

Concho Valley Horticulture Update

May 2019

Spring Landscaping Tips

A deep soaking rain is always such an encouragement for west Texas gardeners! The recent widespread rain will help plants have good vigorous spring growth and is great for our reservoirs too. After a nice heavy rainfall like that, plants won't need irrigation for a while so be sure to turn the sprinkler system off.

A great resource to use to know when plants do need to be watered is the website WaterMyYard.org. It is a service provided by Texas A&M University, that utilizes a local ET weather station that was installed by the City of San Angelo through grant funding. The weather station measures evapotranspiration (ET) which is the total amount of water lost from plant leaves and from soil. Sign up to receive a weekly email that says how long to run your sprinkler system that week, to get just the right amount of water that plants need.

The rain will not only help lawns and landscape plants grow, but will also increase weeds. Frequent mowing will help the lawn stay dense and keep weed populations down, and three to four inches of mulch in planting beds will reduce weeds there. Keep an eye out for insect pests that like new plant growth, like aphids. Wash them off with a strong stream of water, or use insecticidal soap to control them.

This is a good time of year to fertilize lawns, shrubs, flowers, vegetables, etc. A slow-release nitrogen will help them during this spring period of active growth. A soil test can be done through the soil lab at Texas A&M to know for sure what nutrients are needed and how much – visit the website <http://soiltesting.tamu.edu/> and print the homeowners submital form for instructions.

When planting new plants, especially perennials and evergreens that are expected to last long term in the yard, use good plant selection. Choose plants that are well-adapted and can do well in the local climate and soil. Check out the Master Gardener demonstration garden at the Tom Green 4-H building, located at 3168 N. US Highway 67 in San Angelo to see some good examples of plants that do well here. Also visit the Earth-Kind Perennial Trial at the south end of Kirby Park, and the Earth-Kind Rose Trial at the north end of Kirby Park in San Angelo to get ideas for plants to buy that would fit well into your landscape.

May To-Do's

- Adjust irrigation schedule as needed as temperatures warm up
 - Visit the website watermyyard.org to receive weekly watering recommendations
- Apply glyphosate ('Roundup') carefully around bed edges to keep bermuda grass from creeping in
- Replenish mulch around beds to conserve water and maintain plant health

Pecan Update



Keep an eye out for pecan nut casebearers, a small moth that damages nuts in the spring. Sign up for the Concho Valley Pecan Update newsletter to receive the announcement for the best time to spray.

Call 325-659-6522

Texas Superstars

When picking out what to plant this spring, be sure to choose plants that can thrive in our climate. Good plant selection is even more important than soil preparation – for example, plants that need acidic soil like blueberries and azaleas won't survive in alkaline soil, and plants that need cold winters like lilacs won't handle our warm climate. Landscapes in west Texas need plants that can handle alkaline soil, hot temperatures and drought. Visit the website texassuperstar.com to see a list of both perennials and annuals that have been research-proven to do well in Texas by Texas A&M University.

The newest plant to earn the Texas Superstar designation is 'New Look' celosia. It is a warm-season annual with bright red plumes that soar above the dark, bronze foliage. It prefers sun and will tolerate light shade, and is adapted to most soils but needs good drainage. The flowers are very long-lasting and continually produce



throughout the summer season up until the first frost. It makes a great addition to the landscape as annual color in beds and containers, and makes a nice cut flower for arrangements.

Other Texas Superstars to keep an eye out for include Victoria Red Grape, Brazilian Red Hots Alternanthera, Whopper Begonias, and Butterfly Deep Pink Pentas

Plant Spotlight

Wall Germander

Teucrium chamaedrys

This beautiful summer flowering evergreen is tough and does not require a lot of work! It grows in a mounding form to about 18" tall, making it a fairly compact plant that doesn't take over the bed.





Spring Pecan Care

Pecans are popular and beloved trees in San Angelo and the Concho Valley. Though they are not exactly low maintenance they can make a handsome addition to a home landscape; and they not only provide shade, but a delicious edible crop as well. Some of the most important maintenance tasks to keep in mind this time of year to maintain tree health and provide a good crop in the fall include nitrogen fertilizer, zinc fertilizer, irrigation and pecan nut casebearer control.

