevent evaporation, keep roots cooler and reduce weeds. Drip irrigation and mulch are an incredible combo for beautiful beds with healthy plants that can survive the heat of summer. For lawns that use sprinkler heads, convert to more efficient multi-stream nozzles and don't water during the hot part of the day.

Water deeply but infrequently. Throughout the year, go as long as possible between watering sessions to help promote deep root growth. Watering too frequently encourages shallow rooting, and when the heat of summer hits, shallow-rooted plants may not be able to stay hydrated no matter how much irrigation is given.



Trees are the most permanent, valuable part of a home landscape and many landscape trees will need supplemental irrigation since we had little significant rainfall in the spring. Most shade trees planted in west Texas are drought tolerant and can get by on rainfall during normal years if well-established, but extra watering is recommended this year even for mature oaks and other tough trees. Pecan trees in particular will need thorough irrigation every two to three weeks to stay healthy. To water large trees, don't place the water hose near the trunk but aim the irrigation toward the drip line (the edge of the tree canopy) where there are more water-absorbing roots.

Normally mid-to late May is the time of year we recommend spraying pecan trees for pecan nut case-bearers, a moth pest that damages developing nuts in their early stages of growth. But this year we are recommending no sprays in most cases – allow the casebearers to help thin the crop, reducing stress on the trees.

Any newly planted trees, shrubs or perennials should be watered by hand for the first few months – drip or sprinkler irrigation is not enough to get new plants going, especially in extreme heat and drought. If any travel or time away from home is planned, set up a drip system on a timer for potted plants or ask a neighbor to water them – plants in containers dry out faster and require more frequent attention.

Turfgrass should be watered one inch, once per week if well established. Newly planted seed or sod will need to be irrigated lightly every day or several times per week until strong roots are developed. Every sprinkler system is different, to know how long to run a particular system do a catch can test – set out clean empty tuna cans or similar containers and run the zone until an inch of water is measured in most cans. If runoff occurs before an inch can be applied, use the 'cycle and soak' method; stop the system for a period and allow the water to soak in, then run again to reach the desired inch of water.



# Cut Flower Garden



Fresh flowers can bring the beauty of nature inside the home and are also a nice homegrown gift to share with others. For gardeners that don't want to sacrifice their bedding plants and patio flowers to bouquets but would also like to enjoy flower arrangements, a flower cutting garden might be a good choice. A cut flower garden is a separate area dedicated to growing some annuals and perennials to bring inside the home or give away; it can be tucked away in a sunny spot of the yard that is not a focal point and does not need to look showy all season long. Cut flower gardens are often included with vegetable gardens – a small block or a couple of rows can be dedicated to flowers.

Whether creating a dedicated flower cutting garden, or just incorporating some good cut flower selections into the landscape, here are some tips for growing and utilizing cut flowers. Texas A&M Extension Landscape Horticulturist Dr. Bill Welch provided some helpful information in his summer newsletter, a copy of which can be found at [tomgreen.agrilife.org/horticulture](http://tomgreen.agrilife.org/horticulture). First, start with a soil test ([soiltesting.tamu.edu](http://soiltesting.tamu.edu)), prepare soil with compost and maintain flowers in a similar manner to vegetables. Light, frequent applications of nitrogen can increase production.

Some annual flowers to consider that make good additions to a bouquet that will also grow well in west Texas include zinnia, marigold, black eyed Susan, bachelor button, sunflower, celosia and calendula for the warm season. Cool season annuals like snapdragon, pansy, sweetpea, and stock can provide flowers for winter arrangements. Perennials that have long-lasting and/or showy cut flowers include crinum, purple coneflower, Mexican mint marigold, various types of lilies, coreopsis, chrysanthemums and irises.

When cutting flowers and foliage for arrangements and bouquets, avoid tender new growth because it will wilt quickly. Use a clean, sharp cutting tool and avoid smashing the stem with dull blades. Flowers will last the longest in a vase if they are harvested in the coolest time of day, handled carefully and kept in water constantly. Floral preservatives that come with store-bought bouquets can help the flowers last longer, and if you don't have any at home - one ounce of Listerine mouthwash per gallon of water can be used as a substitute.

Other landscape plants can be used as greenery to fill in cut flower arrangements. Pomegranate, cast iron plant, ferns, hollies and other evergreens, ornamental grasses and berry plants can all add a lot of interest to cut flowers. Check out Dr. Bill's newsletter for more tips and ideas.







# UPCOMING EVENTS

## *June 2022*

Thursday, June 9, 2pm-4pm

### **PPC Seminar - Old Fashioned Plants**

**NEW** Location: Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Office, 113 W. Beauregard, San Angelo

Cost: \$20

Speaker: Allison Watkins

Hosted by the People/Plant Connection

Join us for a discussion about antique roses and heirloom vegetables, as well as how to save seeds and propagate cuttings. To reserve a spot [Click Here](#) or call Susan Stanfield at 325-656-3104

Thursday, June 16, 6pm-8:30pm

### **Landscaping in Drought Seminar**

Location: Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Office, 113 W. Beauregard, San Angelo

Cost: Free

Speakers: Kay Thompson, Master Gardener and Allison Watkins - CEA Horticulture

Hosted by the Concho Valley Master Gardeners

Learn about rainwater harvesting, landscape water conservation and managing through drought. To sign up, [Click Here](#) or call the Extension Office at 325-659-6522.

Friday, June 17, 12pm-1pm

### **Lunch N Learn Class - Summer Shade**

**NEW** Location: Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Office, 113 W. Beauregard, San Angelo

Cost: \$5

Speaker: Allison Watkins

Hosted by the PPC; Let's discuss the best plants for shade to help create a cool, comfortable and beautiful spot in the landscape. To reserve a spot [Click Here](#) or call Susan Stanfield at 325-656-3104

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



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