

Concho Valley Horticulture Update

July 2014

Oak Wilt

There have been several confirmed cases of Oak Wilt in the San Angelo area. Oak wilt is a deadly fungal disease that can affect almost any kind of oak but is most prevalent in live oaks and red oaks.

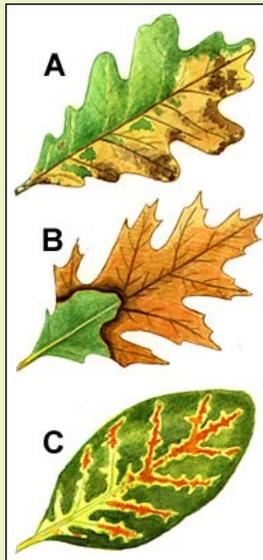
Prevention is the key to keeping trees healthy and to avoid infection; a fungicide called propiconazole (trade name Alamo) is labeled for treatment of oak wilt, but is costly and not guaranteed to work -especially on trees already showing symptoms.

There are several preventative measures that homeowners can do to keep their trees protected. First, prune only when the time is right - the season for pruning oak trees is during the winter. Sap-feeding insects called nitidulid beetles can spread the disease to wounds on freshly pruned trees, but they go dormant in the winter which makes it a safer time to prune.

Another preventative tip is to paint the cuts. Any cheap latex spray paint will work, it doesn't have to be the thick pruning paint. In general, painting wounds is not needed, but oak trees are the exception. Use on all cuts of oak trees to inhibit infection, especially for any limbs cut down in the warm season.

Third, be sure that any equipment used on oak trees is sterilized and cleaned between trees. If you do the work yourself, use rubbing alcohol or a 10% bleach solution; if you hire someone, be sure to ask them to clean tools before working on your oak tree.

Please join us for a free program on preventing, identifying and treating oak wilt. It will be Tuesday, July 8th at 6:30pm at the Tom Green 4-H Center, next door to the animal shelter. For more info, call the Extension Office at 325-659-6528.



Oak wilt symptoms on
A. White oaks
B. Red oaks
C. Live oaks

July To-Do's

- Check melons and squash frequently for ripeness
- Audit irrigation system to check for problems
- Pick okra, peas and peppers often to maintain production.

Check Sprinklers



Early morning is a good time to run the sprinkler system, but run it once in a while during the day so you can make sure it's running properly. Sprinkler heads may break or pop off, causing water-guzzling geysers that make the water bill go up and waste water.

Bees and pollinators

You may have heard in the news about the decline of bees throughout the world, a phenomenon called colony collapse disorder. Bees play a major role in feeding us humans – they don't just make honey that we can eat, they pollinate many crops. About a third of our diet comes from insect pollinated plants, and about 80% of that pollination is done by honeybees.



Many gardeners understand the importance of beneficial insects in the garden, such as bees, butterflies and other pollinators. To get good production from squash plants, peach trees, tomatoes and melons, bees and other pollinators are critical. The reason pollination is so important is because plants will not produce fruit or seeds without fertilization, and many plants need pollen from separate plants to do so.

To help increase pollinators in the garden and improve fruit set of tomatoes, squash and other plants, try doing a few things to help them.

First, design your garden so that there is something blooming all the way from spring through fall. Next, incorporate some plants that are native to our area. Don't get too upset if some of your plants get eaten, such as milk weed or parsley - these are a favorite food for monarch larvae.

Next, avoid pesticides as much as possible. If absolutely required, don't use broad spectrum ones. Use products that are selective and targeted to a specific pest and won't kill everything in the yard.

We are hosting a free educational program open to the public called "All About Bees" that will provide information on bees and how to get started into beekeeping and producing honey. There will even be a tasting of locally produced honey. The class will be at 6pm on Tuesday, July 15th at the A&M Research Center, located at 7887 N. US Highway 87. For more info, contact the extension office at 325-659-6528

Plant Spotlight

Damianita

Chrysactinia mexicana



From April to September damianita is covered with a profusion of bright, golden-yellow flowers. It is a small evergreen shrub with dark green, highly aromatic needle-like leaves;; this compact evergreen plant makes a valuable addition to the landscape. Requires full sun.



Growing Pomegranates

Pomegranates are great landscape plants. They are attractive small trees, have beautiful orange flowers and large, vibrant orange fruit. Besides the decorative aspects, pomegranates are a fun fruit crop to grow and eat.

