

Concho Valley Horticulture Update

October 2016

Fall and Winter Flowers

Well I sure love fall, and we have been blessed with a great one so far! Though spring has the reputation for being the gardening season, fall is actually the best time for a lot of gardening and planting for us here in west Texas.



So now that summer annuals are fading away, and summer perennials have stopped blooming, the landscape can still be bright and beautiful if you utilize some fall perennials and annuals. Some good perennials for fall color and interest include flame acanthus, autumn fire sedum, turk's cap, fall aster, and Mexican bush sage. Of course, chrysanthemums are also popular fall bloomers and are good choices too. Get some of these planted and you'll have a show stopping yard this fall, and every fall – since they're perennials.

Annuals also have purpose and use in the landscape, even though they only last one season and don't come back. Annuals have really concentrated color and provide a big impact for such small plants, if planted close together in pockets and not scattered throughout a large bed.

As it cools down even more, it will be time to get cool season annuals like pansies planted for color that lasts all winter.

Pansies work best in a location that receives full sun, and will keep blooming throughout the season if kept moist and by applying a balanced fertilizer program and pinching any blooms that have faded. Pansies are so popular because they come in many different colors and color combinations, and keep blooming steadily.

Some other great options for colorful, cool season annuals are things like snapdragons, stock, flowering kale, and Johnny jump ups.

When planting new fall perennials and cool season annuals, be sure to till up the soil well, incorporate some compost, and mulch over well after planting. This will help your plants stay healthy and beautiful as long as possible.



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 Pecan IPM Newsletter by
Bill Ree

Not a lot of activity on the pest management side at this time of year. Your primary crop threats at this time will be late emerging pecan weevil, third generation walnut caterpillar, stink bugs and wildlife. Female pecan weevils will oviposit in nuts up to shuck split so late maturing cultivars and /or natives will need to be protected.

Concho Valley Pecan Show

Pecan trees are very important to us here in the Concho Valley. They are popular landscape trees, and are very beautiful. They are also one of the only horticulture crops produced commercially in the Concho Valley; they are actually probably the most important horticulture crop in Texas.

Pecans do require maintenance to keep them healthy and productive; they are not low maintenance or drought tolerant at all. Our trees were pretty happy in the spring and early summer, but in late summer when it got hot and dry they got stressed, and many dropped a lot of leaves and some pecans. The fall rains have been great though, and many trees have a good crop still. Late season moisture is very important for a pecan tree to bring a good crop – the pecans won't fill well unless there is rain or irrigation until the end of the season.

Keep caring for pecan trees even through the winter, dormant trees still need irrigation or rainfall every month or so. If there is less than an inch of rainfall in a month, give occasional supplemental water to pecan trees now through February, then in spring increase the frequency. If you want to plant a nice landscape shade tree and have enough water to maintain it, some of

the recommended varieties include Pawnee, Hopi, Sioux and Wichita – these do well in the Concho Valley.



We will be conducting the annual Concho Valley Pecan show on December 1st. Entries will be accepted until noon on Tuesday, November 29. This is a great way to learn what variety of pecans you may have and see how good the pecan crop is this year.

For more info, please contact the extension office at 325-659-6522

Plant Spotlight

Oxblood Lily

Rhodophiala bifida

These tough plants will grow almost anywhere and pop up in the fall with the autumn rains. Plant in part shade to full sun for best flowering.



Pruning

Soon cooler weather will start slowing down many landscape chores, and many gardeners will be looking for tasks that can be done to stay productive. One dormant season task is pruning, but don't get started too soon – it's better to wait until it's colder for many landscape trees, especially oaks.

Timing is important for pruning, especially for valuable mature shade trees. Winter is the best time for major pruning many landscape shade trees, but not for trees that flower in the early spring – for those, prune after they flower. And even though winter is best, many can be pruned just about any time of year, with the exception of oak trees. Don't prune oaks until December or January, to help prevent potential oak wilt infection.

Dead or diseased limbs should always be removed if they pose a danger to people or structures, no matter what time of year.

When pruning a woody plant, don't remove more than 1/3 of the total leaf canopy in one year. Pruning off too much at once can stimulate a rapid growth response in trees and shrubs, creating unsightly and unwanted water sprouts and suckers. It is also unhealthy to the plant to take off too much plant material at once, even when dormant.

Pests are also dormant in the winter, decreasing the chances of insect or disease infestation; which is why you should always only prune an oak tree in the winter when the pest that spreads the oak wilt disease is dormant.

Make sure that any tools that are used on your trees are sterilized with a ten percent bleach solution, rubbing alcohol, or similar products. If you hire someone to do the work, make sure they sterilize their tools before starting



Terrariums

Even though we have pretty mild winters here in the south, winter can get brown and dreary. When the weather gets cold, and you can't spend as much time outside, there are still ways to work with plants and enjoy the beauty of nature.

