

HORTICULTURE UPDATE

Water Landscape Trees and Shrubs

The extreme heat and persistent drought has significantly stressed landscape plants and is expected to continue through the end of summer. Shade trees, ornamental trees and shrubs are the most permanent, valuable plants in the home landscape and should be irrigated thoroughly to reduce stress and help them survive these rough conditions.

Many well-adapted and established trees and shrubs can get by on rainfall, supplemented with lawn irrigation, and don't always need their own separate irrigation efforts. Pecan trees are an exception and will always need irrigation every two to three weeks in normal years; and in the current conditions, it's recommended to also water the well-established, drought tolerant landscape trees like live oaks. Even if drought does not kill a tree, the stress can have significant and long-lasting effects – many insect pests and diseases affect stressed trees much more than healthy ones, and the stress may impact the health of the tree for years to come.

Large trees should not be watered just at the trunk – the large woody roots there do not absorb water, they transport it. The goal should be to irrigate the entire root zone, which extends beyond the canopy. Start by watering 'low and slow' at the dripline of the tree, by letting the water hose run on low or using a hose-end sprinkler or drip tubing. Let it run long enough to thoroughly saturate the ground under the tree canopy and even beyond the width of the canopy. Generally, two to three inches of water per inch of trunk diameter is sufficient, or simulate a one-inch rainfall over the entire rooting zone. Water in the morning or evening to reduce wasting water, which is lost to evaporation in hot temperatures.

Frequency of irrigating trees depends on the type of tree and how well established it is. Young trees with small root systems should be checked every week, while large mature trees should be watered every two to three weeks as long as the drought continues.

August To-Do's

- Lightly prune shrub roses and perennials to stimulate a fall flush of blooms; if they are looking stressed, prune more severely
- Provide water for backyard wildlife - songbirds, butterflies etc.
- Continue to deadhead annuals to stimulate new flowers
- Start plant spring blooming wildflower seeds

Pecan Update

Congratulations to all our pecan growers who placed in the Texas State Pecan Show!

Bill Book - 1st place Burkett, 3rd place Comanche, 2nd place Mahan, 2nd place Stuart

Chester McCown - 1st place Hopi, 1st place Waco, Grand Champion Native

Cindy Hanks - 2nd place Variety Seedling

Jerry Peiser - 3rd place Pawnee

Re-plant for Fall



It's tough to write about landscaping and gardening when it's so discouragingly hot and dry, but gardeners are eternal optimists and know that better conditions are always around the corner. Fall is still a few months away but it's the best time of year for many vegetables and flowers, and now is the time to start planning and planting for a bountiful fall season.

When they start popping up in nurseries and garden centers, plant fall perennials and annual color such as autumn joy sedum, autumn sage, fall aster, marigold, zinnia, etc. Prepare the soil with compost, install drip irrigation but water by hand for the first few weeks, and apply a thick layer of wood mulch (three to four inches deep) to help the plants establish well through the heat and grow strong roots for beautiful fall blooms.

Believe it or not, now is prime time to plant tomatoes! July/August is a great time of year to plant fresh new tomato transplants for fall production. Other warm season vegetables such as eggplant, cucumber, okra, peppers and squash can also be planted in late summer for a fall crop before it freezes in November.

Tomatoes prefer cool weather and have trouble setting fruit when it's over 90 degrees. The larger the variety, the harder it is to get tomatoes when it's hot. Small cherry tomatoes can usually produce well all summer but fertilization and fruit production in larger varieties slows down in late spring and stops altogether in summer. Many spring-planted plants start to get stressed from pests like spider mites in the summer, so if your plants aren't looking healthy consider replacing them with new transplants. Fall is a wonderful time of year to grow vegetables in west Texas.

Choose large, healthy plants and encourage them to put on as much growth as possible in their first few months by irrigating steadily and fertilizing with nitrogen – but give them some time to establish before fertilizing. Nitrogen fertilizers can easily scorch or damage brand-new transplants. Keep a close eye on water needs, apply mulch and provide some shade in the afternoon for the first few weeks until they establish strong roots.

Plant Spotlight

Pride of Barbados

Caesalpinia pulcherrima

If anything can handle this heat and drought, Pride of Barbados can. Not only does it survive, it thrives in the heat and dry conditions! It's a real showstopper that prefers lean soil, no soil amendments or fertilizer necessary.



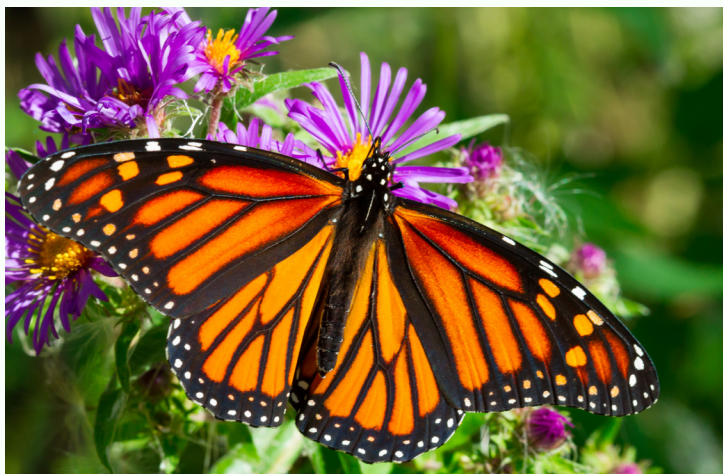
Butterfly Gardening

Late summer and early fall is a great time of year to plant things to attract butterflies; fall is the best season for planting in general, and in October the monarchs will migrate through and will be in need of nectar plants to feed on. So plant now so they have plenty of flowers!

