



Concho Valley

September 2023

HORTICULTURE UPDATE

Planting Trees and Shrubs

Fall is always my favorite season but the tougher the summer, the happier I am for September to come along! Hopefully the weather turns a corner soon - some deep, soaking rainfall will do a world of good for all the struggling plants. Fall is the best season for planting many types of plants so make plans now to refresh the yard when it cools down and starts to rain, and replace things as needed - trees, shrubs, perennials, herbs and cool season color. Take the time to research and plan, and select the best plants in order to save water and create better outcomes.

Trees and shrubs are the most valuable, permanent plants of the landscape - use good plant selection and design principles to place in the right location, and best planting techniques to get a successful result. Plant large shade trees at 45-degree angles off the front corners of the home, so they frame the home and highlight it – not in front of the home to block it and/or visually divide in half. Plant large shrubs at the corners, and smaller dwarf shrubs closer to the front door. Choose dwarf shrubs for the front of the home that grow to the appropriate size at their mature age, so that regular shearing/pruning is not necessary.

Planting depth is very important for woody plants – don't dig the holes deeper than the rootball; planting trees just a few inches too deep can cause major health and aesthetic issues. Amend soil with compost when planting shrubs, but not trees. Shade trees have large extensive root systems that must be adapted to the native soil – it's impossible to amend all the soil the roots will eventually occupy. But planting beds where shrubs, perennials, annuals and groundcovers will grow should be tilled up and amended with good-quality plant-based compost. Organic matter in the soil will improve plant performance and reduce the need for fertilizer. Finish off with a three- to four-inch deep layer of wood mulch. Research has shown that mulch can help woody plants grow bigger, faster – it helps keep weed competition at bay, moderates soil temperature, prevent evaporation, etc. Always water new plants in immediately after planting, and hand water for the first few weeks – don't rely on automatic irrigation until they begin to establish new roots.

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

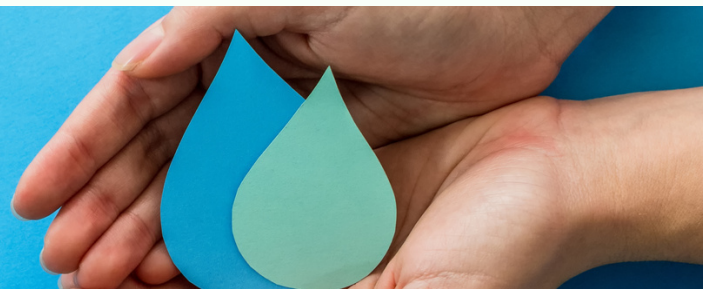
Late season pests to keep an eye out for:

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

Landscape Water Conservation



Fall is a busy time in the landscape and garden - it's the best time of year for planting most landscape additions like trees, shrubs, groundcovers and perennials. As we replace stressed or dead plants and add new beds and landscape features, let's be sure to do it in a water-smart way that will not only help preserve our water resources for the future but also improve chances that the plants thrive year-round in the west Texas climate.

Texas A&M University coined the term "Earth-Kind Landscaping" which includes water conservation as well as other practices that protect the environment such as reducing pesticide and fertilizer use. Some of the first steps to create a more Earth-Kind, water-conserving landscape include careful plant selection, good soil preparation, and efficient irrigation.

There are so many plants to choose from, it can be overwhelming to know what plants will perform well and meet the needs of the landscape. Start out with resources like the Earth-Kind Plant Selector at <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/plant-selector/>. There is a list of trees and shrubs that do well in the Concho Valley available at <https://tomgreen.agrilife.org/horticulture/>. See what the Concho Valley Master Gardeners have at their annual plant sale, first Saturday of April each year. Observe which plants prosper and thrive in local parks and throughout your neighborhood. Choose plants that are native or well-adapted, that work well in the local soil and climate.

Evaluate and improve the soil before planting. Till to loosen it up and aerate and incorporate compost to improve water holding capacity and provide nutrients. After planting, apply a thick layer of wood mulch to reduce water loss through evaporation. Irrigate with well-designed and properly installed drip irrigation. As horticulturist Skip Richter says, "irrigation systems don't waste or save water, people do." Even drip irrigation can waste water if it's not utilized correctly or maintained well, and sprinkler systems can be designed or upgraded to reduce evaporation and be more conserving. Don't 'set it and forget it' with irrigation, systems will always need to be reviewed and adjusted.

Plant Spotlight Firecracker Plant

Russelia equisetiformis

This newly designated Texas Superstar plant is a heat-loving showstopper!

Considered a tender perennial, it can come back after a mild winter but would be best grown in a protected spot and mulched well after the first freeze.



Khakiweed

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.

Another tip - don't scalp the lawn or mow too low, as this plant loves to grow out flat on the open ground. Raise the mower a and cut the grass a little higher so the turf can shade it out. In summary, 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.

Fall Vegetables

Summer was quite rough and discouraging for home gardeners, but the autumn season is always an encouragement to try again. Fall is a wonderful time of year to grow food – it gets easier and more productive as temperatures go down and rain returns.

If you'd like to start over with some warm season crops like tomatoes, purchase large transplants (gallon containers or larger) and get them planted right away to have a plentiful harvest before freezing temperatures arrive later in the year. Or plant in containers that can be brought inside to extend the growing season past the first fall freeze when it comes around.

After it cools down a bit more, around late September or early October it's a good time to start planting winter vegetables. Cool season crops are cold hardy and can withstand freezing temperatures once established. These winter season vegetables include artichoke, beet, bok choy, broccoli, brussels sprout, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, chard, collard greens, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mustard, bunching onion, radish, shallot, spinach, and turnip. Many of these plants can be purchased from local nurseries or can be direct seeded into the garden bed.

