



# Concho Valley

May 2023

# HORTICULTURE UPDATE

## Plan Ahead for Summer Survival

Temperatures have been up and down this spring, and we have not had much rain yet. Plants need a period in the spring with rainfall and cooler weather to put on lots of new growth for the growing season and so far that hasn't been the case. Focus on good plant 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 coming hot 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. Some beautiful plants that thrive in the heat include sweet potato vine, Pride of Barbados, yellow bells, lantana, gopher plant, and various salvia varieties including Mystic Spires blue salvia – a favorite of many horticulturists and master gardeners. Vegetables to plant now include okra, pumpkin, squash, cantaloupe and southern pea.

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.

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 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.

## May To-Do's

- Adjust irrigation schedule as needed as temperatures warm up
  - Visit the website [watermyyard.org](http://watermyyard.org) to receive weekly watering recommendations for sprinkler systems
- Replenish mulch around beds to conserve water and maintain plant health
- Plant summer vegetables such as okra, peppers, melons, squash, sweet potatoes, and black-eyed peas

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## Pecan Update

Tuesday May 9th, 12pm-2pm  
Tom Green 4H Center  
3168 N US 67, San Angelo  
**Listening Session with staff  
from Texas A&M on  
PRESERVING TEXAS' PECAN  
LEGACY**

*What do you need help with?  
How can we work together  
to sustain pecan growing in  
Texas? Help set the priorities.  
We want to listen!*



# The Journey of the Monarch Butterfly

By guest contributor Linda Rowe, Concho Valley Master Gardener



Butterflies are beginning to grace our yards and landscapes with their beautiful, fragile appearance. The Monarch makes itself known as we spot them on their way to the northern border of the United States from the mountain forests of central Mexico. There are several things we can do to help the Monarchs on their journey, as well as attract other butterflies to our yards.

First, we need to provide plants rich in nectar, as the source of energy for adult butterflies in general. Constant and or overlapping blooming nectar plants provide food sources from spring through late fall.

Some plants which are good nectar sources are lantana, salvia, Turk's cap, zinnias, and blue mist to name a few.

Butterflies need protection from wind and places to seek shelter during bad weather. They find protection from the elements in shrubbery, ornamental grasses and places that provide nooks and crannies, as you might find in rock piles, brush, and wood piles. There they tuck themselves away from rain and wind.

Another way to help butterflies is to plant their host plant. A host plant is the plant that provides the food source for the butterfly caterpillar. The Monarch host plant is milkweed. Milkweed is the only food source on which a Monarch will lay her eggs. Fritillaries host plant is passion flower vine, and Swallowtails prefer plants in the parsley family.

Finally, the last suggestion I would make is to provide butterflies a place for "puddling." This activity is generally done in groups of mostly males, as the above picture shows.

By "puddling," they drink much needed salts, minerals, and other nutrients of which they pass on to the female during mating. This provides the female with what she needs to produce healthy eggs. One can easily be made by using a shallow dish. Add sand, soil, water, and a rock for perching. Keep it moist and butterflies will enjoy much needed moisture.

## Plant Spotlight

### Ruby Crush Tomato

*Solanum lycopersicum* 'Ruby Crush'

This newly designated Texas Superstar plant is a tomato that tastes delicious and performs well in tough growing conditions!





# Lawn or No Lawn?

Lawns are an important part of many functional, beautiful landscapes and provide a lot of enjoyment – especially for kids and pets and outdoor entertaining. But not all home landscapes need lawns, and there are many options for going turf-free.

For homeowners that wish to have a thick, healthy lawn but are starting from scratch or want to rejuvenate a stressed yard, late spring/early summer is a good time to plant bermuda grass seed and is also a good time to lay sod. Start with good soil preparation – turfgrass will establish much better and maintain a better appearance and stay healthier in the long run if the soil is loosened up and compost is tilled in before planting. But be sure to smooth and level out the soil before planting the seed or sod. Water lightly very frequently at first to help establish roots, then slowly reduce frequency and increase duration until one inch of water is applied no more than once per week.