Nectar plants that adult butterflies like to visit include things like butterfly bush, butterfly weed, blue mistflower, lantana, salvia, fall aster and flame acanthus. Almond verbena is a wonderful choice not only for butterflies but for bees and hummingbirds as well. If you would like to try something new in the landscape, give it a try – it has attractive white flowers that are incredibly fragrant and have a very strong, sweet smell. Plant in full sun and allow plenty of room to grow – it's a perennial that will grow several feet wide and can grow very tall. In mild winters it may be deciduous but will generally do best if cut back severely each winter and allowed to grow from the ground up each spring.

To create a habitat for butterflies, be very conscientious and careful with pesticides; butterflies are particularly sensitive to insecticides. Nectar plants for the adults are the main focus for the fall monarch migration southward, but for other butterflies and for the monarch's spring migration they need food plants for the caterpillar stage. So to create an ideal butterfly environment, include plants like milkweed, parsley, dill and fennel that are good for the caterpillars.

Butterflies also need a source for water, and a damp area works well. If there is an existing wet spot, like where air conditioner condensate drains, that will do. If not, a shallow saucer of sand with water added to make it damp can help. Also, use drip irrigation instead of sprinklers as much as possible because spraying nozzles can wash the nectar out of the flowers.



Late Summer To- Do List



August is not a favorite month for many gardeners, it's hot and dry and many plants really start to show stress. This year in particular is historically tough on plants. But the beginning of autumn is just around the corner, and now is a good time to finish up late summer tasks and get ready for a busy fall season.

First, trim back perennials and roses to stimulate more abundant fall blooms. If plants are healthy, trim back lightly – remove up to 25%. If plants are stressed or pest-infested but well established, cut back more severely – around 50% or enough to remove the damaged foliage.

For those with pecan trees that would like to get a good crop of nuts this year, consider treating for pecan weevils. If there is a history of pecans that are well-sized but empty inside with an exit hole, pecan weevil insects are the cause. They usually emerge in August, and homeowners can apply an insecticide such as carbaryl or bifenthrin to the trunk every 10 days in the latter half of August to prevent the kernel damage. Keep watering pecan trees thoroughly every two weeks to maintain the crop and keep the trees healthy.

For the vegetable garden, plant crops such as beans, corn, cucumber, eggplant peppers, squash, potatoes (don't cut the seed pieces, plant whole), and tomatoes (large transplants). Prepare the soil by incorporating compost, and utilize drip irrigation and mulch to help the plants make it through the heat and to conserve water.

It will also soon be time to plant wildflower seeds like bluebonnets, so plan ahead and don't apply pre-emergent anywhere you plan to plant wildflower seeds (or any other seeds like vegetables or turfgrass). Wildflowers need fall rains to get started, so get them sowed in August or September, so they are in the ground in time to germinate when it rains.

Growing Plants Indoors



The extreme weather this summer has forced landscapes (and gardeners) into survival mode, just trying to hang on until rain and cooler temperatures arrive this fall. It's a good time to try out some house plants and indoor gardening. Buy seeds and start your own fall vegetable transplants inside, buy a houseplant like a philodendron, or try cultivating some herbs with an indoor kitchen garden.

For permanent house plants, choose those that are adapted to low light levels – selection and care are quite different for plants that stay inside the home than typical the landscape plants. Some of the toughest house plants that work well in most homes include Christmas cactus, philodendron, ficus, pothos ivy, sansevieria, ZZ plant, dracaena, and aglaonema.

Two major factors to focus on with house plants are light and water. Plants that are known to be good for inside a building are generally tropical plants native to areas with very dense canopies that can handle lower light levels; but all plants need some light to grow – and even house plants need more light than is usually available in the home to grow well and thrive.

A simple test to measure light levels and to help choose the best spot for houseplants can be done by holding your hand about 12 inches above the surface in question (floor, table, etc) during the brightest time of day. Look for the hand's shadow – if it is a clear and distinct dark shadow, that is a high light level. If it has a fuzzy outline and is a light, faint shadow that is low light. Match plants with the proper amount of light that they need based on the label directions.

Watering houseplants can be tricky; many plants do best when they can be watered thoroughly and the excess water is allowed to drain away well, but houseplants tend to be watered lightly and more frequently; and there is usually a tray underneath to catch the excess water which can create standing water for long periods of time. If possible, place houseplants in a sink or tub, water thoroughly and allow to drain well before returning.

Indoor herb gardens are very popular and can be a nice feature in the kitchen – providing beauty, fresh fragrance and interest. While many herbs are easy to grow outdoors in the west Texas climate, it's important to remember that most herbs are not naturally suited to be houseplants. That's not to say it can't be done - start with finding the right spot where they can get six to eight hours of direct sun, like a south facing window.

Just about any herb can be started indoors, but not all can be permanently grown in small containers; many herbs grow to be large plants, like sage and rosemary. So either stick to smaller plants like basil, thyme and parsley or if growing larger plants just plan to start over every so often to keep plants small and manageable for an indoor garden. Once they outgrow their container, they can be planted outside or given away.





UPCOMING EVENTS

August 2022

Friday, August 19, 12pm-1pm

Lunch N Learn Class - Every Drop Counts

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

Cost: \$5

Speaker: Allison Watkins

Hosted by the PPC; Join us for a discussion on how to have a beautiful landscape without wasting water. We will cover plant selection, mulch, drip irrigation and more. To reserve a spot [Click Here](#) or call Susan Stanfield at 325-656-3104

Saturday, September 10, 8:30am-4pm

Fall Landscaping Symposium

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

Cost: \$30

Hosted by the Concho Valley Master Gardeners - don't miss this wonderful annual event! A full day of presentations with plenty of breaks, and snacks and lunch provided

Visit <https://txmg.org/conchovalley/> for details and to register.

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

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