

Concho Valley Horticulture Update

October 2014

Fall Planting

Autumn is a great time of year to consider replacing any plants that were damaged or killed by stressful weather in recent years with tougher, more tolerant options. Select the best plants based on the needs of the landscape, such as the amount of shade, drought tolerance, and soil type; then go to the nurseries looking for them, rather than just buying on a whim. Planning will go a long way to having successful plants!

Even when we are getting more rain, water conservation is always important. Be sure to apply a 3 to 4 inch deep layer of mulch around plants to retain moisture – just don't pile mulch up high around woody trunks. Leave a few inches of space between plant trunks and mulch (think of the shape of a donut, not a volcano).

Some good large shade trees for the area would be Bur oak or Chinquapin oak. These beautiful, tough, and drought tolerant oak trees will provide great shade when they mature. For smaller homes, try a Chinese pistache, which has beautiful fall foliage. Autumn is a good time of year to select a deciduous shade tree, since you can see what the fall colors will be.

Suggested small ornamental trees include desert willow, Texas mountain laurel, and possumhaw holly.

Winter hardy perennials can also be planted now; they won't have long until freezing weather takes them down to the ground, but the roots can continue to establish through the winter. Some great perennials for the area include pride of Barbados, flame acanthus and lantana. Apply mulch over the roots after frost to help them come up strong in the spring.

Those who enjoy growing vegetables can plant cool season crops like lettuce, spinach, broccoli and cabbage. These winter vegetables can be grown in any kind of set-up, from an extensive row-crop garden, or a few planted in flower beds or containers.

October To-Do's

- Harvest cold-sensitive herbs such as basil
- Plant cool season annuals
- Adjust irrigation schedule for cooler weather
- Plant trees, shrubs and vines

Pecan Update

From the Texas Pecan Pest
Management Newsletter
By Bill Ree



At this time the only production insect problem facing producers could be a late emergence of pecan weevil and late infestation of stink bugs. Make sure you run PW emergence traps up though shuck split of your latest maturing variety.

As for foliage pests, to treat or not to treat for aphids and mites can be a tough call. I have arbitrarily set October 1 as the cutoff date for aphid/mite treatments.

Removing Trees

It can be heartbreaking to cut down a tree in west Texas, but unfortunately there are still some dead or nearly dead trees in the area that need to be dealt with. I've seen some trees that are nothing but a trunk left, but the owners try and keep it to see if it can recover. If the tree hasn't leafed out in the last year, it's not going to and should be removed so that it doesn't fall and damage property or people.

And then there are some trees that we don't mind cutting down, like a weedy mesquite growing in the wrong place. A lot of them have come up in recent years and they can become a nuisance.

For mesquites that need to be removed, or for landscape trees that suffered so much damage that they need to be taken down, be sure to take care of the problem promptly.

And for mesquites and other weedy trees, treat the stump left behind so that it doesn't keep sprouting out and causing problems.

One option is to hire someone to come grind the stump. It's a machine that chews up the stump into a pile of chips. This is a great option be-

cause it kills the stump and also destroys it for you.

Another option to prevent a tree from re-sprouting is to apply a herbicide to the trunk. Within a day of cutting the tree down, paint on some herbicide such as Triclopyr. This chemical can be purchased inexpensively in small quantities as a 'brush and stump killer', or can be bought in larger quantities under the trade name Remedy.

Just follow the label and apply as directed and be very careful when handling and applying herbicide.

This kind of stump treatment will kill anything it contacts, so don't let it get near desirable plants. Always follow label directions.



Plant Spotlight

Woolly Stemodia

Stemodia tomentosa

This Texas native does great in well drained soil and makes a beautiful trailing plant for raised beds, or a nice groundcover for sunny areas.



Waterwise Landscaping

I have really enjoyed the weather this year, the summer was cooler than usual and even though September started out hot, the cool fall temperatures settled in and we even had some good doses of rain. But though this year was not as hard as previous years, we still need to focus on water conservation. Our water supplies are still low and water will always be a critical issue.

Here are some practices to adopt in the landscape to be more conservative with water use.

First - amend soil. When planting new plants, till in 3 inches of compost as deep as possible to improve the soil structure and water holding capacity.

Next, start converting to drip irrigation for all planting beds like vegetable gardens, flower beds and shrub beds. Drip irrigation is much more efficient than

sprinklers because sprinklers can lose a lot to evaporation.

Besides evaporation loss, spraying water on plant leaves is not good for the health of most plants. When it's humid and wet outside, spraying on the leaves can spread disease. And when it's hot and dry, the salt content of the water can burn or scorch plant leaves.