Young trees will need at least seven to ten gallons of water per week, and older trees will need as much as 50 inches of precipitation annually. Since we average around 20 inches of rainfall in the Concho Valley, that means a significant amount of irrigation is needed to maintain large trees and grow a nice crop of pecans. Adequate moisture is needed all through the growing season in order for the nuts to grow to full size, then fill well with kernel, and for the shuck to split open at the end of the season. So reliable, steady watering is important.

In order to count on a good crop of nuts, keep an eye out for the pecan nut casebearer in the spring, and the pecan weevil later in the summer. The pecan nut casebearer is a small moth that lays eggs in the developing nuts in the spring and can reduce the crop load. If the tree has a heavy crop set, it's ok to not treat because an overloaded tree could benefit from a crop reduction. If treatment is needed though, the timing of the spray is very precise. We manage a mailing list regarding the proper timing and recommended spray dates for case bearers, just contact the extension office at 325-659-6528 to sign up.

Zinc and nitrogen are also important considerations this time of year. Zinc should be sprayed on the leaves during active growth and nitrogen fertilizer should be broadcast on the ground around the drip line and watered in. Apply one pound of 21-0-0 fertilizer per inch of trunk diameter, or $\frac{3}{4}$ lb 33-0-0 fertilizer per inch diameter.

Plant Pumpkins

Pumpkins are a fun crop for home gardeners to try and May through June is a good time to get them planted, especially to grow large pumpkins that need a long growing season. Fall is the last thing on a gardener's mind since it's still spring, but to have home-grown pumpkins for fall decorating, baking and carving, it's time to get them started. In the home garden, pumpkins are especially fun to grow with children – the seeds are large and easy to plant, they germinate fast, and the plant grows quickly. A pumpkin patch can be a good science lesson and kids can measure growth and chart progress as the plant and fruit grow.

Many plants in the squash family (aka cucurbits) do well in our hot summers – besides pumpkins, other good options to try are watermelons, cantaloupes, and various other squashes such as yellow summer squash, cucumber and acorn squash.

Depending on the type of pumpkin, it can take anywhere from two and a half months to four months to grow a mature pumpkin – the larger the variety, the longer it takes. So be sure to get them in the ground soon to ensure there's enough time to get plenty of mature pumpkins. Choose varieties to plant based on what they will be used for – some examples include Dill's Atlantic Giant for large pumpkins, Small Sugar for baking, and Magic Lantern for carving.

The plants are very large and will take up quite a bit of space, so there needs to be plenty of room for them to spread out in a plot with full sun. The soil should be well drained, so till in some compost if it's heavy and compacted.

The pumpkin seedlings will need to be kept moist when germinating; then decrease the frequency but increase the amount given each time as the plants grow. Use drip irrigation to be efficient with water use, and also apply mulch after the plants emerge and become established.

The People/Plant Connection, a local nonprofit organization, hosts a giant pumpkin growing contest each year, and is giving out free giant pumpkin seeds. Contact the People/Plant Connection for more info at 656-3104, or stop by the Extension Office at 113 W. Beauregard to pick up some seeds.

Diagnosing Plant Problems

A common question that comes up frequently is “what is wrong with my (insert plant here)? Whether it’s a lawn that is struggling with dead spots, a tree showing stress, or a wilted vegetable, any time plants are in poor health it raises a red flag and homeowners want to know what to do to fix it. Diagnosing plant problems can be challenging and is rarely as simple as a quick look and a one-step recommendation to cure it. It’s almost like being a crime scene investigator, because there are a lot of questions to ask and details to sort through.

Three broad types of common causes of plant stress are insect, disease, and cultural practice. Insects and diseases are often the easiest to figure out because there can be very clear symptoms. The first thing to check is to see if there are any visible insects on the plant, or evidence of them having been there such as webworm webbing or spider mite debris. If there are insects damaging the plant, they must be correctly identified to effectively control.

Also take a close look at any visible signs on the plant such as leaf spots, powdery substances, cankers, lesions, galls or mosaic patterns. These can be indicators of disease pests. If both insect and disease have been ruled out, the other possibility is cultural problem – basically, what is the environment like for the plant and how well has it been cared for. This is harder to figure out because there are so many factors that affect plants - soil type, nutrients and fertilizer, sun or shade, water, weed killers, weather, and so on.

