

Concho Valley Horticulture Update

August 2015

Weeds

Weed growth always matches rainfall, or lack thereof. We had an incredible spring with lots of rain, and the massive weed growth reflected that. Now that it has gotten hot, and isn't raining so much, weeds will slow down a bit – but no matter the weather, there is always something that will come up.

During the dry times, there are some weeds that are better able to take advantage of the situation and pop up when others can't. Mesquite trees are one example, and usually pop up in landscapes and gardens in the summer.

Mesquite weeds can be controlled using a mixture of the herbicides Reclaim and Remedy, when doing a leaf spray, or using Remedy mixed in diesel fuel when doing a stem spray. It may take many repeat sprayings to get full control.

For more details on how to control mesquite, contact the extension office at 325-659-6528 for a pamphlet with instructions.

We're predicted to have a rainy September, which would be wonderful, but it might be a good idea to and apply pre-emergent herbicide to the lawn to prevent winter weeds from taking over.



Pre-emergent herbicide is weed-control that kills germinating seedlings. It doesn't prevent seeds from germinating, but kills them when they do. So the weeds seeds are still there, waiting in the soil for some rain to come so they can germinate. Applying pre-emergent has to be done beforehand, since it is a preventative approach. It does not kill existing weeds.

Some examples of good pre-emergent products would be pendimethalin (trade name Pendulum or Pre-M) or something like XL-2G. Just use a fertilizer spreader to apply a layer evenly over the lawn .

There are many other weeds that get into landscapes and gardens, for help identifying and controlling problematic infestations, contact the local Extension Office.

August To-Do's

- Prune roses to stimulate a fall flush of blooms
- Provide water for backyard wildlife - songbirds, butterflies etc.
- Continue to deadhead crape myrtles to stimulate new flowers

Pecan Update

Congrats to our Concho Valley participants who placed in the State Pecan Show!



Douglas and Sarah Wilde—
1st place Burkett
Tom Green County

Chester McCown—3rd place Lakota
Runnels County

Robert Fuessel—3rd place Waco
Tom Green County

LeRoy Olsak—1st place Kiowa
1st place Western
2nd place Wichita
3rd place Schley

Schleicher County

Brian Edmiston—1st place Pawnee
Schleicher County

Fall Vegetable Gardening

Autumn is my favorite time of year to plant vegetables; even though spring is the most popular time to plant a garden, fall is often as good or better for warm season crops like tomato, cucumber and squash. Plus, later in the fall, winter vegetables can be planted such as spinach, broccoli and carrots.

Many home gardeners struggle to grow productive vegetable gardens in the spring and summer. It's a challenge to grow healthy plants in west Texas! But challenging doesn't mean impossible, and sometimes the challenge is what makes it worth doing.

Depending on spring success, some gardeners give up for the summer while others try to keep spring plants alive and going through the summer. Usually the best strategy is to start over fresh in August for warm season vegetables.

It may seem counter productive to pull up mature plants and start over with new transplants, replanting new warm season vegetables for fall production. But summer is really rough on plants, so starting with healthy new plants will usually give higher yields for a fall harvest on certain crops like tomatoes.

The key to getting a good harvest of warm season crops in the fall is to plant large, healthy trans-

plants in late July or August, keep them well watered, and give a little shade if necessary so they don't wilt when first planted. Fertilize with nitrogen to get vigorous growth before cooler weather sets in.

Fall is a great season for vegetables because as the weather becomes milder, pest populations go down and there is less stress on the plants - and it's easier on the gardener too!

Then once autumn really sets in - around September to October, cool-season crops can be seeded. There are many forms of greens that can be grown such as cabbage, leaf lettuce, spinach, swiss chard and kale; and they make a very tasty addition to the dinner table. More options include broccoli, carrots, beets, radishes. Planting should be staggered, seeding a little at a time every two weeks so there can be a regular, steady harvest. Most cool season crops can be planted from September through February.



Plant Spotlight

Mexican Honeysuckle

Justicia spicigera

This perennial is a great hummingbird plant, and grows to about 3-4 feet tall and wide. Does best in full sun, and is low maintenance. Just prune back yearly to keep compact.



Iron Deficiency

I've had a lot of questions about iron deficiency this summer, and have seen lots of plants struggling with small, yellow leaves due to lack of iron.

Iron is an necessary plant nutrient and can be found in our soil, but the high pH and alkalinity of the soil ties it up and it's not available to plants. So iron chlorosis, the name of the symptom, is a common problem.

But in addition to the soil pH, too much or too little water can cause even more nutrient issues. Nutrients are transported along with water up to the canopy of the plant, and if there is not enough water the nutrients won't be transported. Too much water can create water logged soil that also prevents nutrient uptake.

