

Concho Valley Horticulture Update

February 2014

Fertilizing the Landscape

Applying fertilizer should mean more than grabbing a bag and throwing it out on the lawn. You need to consider whether plants actually need any fertilizer or not, what kind to use, how much to put out, and when to apply it. First things first, decide whether your plants need it. Applying fertilizer to plants that will grow just as well without it is a waste of time and money.

One way to tell is to just look at the plant. If there is any yellowing, nutrition might be a problem. Also look at annual growth - a young tree should be growing 9 to 12 inches a year, and large mature trees should get from 6 to 9 inches of growth. If your tree doesn't have that much new growth in a year, it may need some fertilizer. If you're not sure, just do a soil test. It's very inexpensive and easy to do, just contact the extension office for help.

Timing is really important because if applied at the wrong time, fertilizer might not be effective or could even harm your plants. In general, it's best to apply fertilizer in late winter just before spring growth begins. Turfgrass has a little different timing though, and shouldn't be fertilized until spring time, when it's actively growing. A good indication is when you've had to mow it twice.

Next, choose what fertilizer to use. If you did a soil test, you'll get a specific recommendation on what to use. Otherwise, a slow release nitrogen fertilizer is a commonly recommended product, and possibly some iron if you've noticed some yellowing or chlorosis symptoms on your plants.

The last step is decide how much to apply. When fertilizing young trees and shrubs, they need frequent, light applications. Mature woody plants should be given 1 to 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of area covered by the canopy. For lawns, 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet is a good application.

When fertilizing large trees, apply it in around the dripline, which is the edge of the canopy.

February To-Do's

- Plant cool season annuals
- Apply Pre-emergent herbicide
- Plant and/or prune rose bushes
- Water 24 to 48 hours before hard freezes to protect plants
- Run irrigation system check
- Prune shade trees and shrubs as needed
- Check mowers and other lawn equipment; sharpen mower blades, get tune-up if needed

Time for Pre-Emergent



Pre-emergent, if applied correctly, will go a long way to keeping lawns weed-free

Roses for your Valentine

Valentine's day is coming up, and if your valentine is a gardener get them a rose bush to plant instead of a bouquet of cut roses. February is a great time of year for rose planting and maintenance.

When choosing which rose to plant, there are a lot of options. In general, many antique roses require less maintenance, they bloom longer, are hardier and more pest resistant, and are a better choice for the average landscape.

One way to choose a rose that has been proven easy to care for and very strong is to plant an EarthKind rose. Go to the website earth-kind.tamu.edu and select the EarthKind roses link. There is a list of 21 rose varieties that have been through rigorous testing and have been very successful plants.

Some good ones would be knockout, Belinda's dream, and carefree beauty. Plant your new rose in a location that has at least 6 hours of full sun,

somewhere that is east facing if possible. Morning sun will dry off the foliage quicker and help reduce disease. Good wind circulation also helps reduce pest problems.

Prepare the soil with compost, then plant the rose. Don't place it too deep - only as deep as the root system.



Many people get scared when it comes to pruning roses, but there is no great mystery or difficulty to prune them. EarthKind roses require less

pruning than most, and should only be pruned if you need to change the shape or size. Just prune to fit the landscape. Don't take off more than a third of the height in one year though.

Plant Spotlight

Primrose Jasmine

Jasminum mesnyi

This old-fashioned beauty will be blooming before you know it, generally flowering in February or March. It is drought tolerant, tough and easy to grow. Just be sure to plant it in a spacious area, as it can grow pretty large.





Prepare for Spring

Spring will be a busy season out in the landscape and garden, so the more you can do now to get ready the better. Spring is the big planting time - even though fall is a great time to grow, most people go with spring gardening. It's probably due to the winter blues and excitement for warm weather.

Just be aware that if we don't have any rain, a large vegetable garden probably won't work well this year. Currently, water restrictions are on once every 14 days. Even if changed to once per week when it turns warmer, a vegetable garden will be hard to maintain.

If you don't want to invest a lot of time or energy in a large garden, you can grow a couple of vegetables such as tomatoes in a flower bed, or potted up in a decorative container. Leaf lettuce can make a nice border for flower beds.

There are lots of reasons to try gardening, such as producing your own food, having cheaper organic food, to have better tasting food than you can get at the store, or just because it's fun and good exercise.

It's still cold outside, but on a nice day you can start getting ready by preparing the soil. Till up soil where you will be planting vegetables and incorporate some composted organic matter. Very few soils in Texas are good for gardening without amendments, especially around here. If your soil is really hard and not conducive to planting, you can bring in good soil for about \$30 a square yard.

Our soil is very heavy with caliche and does not drain well. It helps to build beds up - this can be done with raised beds, or just simply mounding the soil up.



Pre-Emergent for the Landscape

Pre-emergent is a type of herbicide that kills seeds as they germinate. It won't instantly rid a yard of a weed infestation, but if used properly over time pre-emergent will greatly reduce the amount of troublesome weeds in the lawn.