Some pomegranates have been developed just for the flowers and don't make very good fruit. So if you want to have pomegranates to eat, be sure to check the label and see if it's a good fruiting variety or not. If you can't find a good fruiting variety, we have some planted in demo gardens – they root very easily, so contact the Extension Office if you'd like to get some cuttings.

Pomegranates are a great choice for landscapes in this area because they do well in our hot, dry climate. They don't need as much water as some other fruit crops and aren't very prone to disease and insect problems. Pomegranates also prefer dry air over humidity, which is why they do so well in our landscapes.

Pomegranate plants can get up to 20 to 30 feet tall, but are usually about 15 feet tall.

They will naturally be very bushy and have many trunks, so in order to be a tree will have to be trained.

Pomegranates will do best in full sun, but can take a little bit of shade. They will need to be watered frequently to become established, but once established won't require a whole lot of irrigation. Just give them a deep, thorough watering every few weeks if there has been no rain.

In most cases, pomegranates won't need to be fertilized, but if you see signs of yellowing try adding some nitrogen.

The fruit should be harvested when it becomes fully colored - it will be a very dark orange to red color, and when it has a metallic sound when tapped. Be sure to pick them before they get over-ripe, because they will crack open.

Recommended Varieties:

Surh Anor
Salavatski
Al - sirin - nar
Sumbar



Plants Doing Well Now

We've been under pretty bad drought conditions for several years now. This spring was very hard and we went a long time with no rain. Thank goodness for that miraculous memorial day downpour! We still need to focus on planting only tough plants that are tolerant to heat and drought.

Use this time of year that's hardest on plants to observe neighbor's yards and landscapes around town to see what is performing well, and take note. Some examples are the showy Yellow Bells (a.k.a. Esperanza), vibrant hibiscus, and dependable lantana. Russian sage, bulbine, turks cap, dwarf ruellia and knockout roses are also on the list of plants doing well this summer. Some unique and sometimes hard to find plants to watch out for are Darcy Sage (*salvia darcyi*) and Jerusalem sage (*Phlomis fruticosa*). If you see either of these in a nursery, grab it!

Darcy sage is a beautiful plant with tall red flower spikes, and looks similar to *salvia coccinea* but is larger. Jerusalem sage is not a true sage but is a wonderful hardy perennial with bright yellow flowers.

Some of my favorites that seem to be enduring well include Flame Acanthus, Blackfoot Daisy, sweet potato vine and ornamental grasses such as Mexican Feathergrass.

Wait until fall or next spring and try planting some of these hardy plants, or any others that you see doing well in the area for yourself - summer is not a good time to try and establish new plantings. And remember, even drought tolerant plants will need regular irrigation at first until roots get well established. It really pays off to make a list of plants that look good right now to have a reference for fall or spring planting!

Drought Tolerant Trees

Trees are a vital part of a good home landscape. Excellent large tree options are bur oaks, chinquapin oaks, Chinese pistache and cedar elms. Small trees can also play an important role in the landscape, so don't forget about ornamental flowering trees. They can also help cool homes by casting shade on outside walls. While right now is the worst time of year to plant trees, take note of the ones you like that are performing well and wait until September or October to plant some for yourself. If it can look great in the hottest part of the summer, plant some more of it!



The toughest small tree is probably the desert willow, and the ones in town have been doing really well and are blooming beautifully this year.

Flowers can be pink, purple or white and there are even some seedless varieties available now such as Art's seedless and timeless beauty.

The Texas persimmon is a fun small tree to plant, though it can be hard to find. It has interesting bark, is evergreen and grows in a very interesting wild, twisted form.

When choosing a spot to plant, some careful planning can help maximize the shade that even small trees provide. Place them carefully so they deflect sun off the home and they can help reduce the utility bill in the summer. They can also be great landscape design assets and provide color and interest to the yard.

Classes & Programs

July 2014

Tuesday July 8, 6:30pm

Oak Wilt Prevention, Identification and Treatment

Location: Tom Green 4-H Center

3168 N. US Highway 67 (next door to animal shelter)

No charge to attend



Tuesday July 15, 6:00pm

All About Bees

Location: A&M Agrilife Research & Extension Center

7887 N. US Highway 87, San Angelo TX

No charge to attend

Saturday July 19, 9am

Saturday Seminar - Vegetable Gardening

Location: Water Education Center

417 S. Oakes

Cost: \$10



Friday July 25, 12pm

Lunch N Learn Class - Diagnosing Plant Disease

Location: Tom Green County Commissioner's Courtroom

Judge Edd B. Keyes Bldg, 113 W Beauregard

Cost: \$5

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



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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.