

Concho Valley Horticulture Update

September 2014

Fall Lawn Care

We have been blessed with a good year so far, but some plants will need more than a few months of good weather to make up for years of previous stressful weather. Some trees, shrubs and lawns may be looking a lot healthier and happier going into autumn, but there are others that are still thin and damaged looking – these might just need more time and TLC in order to recover.

Fall is an important time of year to spend some effort taking care of the lawn. Besides irrigation and mowing, which should continue but slow down as temperatures cool off, it's a critical time of year for fertilization and weed control.



Fall lawn fertilization will depend on the weather, and how soon it starts cooling down. But usually mid to late September, and no later than October 1st, is a good time frame. Fall fertilization is important because it improves winter hardiness and helps the grass come back faster in the spring. It also helps the grass be nice and dense through the winter, even while dormant, which helps choke out winter weeds.

The type of fertilizer for the fall should be a soluble, readily available nitrogen source, not slow release. Apply one pound of nitrogen or less per thousand square feet of lawn. For instance, a fertilizer with 21% nitrogen would require about 4.5 pounds of fertilizer per thousand square feet of lawn.

For weed control, a good preventative measure is the application of pre-emergent. This should be done around September or October to prevent cool season weeds. Pre-emergent is a herbicide that does not kill existing plants, but kills seedlings as they germinate. So don't apply a pre-emergent in an area that seeds will be planted in during the near future. And remember to always follow the recommended application rates for fertilizer and pre-emergent. Just because a little bit is good, more is not better – too much of either product can cause more harm than good.

September To-Do's

- Purchase bulbs while selection is good, but wait until November to plant
- Plant wildflower seeds
- Divide spring blooming perennials such as iris and daylily
- Adjust irrigation as temperatures cool down

Pecan Update

From the Texas Pecan Pest Management Newsletter
By Bill Ree



Congratulations to local pecan grower LeRoy Olsak, of Eldorado Pecans! He won the Commercial Grand Champion at the Texas State Pecan show!

Nacono pecan:
39.79 nuts/lb
57.02% kernel

Another local grower, Brian Edmiston, won first place in the Pawnee division:
39.79 nuts/lb
59.65% kernel

Protecting Trees from Construction



We can all see how much building and construction there is going on around San Angelo, and I have received questions about how to protect trees with construction going on nearby. We all want to keep our trees healthy, and they need some special attention where's there's heavy equipment in the area.

Things like creating a paved driveway, running utility lines, raising or lowering the grade, and building a foundation too close to existing trees can damage or kill them. Most of a tree's roots are close to the soil surface because that's where they get water and oxygen. Covering the roots with soil, pavement or buildings can suffocate them and prevent them from taking up water.

A general rule is 1/3 - if you are going to cover or disturb less than 1/3 of the trees root system, it should be ok. More than that, and you'll need to take some special precautions.

If the roots will be covered, one option is to install a venting system around the roots. This can be done with piping, coarse gravel or rocks and other porous materials. If the grade will be lowered, a retaining wall should be built around the

tree to keep the soil at the original level near the tree. It is a good idea to thin the tree before lowering the grade to decrease its size and prevent as much stress as possible.

If you would like to know more about protecting trees during grade changes, contact the extension office for a publication at 325-659-6522.

It's also very important to not let heavy equipment roll over the root zone of trees, causing compaction which can damage or even kill trees.

If you are worried about keeping a tree healthy during construction, be sure to get a tree expert or arborist to take a look.

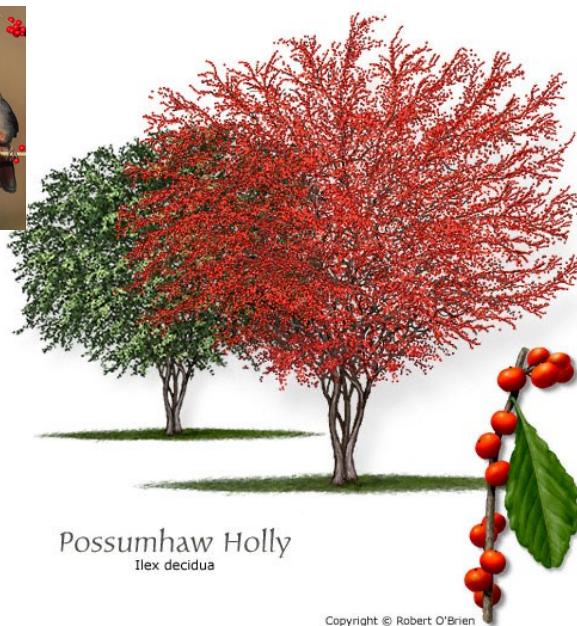


Plant Spotlight

Possumhaw holly *Ilex decidua*



Female plants with their red, orange, or yellow fruit can become a blaze of color in the fall and winter landscape. Can adapt to a wide range of soil conditions and can be grown in shade, but fruits best in partial shade to full sun. Females need a male pollinator for good berry set



Possumhaw Holly
Ilex decidua

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Butterfly Gardening

Next month the Monarch butterflies will be making their way through to Mexico on their annual migration. We are lucky to be right on their path, and depending on circumstances such as weather, we might get to see tons of monarchs in October.