When it comes to turfgrass, sprinklers are the easiest way to go, though. There are some subsurface drip systems available which are more water efficient, but they are not common. But you can adjust your sprinklers to be more water wise. Do an irrigation audit - run the system during daylight so you can see where the heads are spraying. Sometimes sprinklers get turned and spray the wrong direction. Also, check if the heads are spraying a fine mist - smaller droplets evaporate faster. Lowering the pressure can increase the droplet size and reduce water waste.



40 GALLON CHALLENGE

Save 40 gallons of water a day for your county and state. [Read more about the program.](#)

Take the pledge to conserve water. Choose your state: GO

Did you know that you can save 4 gallons a day by making a compost pile instead of using the garbage disposal in the sink? Find out more ways to save water by taking the 40 Gallon Challenge:

Visit <http://www.40gallonchallenge.org/>

Testing Soil

The two things that impact plants most are soil and water. Now that work in the garden and landscape is starting to slow down, it's a great time to do a soil test. Especially if your plants didn't perform as well as you expected in the previous months, a soil test is a very simple thing to do and can be really helpful.

A soil test done through the soil lab at Texas A&M University will tell you how much nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium there is in the soil, and what the pH is. You can even find out what micronutrients you have in your soil if you suspect deficiency.

It's important to note that more is not better when it comes to fertilizer for plants. Never just put down fertilizer without knowing if the soil needs it or not.

Many plants don't need as much fertilizer as they get, if any at all. Applying too much fertilizer is a waste of time and money, and is not good for plants.

Taking a soil sample is easy. All you have to do is dig up some soil in several different spots in the area you want to test. Remove all leaves, roots and rocks and mix it all up in a bucket.

Then you need a submittal form that you can get from any county extension office, or online at soiltesting.tamu.edu. Place about 2 cups in a plastic zip top bag and mail it as directed on the submittal form.

A properly done soil test will be a big help in producing a beautiful landscape and a great harvest next year. When you soil test results come in, usually in a week or two, feel free to contact the extension office for help interpreting the results.

Firewood Storage

Firewood is a great fuel source if you have a fireplace or stove to burn it in. Good storage is important to maximize the enjoyment of burning firewood. And nowadays we want to be very careful about where we get oak firewood from and how it's stored, because of the risk of spreading oak wilt disease.

First, firewood needs to always be kept dry and have air circulation. An open ended shed or storage unit that keeps the wood up off the ground is ideal.

Don't forget to locate the wood storage close to the home; when it's time to go out in the winter for more wood, you won't want to travel far.

Anything that keeps the wood up off the ground will do for storage, as long as it keeps the wood dry and keep it away from insects.

Try to keep the logs about 30 feet away from a house but still be accessible. It's also good to have a cover available to protect the wood from weather. But this would need to be taken off in sunny days so the wood can warm up and dry out.

Always place larger pieces of wood on the bottom of wood piles, and make sure none of the pile starts to lean. Don't stack wood too high, as this would increase the possibility of falling over.

Avoid bringing in red oak firewood if possible, but if you do obtain some be careful with how it's stored. Only get well seasoned, dried out oak wood. If you're not sure about the source of the oak wood, cover it with clear plastic and seal it down at the ground so that heat will build up and kill oak wilt pathogens, as well as prevent insect vectors from coming in or out.

Classes & Programs

October 2014

Saturday October 4, 9am

Saturday Seminar - Fall Flower Arrangement

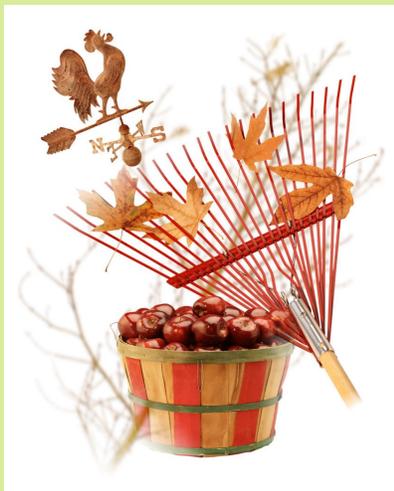
Instructor: Becky Pena, from Bouquets Unique

Location: Water Education Center

417 S. Oakes

Cost: \$15

Hosted by the People/Plant Connection: Becky will give a hands-on demonstration of how to make a flower arrangement with a fall theme. Cost cover supplies, and everyone will have an arrangement to take home !



Friday October 17, 12pm

Lunch N Learn Class - Don't Fall Behind

Instructor - Allison Watkins

Location: Tom Green County Commissioner's Courtroom

Judge Edd B. Keyes Bldg, 113 W Beauregard

Cost: \$5

Take advantage of the cooler weather and get to work in the yard! Learn what to do in the fall, including tree care, bulbs, fall vegetables, soil managements and fall plant selection.

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

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