Incorporate compost into the soil before planting, and finish off with a thick layer of wood mulch to help reduce transplant shock, conserve water, and prevent weeds (if planting seeds, wait for the plants to emerge before applying the mulch). If growing in containers, use potting mix instead of real soil and make sure the container has good drainage. Standing water will damage roots and cause the plant to decline, and can attract pests such as fungus gnats.

Drip irrigation is the best way to irrigate vegetables, since it applies the water directly to the soil for the roots to absorb instead of being splashed on the leaves. It can be a pretty simple do-it-yourself project with a little practice. For tips, visit tomgreen.agrilife.org/horticulture and click on "Low Volume Irrigation."



September To Do's



The Concho Valley is still in drought conditions, and we are in need of some fall rain! But the mornings are getting cooler and the days are getting shorter, and there are a lot of things that are best done in the fall for the landscape and garden.

Pre-emergent can be applied to well-established lawns to prevent winter annual weeds such as rescuegrass and henbit. Don't apply to newly planted lawns or anywhere that seeds or new plants will be placed in the next few months. Lawns that have been regularly irrigated and that are not drought-stressed can be fertilized with nitrogen fertilizer to help the lawn come back strong next spring. Top dress St. Augustine with peat moss (1-2 bales per thousand square feet) to help prevent take-all root rot disease damage, and if it has been a problem in the past also treat with an azoxystrobin fungicide such as Scott's DiseaseX or Heritage.

Replenish mulch in beds to a depth of three to four inches, especially around any tender perennials such as Pride of Barbados or lantana. Mulch helps insulate roots in the winter and can sometimes be the difference between a perennial coming back or not if there are some hard freezes.

Plant wildflower seeds like bluebonnets now – and put in as much or as little work as you like, depending on how much you want to see blooming next spring. A few seeds can be scattered and left to fend for themselves, and if we get some well-timed winter and spring precipitation, they can do just fine with little care. But if it's important to have a good display with lots of blooms, take a bit more care in planting – clear the weeds, prepare the soil to loosen it up and sow the seeds. Water them in well and water every few weeks when there's no rain. Keep weeds cleared out, but don't mistakenly pull the wildflowers – plant some of the seeds in a pot with potting mix to use as a guide to know what the seedlings of the desired plants look like. This is especially helpful if you are planting a seed mix with several different types.

Dig and divide irises and daylilies, especially those that family and friends would like to have a share of, and those that are overgrown and thick. Dividing every few years helps irises bloom more reliably each spring.

Plant fall color such as mums and fall aster, and once it cools down a bit more plant winter color such as snapdragons and pansies. Add some cool season vegetables and herbs such as parsley, cilantro, broccoli, Swiss chard, lettuce and spinach to keep the landscape beautiful and productive even after warm season plants start to fade.

Fall Landscape Pests

There have been many questions coming into the Extension Office regarding aphids and the sticky honeydew they excrete. The stickiness is especially prevalent around pecan trees but can be from oak trees and others. Aphids don't generally cause enough damage to trees to require treatment, but the stickiness that gets on cars, sidewalks etc is enough for many homeowners to want to treat. Be careful to not overuse pesticides in the landscape, as aphid infestations are very likely to increase after pesticide application; this happens because of the damage to natural enemy populations. Beneficial predator insects such as lady beetles and green lacewings feed on aphids and help keep them under control. Consider products with the active ingredient acetamiprid or imidacloprid and ensure that the product is labeled for aphid control on bearing pecans if the nuts are to be harvested at the end of the season. Some examples include "Bayer Advanced Fruit, Citrus and Vegetable Insect Control" and "Ortho Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Insect Killer." Though the honeydew can be a major annoyance, it may not be worth the expense and trouble of treating this late in the season. Apply the treatment next spring to prevent the problem through the growing season.

Fall webworms may also be a worry for homeowners; like aphids they do not harm established trees but they can reduce a pecan crop and can be unsightly in the landscape. Spinosad and Bt are two biological (organic) pesticides that control caterpillars well but they are more effective if the webs are torn open first (simply use a long stick to pull at the webbing). This helps the spray penetrate into the webs and contact the caterpillars, and also allows birds to eat them.

Armyworms are caterpillars that feed on turf foliage, causing a stripped appearance. They don't often kill healthy, well-established lawns but can be a threat to newly planted or stressed lawns. Pyrethroid insecticides such as cyfluthrin and cypermethrin can be used to control armyworms. Always read and follow labels when applying any insecticide in the landscape.



UPCOMING EVENTS

September 2023

Thursday, September 7, 2023, 3pm-6pm

Preserve the Harvest Workshop

Location: Tom Green 4H Center, 3168 N US 67, San Angelo (next to Animal Services)

Cost: \$30 - pay at event, please RSVP

Speakers: Courtney Redman, Allison Schwarz

Learn gardening tips for growing a bountiful harvest in the Concho Valley, and how to preserve your produce through canning, freezing and drying. There will be a hands-on workshop to make a jar of pickles to take home. RSVP online at <https://tomgreen.agrilife.org/>

Saturday, September 9, 2023

Fall Landscaping Symposium

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

Cost: \$30 - must pre-register

Hosted by the Concho Valley Master Gardeners

The Master Gardeners have another great line-up of speakers this year, covering a range of topics - native plants, integrated pest management, succulents, hobby greenhouses and landscape design. Visit <https://txmg.org/conchovalley/> for info, or to register online at <https://cvmg.square.site/s/shop>

Friday, September 15, 12pm-1pm

Lunch N Learn Class - Year-Round Landscape Color

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

Cost: \$5

Speaker: Allison Schwarz

Hosted by the PPC; Join us for a discussion on plants to choose for the yard to have color in all seasons. To reserve a spot [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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