

# Concho Valley

September 2022

# HORTICULTURE UPDATE

## Fall Lawn Care

Some in the Concho Valley have been lucky to receive a bit of rain recently but San Angelo is still pretty dry. We will keep hoping and praying though! The days are getting shorter and temperatures are going down bit by bit, and fall is (thankfully) on the way. It's time to make plans for fall lawn care to try and keep the turfgrass healthy and strong so it goes through winter dormancy in good shape and greens up well next spring.

First is the decision of whether or not to fertilize. Nitrogen fertilizer can be tough on plants that are heat and drought stressed, so don't fertilize unless you've been watering adequately to maintain active, green growth, or wait until it rains and cools down a bit more; either way, get it done by early October to not promote too much new growth too close to winter.

There have been many questions lately regarding planting new grass. If starting from seed, late spring through early summer is the best window for planting warm season turfgrass such as bermuda, so now is not the recommended time. Cool season grasses such as fescue and rye are not generally recommended in the Concho Valley because they do not hold up well enough through the summer. Sod can be planted just about any time of year with careful care and attention, but it's best to get it planted in the spring, or early fall to give it time to establish well and then go dormant before cold winter temperatures come along.

If St. Augustine grass is struggling or there has been a history of take-all root rot disease causing large areas of the lawn to turn yellow and then die back, treat every fall and spring to reduce damage and prevent the fungal disease. If just starting to exhibit mild symptoms or to maintain healthy St. Augustine, top dress with one to two bales of sphagnum peat moss per thousand square feet and apply a micronutrient fertilizer containing manganese. If there are areas damaged by the disease, also treat with a turf fungicide containing azoxystrobin (such as Heritage or Scott's DiseaseX).

Consider applying pre-emergent in healthy, well-established lawns to prevent cool season annual weeds such as rescuegrass and henbit. Wait until soil temperature cools down to about 70 degrees for several days before applying pre-emergent in the fall, that usually happens in the latter half of September or early October. For a more in-depth guide to applying pre-emergent for the lawn, visit <https://tomgreen.agrilife.org/horticulture/> and click on "Pre-Emergence Herbicides." Read the label carefully and follow all directions for product rate and application instructions.

## 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

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## 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/leafhoppers: pyrethroids give best control

Black Pecan Aphid: continue to monitor and control through September

# Collecting and Saving Seeds



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.

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## Plant Spotlight

### Lynn's Legacy Cenizo *Leucophyllum langmaniae*

This Texas Sage relative is a tough beauty! A designated Texas Superstar shrub, it grows to a height of 5 feet, needs full sun and is very drought tolerant once established. It blooms more often than Texas Sage because it is not as dependent on changes in humidity.



# Fall Pests

Fall is a great season for landscapes, but there are also pests to watch out for, that also thrive in the cooler, milder 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).

If we get some fall rain we so desperately need, weeds will pop 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.

# Planting Trees and Shrubs



If your landscape needs any new foundation landscape plants such as trees or shrubs, fall is the best time of year to plant. Whether for a major landscape overhaul, or just a few additions or changes, fall is ideal for planting woody plants because it is a milder season with cooler temperatures and (hopefully) some rainfall, and it's the furthest season away from summer. Fall planting gives plants more time to establish a healthy root system before the most stressful time of year.

Good plant selection is the first step to success; choose plants that are well adapted to the area and that can handle the high and low temperatures, soil type, etc. Visit <https://tomgreen.agrilife.org/horticulture/> to see a list of recommended trees and shrubs for the Concho Valley. More ideas for good plants to choose from can be found at <http://texassuperstar.com/>, or simply by observing local neighborhoods and parks to see what plants do well in the area.

Soil preparation is the next step, but is not recommended for shade trees. Trees have large extensive root systems and need to be able to grow in the native soil, so no soil amendments are needed for trees. For shrubs, perennials, etc. till up the soil and mix in compost to promote deep roots. It's actually possible to train plants to have deeper roots and therefore be more drought tolerant when it's hot and dry, and soil improvement with compost is the first step.

Irrigation frequency is the other part of training deep roots; right after planting frequent irrigation is required but over time and as the root system grows, reduce irrigation frequency. The end goal should be 'deep but infrequent' irrigation, and that will be different for different plants. Once established, try to push plants as long as they can go without watering and then water thoroughly when they really need it (if there's no rain). Some homeowners think they are doing their plants a favor by watering really frequently but overdoing it can create shallow roots that can't handle the heat when summer comes.

# Wildflowers and Bulbs



As it continues to cool down, and if we get some rain, landscapes will pop with fresh new growth and fall blooms. Plants are stressed and have had a rough summer, so be sure to water thoroughly until we get some soaking rainfall to help them recover and have some new fall growth. Fall is a great time of year for planting just about everything, especially spring blooming bulbs and wildflowers.

It takes a while to see the result of planting spring bulbs and wildflowers, but it's so worth it in the spring time to see colorful daffodils and bluebonnets pop open. Purchase bulbs as soon as they are available in nurseries, but wait to plant until soil cools down in October or November. Plant wildflower seeds anytime from late August through October.

Bulbs will perform best if planted in plenty of sunlight and well-drained soil. If soil is heavy and has poor drainage, amend with compost before planting. Plant at the correct depth, which should be listed on the package but is usually about 2 to 3 times the width of the bulb. Mulch can be applied after planting to help with weed control but should be moved out of the way when shoots begin to emerge in late winter. If left in place, the mulch can cause the stems to be pale and distorted.

For wildflowers, clear out weeds and till/loosen up the soil if planting in flower beds. Seeds need loose, fine-textured soil to germinate well, not clumpy or hard and rocky soil. Of course, wildflowers do pretty well on their own in pastures and along roadsides, so even with minimal effort there will still be some success. But a bit more work will provide a more reliable show of color.

If planting a variety of seeds with different sizes, mix them one-part seed to four-parts sand for even distribution. A simple handheld fertilizer spreader can be used. Once the seeds are spread, tamp them down and water them in lightly (if planted when not raining).

Pull and clear out broadleaf weeds through the winter to prevent them from competing with the wildflower plants. Plant a sample of the seed mix in a container with potting mix to see what the seedling plants look like, so they aren't mistaken for weeds. Some good wildflowers to plant in the Concho Valley include Mexican hat, black-eyed Susan, bluebonnet, Indian blanket and coreopsis.





# UPCOMING EVENTS

## September 2022

Friday, September 16, 12pm-1pm

### **Lunch N Learn Class - Diagnosing Plant Problems**

*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 figure out what's wrong with a sick plant and how to prevent and manage plant diseases. 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.

Saturday, September 24, 9am-12pm

### **Fall Vegetable Container Gardening Workshop and Plant Sale**

*Location: Tom Green 4H Center, 3168 N 67, San Angelo*

*Cost: \$30 for workshop, or stop by to purchase \$2 vegetable plants*

The Master Gardeners invite you to join them for a hands-on container gardening workshop for fall vegetables! Workshop participants will make and take home a planter, pre-registration required; details and registration info coming soon. Keep an eye on <https://txmg.org/conchovalley>

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

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