When trying to determine what is causing plant stress, first consider whether the plant is in the correction environment and is receiving the right amount of light and water, has good drainage, and is adapted to the local soil type and climate. It may sound simple, but the wrong plant that is not well adapted for the area, or even a well-adapted plant in the wrong spot is a frequent cause of poor plant performance. Other simple but common causes can be over or under watering, poor soil (heavy and compacted), or misusing pesticides.

If a disease is suspected, the Texas A&M Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab is a great resource for identifying the pathogen. There are many diseases that can affect plants and a correction identification of the specific pathogen is key in order to come up with a treatment plan. To submit a sample, visit <https://plantclinic.tamu.edu/>.

Lawn Pests

Two of the most frequent lawn problems that homeowners ask about are take-all root rot disease, which is showing up this time of year, and khakiweed which will start showing up later in the season. Take-all root rot is a fungal disease that can affect any type of turf but is seen a lot in St. Augustine lawns. Like the name says, it causes the roots to decay; symptoms usually show up in the spring and early summer. The initial symptom is a yellow color to the grass that eventually turns brown, and the lawn gradually thins out leaving large dead patches.

The best treatment for take-all root rot is the application of sphagnum peat moss at the rate of one to two bales per 1,000 square feet. If the disease is prevalent, the application of a turf fungicide such as azoxystrobin (trade name Heritage) is also helpful. Take-all is an opportunistic pathogen, meaning it most often only affects stressed turfgrass – for example excessive shade, temperature extremes, improper fertilization or improper irrigation. So prevention starts with best management practices and healthy root development.

Khakiweed (*Alternanthera pungens*) is not prevalent yet this early in the season but is in my opinion one of the worst weeds that we deal with in west Texas landscapes; homeowners that have struggled with it in the past should get a head start and make plans for prevention and control now. Khakiweed grows flat on the ground with oval shaped leaves and it produces extremely annoying burs. There has been little research done on control, but broadleaf post-emergent herbicides can help – try a product that has a combination of 2,4-D with mecoprop, carfentrazone, dicamba, or metsulfuron (for example, Fertilome brand Weed Free Zone). Apply early when the plants start to emerge, when they are still small; large mature plants will not be easily controlled.

Khakiweed is a perennial, meaning it comes back from roots so pre-emergent will not totally control it – but pre-emergent is still very helpful if applied in the late winter to prevent more plants from coming up by seed. Khakiweed is also very opportunistic and grows well in bare spots and thinned out turf, so good turf management will help prevent this pest. Don’t scalp the lawn or mow too low, as the weed loves to grow out flat on the ground. Raise the mower and cut the grass a little higher so the turf can shade it out if needed.

Upcoming Events

May 2019

Thursday, May 9, 2:00pm-5:00pm

Gardening Seminar—Insects

[Location: People/Plant Connection Headquarters, Wells Fargo Building Basement, 36 W. Beauregard](#)

Cost: \$25

Speaker: Linda Rowe

Hosted by the People/Plant Connection; Learn about insects in the garden and how to recognize the good and bad ones Also learn about how to control pests and protect the beneficial insects. Please call to RSVP: Susan Stanfield 325-656-3104

Friday, May 17, 12:00pm

Lunch N Learn Class - Rainwater Harvesting

[Location: People/Plant Connection Headquarters, Wells Fargo Building Basement, 36 W. Beauregard](#)

Cost: \$5

Speaker: Allison Watkins

Hosted by the People/Plant Connection; Learn how to capture and use rainwater for landscape use! Rainwater is great for plants and also is a good way to conserve our municipal water sources. For more info call Susan at 325-656-3104

Save the date:

Saturday June 29, 9am to 12pm

Water Conservation Seminar

[Location: Tom Green 4-H Center, 3168 US Highway 67, San Angelo](#)

Cost: Free

Speakers: Allison Strube, City of San Angelo; Kay Thompson, CVMG; Allison Watkins, CEA—Horticulture
Learn about the City of San Angelo's water resources, landscape water conservation, and how to design rain gardens and dry creek beds

FMI call 325-659-6522

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



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