To maintain, mowing and irrigation are two of the most important tasks to focus on this time of year. Frequent, correct mowing and appropriate irrigation have the biggest impact on the lawn staying dense and keeping out weeds. Mow at the correct height (about 0.5 inch for hybrid bermudagrass, 1 inch for common bermudagrass, and 2.5 inches for St. Augustine), often enough so that no more than 1/3 of the height of the grass is removed at once. Water deeply but infrequently to encourage deep rooting. Once inch of water, once per week is sufficient in the hot dry part of summer, and once every two or three weeks is enough when it's cooler in the spring and fall. Use an efficient irrigation method and consider converting sprinkler nozzles to a more efficient type if needed, such as a multi-stream nozzle. Sprinklers should not throw a fine mist, but large droplets that make it through the air and into the soil.

A turf-free landscape is a good option for those that don't need turfgrass. There are lots of options that can help create a beautiful green, lush yard that conserves natural resources and doesn't require weekly mowing; and it can be done in a well-designed, attractive way. Try an internet search such as 'lawn free landscaping' to get visual ideas and inspiration. Flagstone pavers with small groundcover growing in between, more beds for perennials and edibles, and turf-alternatives such as mondograss or native grass mixes are just a few of the many ideas and options.

# Plant Propagation

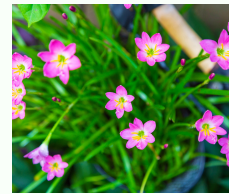
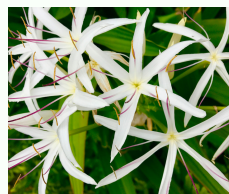
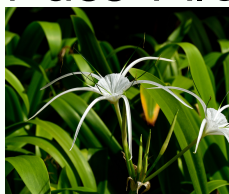
One way to save some money on new landscape or house plants is to try propagating some new ones yourself. It will take quite a bit longer to get an established plant from a cutting than purchasing from a nursery though, so if you want a quicker impact, check out local nurseries to see what they have in stock. But if you have friends or neighbors that have plants growing that you like and would like to try in your landscape, ask them if you can take some stem cuttings and start your own new plants. Many shrubs and perennials that are common in landscapes can be grown from stem cuttings – things like salvia, roses, lantana, yarrow, etc.

The best time and type of cutting to take depends on the specific plant, but many plants can root from softwood cuttings – some will need rooting hormone (available at nurseries and garden centers) and some will root readily without.

For example – rose cuttings can be taken any time of year, but tend to be most successful when taken in cooler seasons. The easiest part of the plant to root is the tip of stems that recently bloomed. Using a sharp clean set of pruners, take a cutting about six to eight inches long (keep track of which end is up!). Remove spent blooms and/or hips, pull off leaves from the lower half of the cutting, and immediately stick into prepared (damp) potting mix. Rooting hormone can increase success but is not necessary for rose cuttings. Take more cuttings than you need because they will not all take root. Place in bright light but not direct sun that will dry the cuttings out, and cover with clear plastic to trap humidity. The cuttings must not be allowed to dry out. Most varieties of roses will start to root after a few weeks, but leave them until they have a strong root system – then carefully repot into their own container and allow to continue to grow and harden off before planting outside in the landscape.



# Pass-Along Bulbs



'Bulb' is a specific botanical term – true bulbs are swollen underground stems that have layers (like onions). But 'bulb' is used more commonly to refer to any underground structure that new plants can be grown from, such as iris rhizomes, caladium tubers, and gladiolus corms. So while it is good to know the difference for planting and propagating purposes, I say it's ok to lump them together and call them all bulbs when referring to planting these various types of underground stems.

If you have a friend or neighbor with these flowers, ask if they are willing to share. If you don't have a source to share from, many can be ordered online or found in local nurseries. Some examples of bulbs to dig and divide now include crinums, spider lilies, rain lilies, oxblood lilies, lycoris, and Philippine lily. Later in the year, in the early fall, will be time to dig and divide things like iris, daylily, amaryllis and snowflakes.

Crinums are a personal favorite of mine because they are beautiful but also very tough. Texas A&M University Horticulture Professor Dr. Bill Welch famously told Southern Living Magazine that "no crinum has ever died." While that may have been said tongue-in-cheek, they are very hardy plants. Some varieties to consider would be 'Milk and Wine,' 'Ellen Bosanquet,' 'Bradley,' and 'Summer Nocturne.' While they are tough once established, crinums are slow to get going. So don't expect blooms the first year and give them a few years to really start flowering well. Rain lilies are also a lot of fun to have because they pop up so suddenly after a warm summer rainfall. There are many wild rain lilies in Concho Valley lawns, but larger and more colorful improved varieties are available in nurseries and online.

