

# Concho Valley Horticulture Update

October 2017

## Pass-Along Plants

Many people associate bulbs with spring – when the tulips and daffodils come up. But there are also summer blooming bulbs like crinum lilies and day lilies, and fall blooming bulbs like spider lilies and oxblood lilies.

Bulbs are so fun to have in the landscape, because even though they don't have long lasting color (their blooms just last a few weeks) they seem almost magical with how they pop up from nothing, into beautiful, colorful flowers. They are easy to forget about because they have no leaves for much of the year, then when it's time to bloom they suddenly appear – which is why some are also nicknamed 'surprise lilies.'

Plants like spider lilies and oxblood lilies are what we call 'pass along' plants, because while they are easy to grow and share, they are hard to find in stores. The best chance of getting some to plant would be to find a friend or neighbor who has some to share.

Oxblood lilies are beautiful deep red trumpet shaped flowers that look similar to amaryllis, but are a little smaller and bloom in September. The bulbs can be planted just about any time of year, but right after they bloom is a good time to dig and divide because it's easy to forget exactly where they are. They are easy to grow and adaptable to just about any soil type and can take shade or sun.



Spider lilies are also a deep red, but instead of a trumpet shaped flower they have long, narrow curved petals with very large stamens – the flower is unique and very showy. In addition to the more common red flower, there is also a yellow spider lily variety that is bright and really pops when planted together in mass. Spider lilies are also easy to grow, adaptable to most soils and can take shade or sun.

Fall is also good time of year to plant multiplying onion bulbs – another 'pass along' plant. While they can sometimes be found in catalogs, sharing plants is a wonderful way to get to know neighbors - so any time there's a chance to get some multiplying onions, oxblood lilies or other shared plants don't pass it up!

As garden author Felder Rushing said, "The most effective way to save the plants of your childhood is to harbor them in your garden and distribute seeds, cuttings, or divisions to like-minded friends, relatives, and neighbors." He also said regarding pass-along plants: "They are a living reminder of a person, or something else historic, like a place. Some are just beautiful and others taste better. They're also easy to grow."

## 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:

Pecan Weevil: Pecan weevil can still be an issue in areas with weevil that have drought hardened soils which can result in a drought delayed emergence. Producers with adult emergence traps should monitor traps until the latest maturing cultivar has reached shuck split

## Plant Shrubs in the Fall

Fall is a great time of year to plant shrubs. While technically, you can plant container grown plants any time of year, summer is the least desirable time, spring and winter are good, but fall is generally the best.

When choosing a shrub to plant, pick the right plant for the spot before heading to the nursery. Select one that will grow to the right size and shape at maturity, so it doesn't require regular, excessive pruning to keep it from overgrowing the beds and covering windows.

Choose dwarf or miniature shrubs such as dwarf yaupon holly or dwarf Indian hawthorn. If you choose the right plant to begin with, there should be no reason to have to prune it regularly, if at all. Like Neil Sperry likes to say, if God wanted us to have square and ball shaped plants He would have created some that way!

It is a lot of work to keep shrubs pruned into spheres or cubes, and it's almost impossible to keep them all the same size. Personally, I prefer the more natural form they will grow into on their own versus extensive pruning.

After picking the right type, shrubs are sold at various sizes, ranging from tiny quart sized to nearly fully grown 10 gallon pots. Smaller ones are cheaper but

take a little longer to fill out. Be careful to not plant them too close together – it's very tempting to do so when they're small, but remember they will grow much larger.

After getting them home, prepare the bed for planting by incorporating a good amount of organic matter into the soil. No special soil amendments are needed except for plain, simple organic matter such as compost, peat moss or rotted manure.

When removing the plants from the pot, gently loosen any roots that are circling around the rootball, and plant at the same depth it was growing at in the pot – match the top of the rootball with the top of the soil. To finish off, apply a good layer of mulch – about 3 inches deep.



Photo from <http://neilsperry.com/>

## Plant Spotlight

### Yellow Spider Lily

*Lycoris aurea*

It will likely take a couple years after planting before this beauty blooms, but it's worth the wait. Yellow spider lilies are an elegant and striking addition to the landscape, can grow in sun or shade, and are very adaptable to just about any kind of soil



## Fall Leaves—Don't Bag It, Compost It!



It's wonderful to be getting into the autumn season! Some trees are starting to show signs of falling while others still have some time to go. While this is a nice sign of a new season and cooler weather, it creates a bit of a mess. Bagging leaves and throwing them away is not the best solution though.

There are 4 things you can do with your leaves that can improve your soil and help your plants. First, you can simply mow over them and mulch the lawn with them. This only works for a light covering of leaves though. Shredding them up with the mower and leaving them on the lawn provides a nice supply of nutrients for the grass.

The second option is to mulch with them. Fallen leaves make a good mulch that will help prevent weeds in the garden and flower beds.

Mulch also conserves water by preventing it from evaporating from the soil, moderates soil temperature, and prevents soil compaction. Just layer the leaves 3 to 5 inches deep. If you have a mower with a bagger, it helps to mow over them and catch them in the bag, then spread. Shredded leaves stay in place better than whole leaves.

A third thing to try is direct soil improvement. You can incorporate the leaves directly into the soil - they really help aerate and loosen up heavy soils. Just till up the soil, add a 6 to 8 inch layer of leaves, and mix them in. This is best done in the fall so the leaves can break down and decompose in time for spring planting.

Finally, the fourth option is composting. Fallen leaves make a great addition to a compost pile, along with kitchen scraps and other organic matter waste. Compost can be used to enrich soil by providing a natural source of nutrients.

## Controlling Khakiweed

Khakiweed is a low growing plant that has small round leaves, which are dark green and a little rubbery looking. The plant produces seeds in a burr which is very spikey, but softer than a grass burr or goat head.