Iron chlorosis is pretty easy to identify, it starts out with striping in the leaves - the veins are green while the leaf tissue between the veins turns yellow. If pro-

longed, the deficiency can progress to brown, necrotic spots and 'burnt' leaf margins.

The normal remedy for iron deficiency is to add iron fertilizer, and not that it's getting hot, water is also important- if you fertilize, it should be watered in well.

Chelated iron will last the longest, but of course is the most expensive type of iron. Chelated iron is just iron that has been chemically treated so that it will stick around longer and won't get tied up in the soil. Plants will have access to it longer.

Also, poor soil quality causes more extreme iron deficiency problems. Plants that tend to struggle for iron will do better in soil that is rich with lots of organic matter, and is loose and well aerated.

Shrubs can be aerated using a garden fork or pitchfork, just gently loosen up the soil around the plants a bit to allow more oxygen in and mulch with a good compost. This can help increase nutrient absorption.



Invasive plants

Most of us would be thrilled to have a plant that would grow



entirely on its own with little to no care, and that would multiply and spread quickly. But if the plant spreads too well, it can be a big problem - these plants fall under the invasive category.

Invasive plants are plants that can spread and grow vigorously outside its natural habitat. There are varying degrees of invasiveness, some plants are so invasive that it's against the law to import them or bring them across state lines.

Some of the most noxious invasive plants can be found at the website plants.usda.gov. These are plants like giant reed, water hyacinth, kudzu, and Chinese tallow tree.

Then there are other plants that could technically be termed invasive, but they are staple landscape plants that are still used in the yard. These are used as landscape ornamentals because they are easy to grow and beautiful. Just be careful if you choose to plant them, and keep in mind that they might take over if not kept under control.

English ivy is one example, it is commonly planted as a groundcover because it grows fast and fills in quickly. But English Ivy can take over beds and smother other plants, so be careful.

Some other desirable plants that need to be watched are blue mist flower, flame acanthus, autumn clematis, and Mexican petunia. These are great plants, but keep in mind that they spread easily.

Lantana and artemesia are common landscape plants that can get out of hand too. These are wonderful plants that provide beautiful color and are easy to grow, and they don't sprout up everywhere as much as the others, but can get very large and overtake other plants.

Planting Wildflowers

We had a great wildflower spring this year, and if you want to try to repeat that next year you might do a little planning ahead. Spring is still a long way away, but wildflowers should be planted around late August or September, and here are the steps for success:

First, get seeds from a reliable source. Seed should be fresh to ensure good germination, so purchase from a company you trust or harvest seeds yourself. Some are even available as transplants, such as gailardia and mealy cup sage.

If planting in flower beds, remove all existing vegetation and lightly till the soil. For lawns, wildflowers can be planted over Bermuda or buffalo grass but not St. Augustine or zoysia. Just lightly scrape the lawn and sow the seeds.

Wildflowers must have good soil contact so the tilling step is very important.

If planting seeds of different sizes, mix them one part seed to 4 parts sand to help even the distribution. Use a handheld rotary spreader and evenly cover the area to be planted.

Once the seed falls into the soil, tamp it down with your feet. Water the area lightly once, just to settle the seeds into the soil. The wildflowers should do fine on rainfall, but if there is drought during the fall, lightly water them occasionally.

Throughout the fall and winter, try to pull broadleaf weeds to prevent them from competing with the wildflowers. This can be tough, because weeds can be easily confused with the wildflower plants. Check out an online or printed wildflower catalog, they usually have pictures of what the small seedling looks like so you'll know not to pull it up. Some good seed and information sources include Native American Seed and Wildseed Farms, both based out of Texas.



Classes & Programs

August 2015

Saturday, August 1, 9:00am

Saturday Seminar - Heirloom Vegetables and Antique Roses

Instructor - Allison Watkins

Location: San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, 1 Love Street

Cost: \$10

From the People/Plant Connection. Sometimes you can't improve on mother nature, learn about growing these tried and true favorites!



Tuesday, August 18, 6pm

Backyard Basics Seminar Series - Food Preservation

You don't have to live in the country to grow your own fresh food! Join us for a new series of classes on urban production. See attached flyer for details .

Location: A&M Center, 7887 N. US Highway 87, San Angelo

Friday, August 21, 12:00pm

Lunch N Learn Class - Fall Vegetable Gardening

Instructor - Allison Watkins

Location: Tom Green County Commissioner's Courtroom
Judge Edd B. Keyes Bldg, 113 W Beauregard

Cost: \$5

Fall is just as good time as spring to plant a vegetable garden! Learn about what to plant, and when.

Save the Date!

The Concho Valley Master Gardeners are pleased to be hosting their 4th annual Fall Landscaping symposium and have an incredible lineup of speakers, including Neil Sperry! Seating is limited and attendees must pre-register to attend. See the attached flyer and visit <http://txmg.org/conchovalley/> to register.

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



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Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status.