Pass-along plants are such a fun tradition to share with friends and neighbors; not only can they handle being divided and shared but they thrive on it. When planting, prepare the soil well by digging and loosening it up and incorporate some high-quality compost.

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## Khakiweed Control

Some of the most common questions I receive from homeowners are about identifying and controlling khakiweed. Khakiweed is a broadleaf, warm-season perennial plant that grows low to the ground in a flattened out, prostrate manner; it has small white flowers in the summer that develop into prickly burs in the fall. The burs break apart into small 'spears' that can easily attach to animals, clothes, shoes and equipment. Khakiweed has a thick, deep taproot that helps it survive drought, and it can be challenging to control.

The number one factor in keeping khakiweed at bay is to have something to occupy the ground space – it thrives in bare spots and thinned out turf. Whether it be a thick healthy lawn, deep mulch, groundcover, etc., there needs to be something to intentionally cover the ground to reduce weed growth. This can really help prevent new khakiweed from coming up, but here are some suggestions for controlling existing plants and other ideas to help with prevention.

First, use gloved hands or a garden hoe to physically pull up large, mature plants – be sure to get the taproot. Herbicide will not be very effective at killing fully grown plants. For smaller, actively growing young plants a herbicide that contains a combination of several active ingredients is more effective than just a 2,4-D broadleaf weed killer. Try a product that has a combination of 2,4-D with mecoprop, carfentrazone, dicamba, or metsulfuron (for example, Fertilome brand 'Weed Free Zone').

Since khakiweed is a perennial, meaning it comes back from roots, pre-emergent will not fully control it; but pre-emergent is still very helpful if applied in the late winter (around February) to prevent new plants from coming up by seed. There are no pre-emergent herbicides labeled for khakiweed specifically, but a Texas A&M bulletin written by Scott Nolte, David Graf and Becky Trammel recommends trying a product with the active ingredient isoxaben (for example, trade name 'Gallery'). See <https://tomgreen.agrilife.org/horticulture/> to view the full publication. Always follow label directions when using any type of weed killer product.

Now is the time of year when khakiweed begins to be the most troublesome because the burs really start to develop – but control efforts need to start in the late winter with pre-emergent, and early spring with broadleaf herbicide when the plants are still small.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## May 2023

Tuesday, May 9, 12pm-2pm

### **Pecan Industry Listening Session**

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

*Cost: Free*

*Hosted by Texas A&M and the TPGA*

Texas A&M wants to know - What do you need help with? How can we can work together to sustain pecan growing in Texas? Help set the priorities. We want to listen! FMI Contact Allison Watkins Schwarz at 325-659-6528 or [allison.schwarz@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:allison.schwarz@ag.tamu.edu)

Tuesday, May 9, 6:30pm

### **CVMG Educational Series- Bees, Pollinators and Honey**

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

*Cost: Free*

*Speaker - Nikki Felcman, St. Abigail Honey*

Join the Master Gardeners for an educational session with special guest Nikki and learn about bees! FMI contact Allison at 325-659-6528 or [allison.schwarz@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:allison.schwarz@ag.tamu.edu)

Thursday, May 11, 2pm-4pm

### **PPC Seminar - All About Hummingbirds**

*Location: Tom Green County Extension Office, 113 W. Beauregard, San Angelo*

*Cost: \$20*

*Speaker: Carol Sturm, Master Gardener*

Hosted by the People Plant Connection; Learn how to provide for and attract hummingbirds to your yard! To reserve a spot [Click Here](#) or call Susan Stanfield at 325-656-3104.

Friday, May 19, 12pm-1pm

### **Lunch N Learn Class - Landscape Weed Contro**

*Location: Tom Green County Extension Office, 113 W. Beauregard, San Angelo*

*Cost: \$5*

*Speaker: Allison Watkins*

Hosted by the PPC; Join us for a discussion on how to keep the yard weed and sticker free. 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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