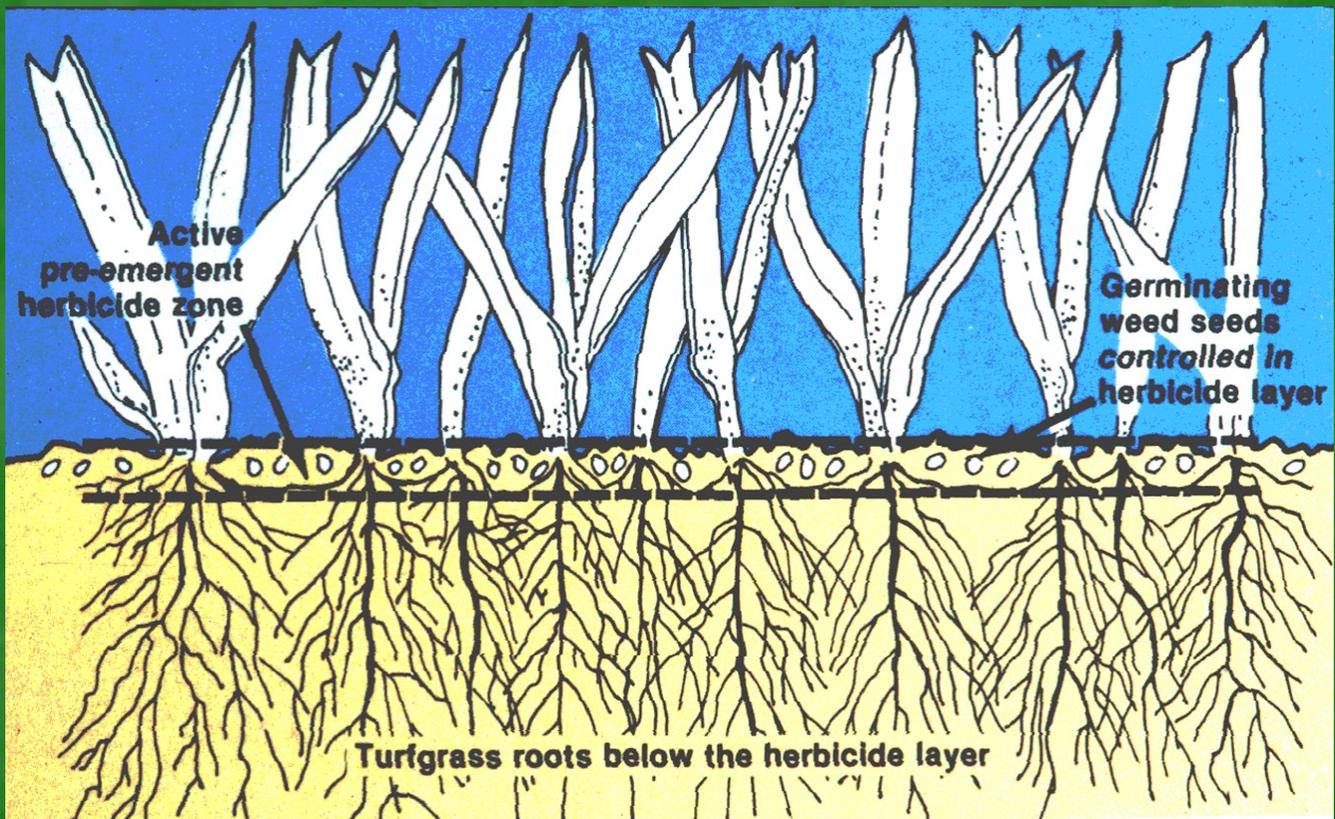
Pre-emergent is most affective against annual weeds, but it can help somewhat even with perennial weeds, by preventing new plants from popping up by seed.

The key to achieving good control with pre-emergent is timing. The product must be applied before weeds come up – but you don't have to be a psychic to know when to apply. Pre-emergent herbicides will last up to several months. For winter weeds, apply in the fall (September) and for spring weeds apply in the winter (right now in February). One additional application can be made in May to prevent grassburs ('stickers') which pop up in the summer, if needed.

Pre-emergent is highly recommended for lawns - it does not harm established, existing plants as long as it is applied following label directions. So there is no danger of harming the grass, shade trees, shrubs, or other landscape plants as long as they are well-established (which just means they need to have healthy root systems and have not been just recently planted).

Applying pre-emergent is not recommended in vegetable gardens, and in shrub and flower beds it depends on specific circumstances; do not use it if you plan on doing any planting there, even transplants. The tender root systems can be damaged. But for well-established beds, where no future planting is planned, it may be an option.

Pre-emergent can be purchased at garden centers, nurseries and horticulture supply stores. Some examples are pendimethalin (trade names Pendulum, Pre-M, Anderson 11-3-11), benefin (trade name Balan) or XL-2G which contains benefin and oryzalin)



Upcoming Classes & Programs

January 2014

Saturday, February 1st, 9am to 11am

Saturday Seminar - Bringing Birds to Your Garden

Offered by the People/Plant Connection

Location: Water Education Center, 417 S. Oaks St.

Cost: \$10

Instructor Charles Floyd will share his expertise in what to plant to bring particular birds to your garden. He will cover the birds that come to the Concho Valley and their habits. Call 656-3104 to reserve your space.



Friday February 21 10, 12pm

Lunch N Learn Class - Spring Forward - Get Ready to Grow!

Location: Tom Green County Commissioner's Courtroom

Judge Edd B. Keyes Bldg, 113 W Beauregard

Cost: \$5

Tuesdays Starting March 4th through May 27th, 12pm to 3pm

Master Gardener Training Course

Location: Tom Green 4-H Center, 3168 N. US Highway 67

Cost: \$175

See attached flyer for details



For more info on any activity, please call the Extension Office at (325) 659-6528

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



Allison Watkins
Texas A&M Agrilife Extension
Tom Green County
113 W Beauregard
San Angelo, TX 76903
325-659-6528

Educational programs conducted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.