One way is to have house plants. Interiorscaping is the art and science of growing plants inside a home or business and is major hobby or even career.

Growing houseplants can be as easy or complicated as you want. On the easy side, you can get a few tough, easy to grow house plants and it will take very little work to keep them going. If you want a lot of exotic unusual plants it can turn into a lot of work.

The key to keeping indoor plants healthy in the winter is to water properly - not over or under doing it - and to get them the proper amount of light.

Some beautiful plants that commonly do well indoors are: dumbcane, peperomia, pilea, sansevieria, schefflera, dracaena, philodendron, and ficus.

One fun way to have plants indoors is to create a terrarium. Terrariums used to be very popular but you don't see them very often any more.



A terrarium is just a small clear structure that is completely sealed up and enclosed, used to display plants. They can be made out of bottles or jars, aquariums, or you can purchase special terrarium structures from catalogs or online.

To plant a terrarium, just place soil in the bottom and add small moisture loving plants. Water the soil and close it up. Keep an eye on the moisture level, if it looks dry add water or if there's a lot of condensation, let it dry out a bit. Once the moisture settles to the correct level, no watering is needed because the system is sealed up and the water cycles through the plants and the air.

Onions and Garlic

If you'd like to try growing some food but don't want to start with a big extensive vegetable garden, try growing some garlic and onions around in the landscape. They are pretty easy crops to grow, and are used a lot for cooking.

Many people plant onions in January, and that's the right time for planting transplants – also called onion sets. But if you want to start from seed, plant in October. Onions are biennial plants, meaning it takes two years to achieve maturity. But the benefits of starting from seeds are – they're cheaper, and you can plant them thick and close together so that in the first spring you can harvest small green onions for meals. Leave some a second year to get full sized onion bulbs.

Onion seeds don't last very long in storage, so make sure any seeds you purchase are no longer than one year old. It's best to find fresh seed if you can. Also, make sure to buy short day onions – they are the types that grow best here, long day onions are better further north. Onions do need some good nutrition, so plant in well prepared soil with compost and fertilizer.

Garlic can simply be started with some cloves from the grocery store. Just plant individual cloves about an inch deep and three to four inches apart and next May you'll have plenty of new garlic to harvest.

Fall is a good time to plant other related crops, such as leeks, chives, elephant garlic, and multiplying onions. Leeks are larger than onions and have a mild flavor and are best started in the fall from transplants. Chives are considered a herb but are in the onion family, and you can plant either garlic chives or onion chives depending on what flavor you want.

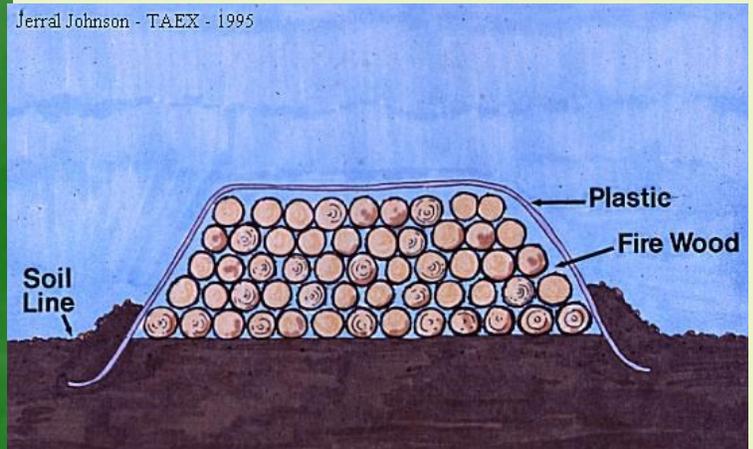


Oak Firewood

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 now days we want to be very careful about where we get oak firewood from and how it's stored, because of the possibility of affecting landscape oak trees.

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.

Jerral Johnson - TAEX - 1995



Other firewood storage tips:

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.

It's also good to have a cover available to protect the wood from weather, but this should be taken off in sunny days so the wood can warm up and dry out.

Classes & Programs

October 2016



Saturday, October 1, 9:00am to 12:00pm

Saturday Seminar - Pollinators

Location: Southside Rec Center, 2750 Ben Ficklin Rd

Cost: \$25



Instructors: Concho Valley Beekeepers Assoc. and Cindy Burkhalter, Hosted by the People/Plant Connection; Pollinators are important! Learn about bees and butterflies and how to keep them happy. To register, call 325-656-3104.

Friday, October 14, 12:00pm

Lunch N Learn Class - Don't *Fall* Behind

Instructor - Allison Watkins

Location: Tom Green County Extension Office

Judge Edd B. Keyes Bldg, 113 W Beauregard

Cost: \$5

Fall is a great time of year for working in the yard, find out what to do to stay productive including bulb planting, cool season annuals, soil management and winterization.



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



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