It is fun and easy to create a habitat for them and other types of butterflies in your yard that will attract and provide nectar for these insects.

Butterfly gardening is great for anyone, and is an especially fun activity to do with kids. Many of the plants used in butterfly gardens are easy to plant and take care of, and kids really enjoy it.

There are three simple things to consider when attempting to create a butterfly garden. Number one is to find and plant flowers that butterflies need for the nectar. Some examples are: anisacanthus, blue mistflower, butterfly bush, butterfly weed, gay feather, lantana, all the salvias, and verbena.

Also plant some dill, fennel, parsley, and passionflower to provide food for the caterpillars. You'll have to be ok with letting these caterpillar food plants be eaten, that's the whole point of them being in the butterfly garden.

Try to reduce or eliminate the use of insecticides overall in your yard or garden. You will also need to provide a small mud puddle for the butterflies in order for them to get some essential nutrients. A dripping water faucet or edge of a pond will do nicely.

When planting, group certain plants together to make the plants more noticeable, and deadheading the flowers will help the plants continue to bloom and is good for butterflies.

One last thing - Drip irrigation is better for butterfly gardens; sprays and sprinklers can wash away the nectar from flowers.



Preparing Potted Plants to be Overwintered

Houseplants are a great way to brighten up the inside of a home, but can be tricky to care for. It's a good idea to bring them outside for the summer to get some fresh air, sunshine and to flush the potting mix with a water hose. If you got your plants outside for a summer break, it's going to be time to start getting them ready to come back in soon.

Houseplants, patio plants, and any tropical plant that is not cold hardy will need protection from the cold winter temperatures, but it's best to not put them through a sudden change. Start by moving them to an area with lower light and reducing the amount of water given. Even tropical, evergreen plants need a break in the winter and need to go dormant with reduced growth.

Leave the plants in part shade until it cools off, around mid-October. Then place them inside the house near a bright sunny window.

Sometimes large summer patio plants are just too much of a hassle to bring in and out every year, so you might try propagating off of them instead. This is a more space-friendly way to preserve plants year after year. Try taking cuttings, about 6 inches long and rooting them in small pots of potting mix.

For tropical patio plants that grew too large to bring inside this winter, try air layering. Air layering is a method of propagating that involves rooting branch of a plant without cutting it off. What you do is cut off a small portion of the bark around a stem or branch, wrap it in moist sphagnum moss and wrap it in plastic, sealing in the moisture. Once roots form, cut it off and plant it.

Aphid Honeydew

There have been questions lately about how to deal the sap that drips down from pecan and other types of trees. Actually, the sticky stuff is not sap straight from the tree. It's called honeydew, and it's a sugary substance secreted by aphids as they feed on plants.

Aphids are a cooler season insect, they come out in the spring and fall more than in the summer time. They are pretty small so you might not notice them right away, but if you look close they are oval shaped and can be black, yellow, red, orange or green. They are really invasive and can come in such large numbers that another common name for them is plant lice.

Lady bugs love to eat aphids and can eat quite a bit. Some homeowners purchase and release ladybugs in order to control the pests, sometimes that method can help but not always.

Usually, aphids do not kill or severely harm a tree. You can just let them run their course and let natural predators take care of them. But if you are having problems with the sticky honeydew and want to get rid of the aphids, there are some different options.

First is to use a hose-end sprayer to apply a chemical insecticide such as malathion. For pecan trees, there is a 3 day pre harvest interval, that just means to wait three days between applying the chemical and harvesting the nuts.

But if you have large trees, spraying will be hard or not an option at all. Another way is a chemical called Imidaclorpid. It's a systemic product that you apply to the ground around the drip line and water in. One example is Bayer Advanced tree and shrub insect control.

Classes & Programs

September 2014

Saturday September 6, 9am



Saturday Seminar - Rainwater Harvesting

Instructor: Kay Thompson, owner - Concho Natives,

Location: Water Education Center

417 S. Oakes

Cost: \$10

Hosted by the People/Plant Connection: It's never too late to start collecting rainwater.

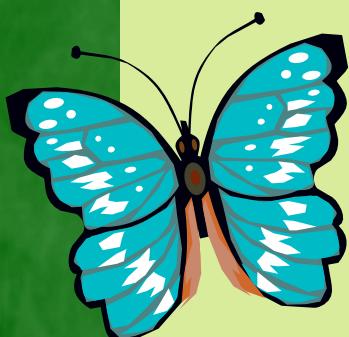
Find out how it works and how to know which system is best for your watering needs.

Call 656-3104 to reserve your space and assure materials.

Saturday, September 13th

Fall Landscaping Symposium

Join us for this fun program with top-notch speakers from around the state! See attached flyer for details or visit txmg.org/conchovalley/



Friday September 19, 12pm

Lunch N Learn Class - Butterflies and Herbs

Instructor - Allison Watkins

Location: Tom Green County Commissioner's Courtroom

Judge Edd B. Keyes Bldg, 113 W Beauregard

Cost: \$5

Fall is a wonderful time to work in the yard and garden - in this combo lesson, learn how to attract butterflies to the yard and also how to grow tasty herbs.



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



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