The khaki weed is extremely annoying because it invades a lawn so easily and disrupts the uniformity of the grass in a lawn. Once khaki weed makes it into a yard, it easily gets out of control and begins to take over.

It's also frustrating because the burs stick to everything, get tracked in the house and into clothes, and can hurt. The burs break apart easily, but each little piece is like a tiny dagger.

Bare soil is an invitation to any weed, and is often the origin for khaki weed. If for any reason the grass is dug up, died back, or there is a bare spot, this can cause some to come up.

Selective herbicides such as 2,4-d can be used around established turfgrass, or nonselective herbicides like glyphosate can be used when there are no other plants with the khakiweed; these can be helpful in controlling khakiweed, but it's not the easiest to kill. Use a surfactant to help coat the leaves and increase success. Pre-emergent also helps - khakiweed is perennial, so pre-emergent won't kill the existing plants, but it does help prevent more from coming by seed.



## Plant Herbs and Garlic in Fall

Temperatures have still been up and down, but soon it will start cooling down for good. Fall vegetable gardens are starting to produce, perennials are looking more refreshed, and it's the beginning of a great season to plant just about anything that needs to be added to the yard – shrubs, trees, perennials, butterfly plants, etc.

Now is also an excellent time to plan some herbs – whether for beginners that haven't tried growing herbs, or expert herb gardeners, fall is always a great opportunity to plant something new and tasty in the yard. Many of the most loved herbs for cooking are pretty easy to grow, such as basil, sage and rosemary; and it's always nice to be able to use ingredients that are home-grown.

There is a wide variety of herb plants to choose from to incorporate into the landscape, including lemongrass, bay, various types of basil, fennel, dill, borage, germander, oregano, rosemary, thyme, parsley, winter savory, chives, lavender, catnip, catmint, sage, lemon balm, lemon verbena, chamomile, garlic, marjoram and many types of mint. How delicious and fragrant they all are! Besides culinary use, there are other benefits from growing herbs – many are good for pollinators like bees and butterflies, some are good for craft projects, and most are deer-resistant.

Whether grown in dedicated herb gardens, in landscape beds, or in planters/pots on the patio, most herbs do best with well-drained soil and full sun. So if planting in the ground, prepare the soil by incorporating compost and if growing in pots, use a good quality potting mix and make sure the containers have good drainage holes.

While fall is a wonderful time to plant herbs, they can also successfully be planted in the spring – except for garlic. Timing for planting garlic is limited to the fall, so don't miss the window for getting garlic planted – October through November is prime time for planting cloves for spring harvest.



## Pecan Trees in the Concho Valley

Pecan trees are very popular here in the Concho Valley - they are attractive landscape trees, and provide a delicious, healthy crop. During the 1950's and 60's there was a major effort to reforest the San Angelo area after the mid-century drought, and the Standard-Times newspaper promoted the pecan as the tree of choice. Since it is so prevalent in the area, and they are not the easiest to maintain species, there are always lots of questions raised by homeowners and commercial growers alike about how to care for pecans and get the best crop. Contact the local county extension office for more information on the care of pecans and pest management.

Pecans do best in deep, well drained soil that receives at least 50 inches of rainfall or irrigation from bud break through shuck split. The Concho Valley averages about 19 inches annually, so supplemental irrigation is necessary - especially for a quality crop of nuts. This year, most trees are fairly well loaded with pecans; if the trees were not properly watered throughout the season, the nut may not be well filled. The amount of available water early in the growing season is one of the determining factors of pecan size and filling of the kernels.

Another important maintenance factor is fertilization. Nitrogen fertilizer is required to maintain tree health and promote good pecan crops. In most cases, make at least two applications of nitrogen fertilizer - the first one should be at bud break.

For those growing pecans, whether in the landscape or a commercial orchard, we are pleased to be holding the annual Concho Valley Pecan show soon.

It will be held on Thursday, December 1st at the Judge Edd B. Keyes Building in San Angelo. Entries consist of 42 pecans of each variety being entered, accompanied by the grower's name and address. Pecans from trees located in the Concho, Schleicher, Irion, Sterling, Coke, Runnels, Schleicher and Tom Green Counties are eligible. Samples will be accepted at the Tom Green County Extension Office until Wednesday November 29 at 12pm. For more information, please contact the Extension Office at (325) 659-6528

# Upcoming Events

October 2017

Thursday, October 26, 9am to 12pm

## **Gardening Seminar—Rainwater Harvesting and Texas Superstars**

Location: 618 S. Chadbourne, San Angelo

Cost: \$25

Instructor: Ron Knight, Master Gardener

Provided by the People/Plant Connection; Learn how to make rainwater harvesting work for your home and landscape, from someone who has done it. Also learn about Texas Superstar Plants—special selections that have been proven to be tough and work well all over Texas. Please call to RSVP: 325-656-3104

Friday, October 27, 12:00pm

## **Lunch N Learn Class - Best Plants for the Concho Valley**

Location: Tom Green County Extension Office

Judge Edd B. Keyes Bldg, 113 W Beauregard, San Angelo

Cost: \$5

Instructor: Allison Watkins

Choosing the right plants goes a long way to creating a landscape that is beautiful without needing a lot of maintenance, water, fertilizer and pesticides. Find out what some of the recommended plants for the Concho Valley

### *Save the Date:*

November 2nd, 6pm-8pm

### **People/Plant Connection—Pumpkin Festival 2017!**

See the giant pumpkin weigh-in, a pumpkin pie contest, activities for kids and more! Will be held at the Southside Rec Center—2750 Ben Ficklin Rd, San Angelo . For more info, call 325-656-3104

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



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