

Concho Valley HORTICULTURE UPDATE

JUNE 2012

SUMMER LANDSCAPE COLOR



Gaura

Summer is not the ideal planting time - but for spots in the landscape that could use a bright pop of color, there are a few Texas tough plants that can usually handle the rough summer heat. Bear in mind that even tough plants will need lots of care to get established.

Be sure to water appropriately, use mulch and try to plant on an overcast day or at least when there is not a lot of wind. Some good summer color plants for west Texas include zinnia, esperanza (yellow bells), lantana, salvia, gaura, Mexican bush sage, flame acanthus, marigold and moss rose.



Mexican Bush Sage



Moss Rose



Marigold



Flame Acanthus

JUNE TO-DO'S

- Continue to dead-head flowers
- Replenish mulch as needed
- Keep beds weeded to eliminate competition for water
- Watch for chinch bug & grub damage in lawns

JUMBO GRASSHOPPER INVASION



Giant grasshoppers have been a major problem for those in rural areas near mesquite forests. Apply carbaryl as a barrier, or simply wait until mid-June when populations start declining.

SOIL SOLARIZATION

Pests can be a huge pain for gardeners, especially in vegetable garden settings where many chemicals can't be used. Soil solarization is one possible solution to be considered. Soil solarization means using clear plastic and the heat of the sun to kill soil borne pests.

Soil solarization does not completely eliminate all organisms, but it greatly reduces their numbers in the rooting area near the soil surface to levels that do not cause significant plant damage.

Solarization can be effective against weed seeds, nematodes, soil borne insects and diseases.



To solarize a garden plot or planting bed, the area must be tilled to seed bed quality - that is, until the soil is well tilled and smooth, and there are no

soil clods left. Then the area should be moistened and clear plastic laid on top. Use clear, UV stable plastic sheeting that is about 0.5 mils thick - flexible enough to stretch across the bed. The edges need to be buried under 5 or 6 inches of soil to prevent the plastic from blowing or tearing.

After the process is complete and the plastic is removed, be careful not to disturb the soil. The planting bed needs to be ready to plant when the plastic is laid for two reasons; first - loose, well tilled soil will be sterilized more effectively. And two - if the soil is disturbed after removing the plastic, pests can be brought back up to the surface. Just carefully plant the new seeds or transplants without bringing up deep soil.

You can use soil sterilization in many landscape areas, but only where there will not be any plants for about two months during the summer. Soil solarization takes about 6 to 8 weeks and there cannot be any plant materials in the area to be solarized. If you had pest problems in the vegetable garden this spring, now is the perfect time to try solarization this summer and plant a fall garden instead.

PLANT SPOTLIGHT

Esperanza - *Tecoma stans* 'Gold Star'

Gold Star Esperanza is a spectacular heat-tolerant native perennial with very showy masses of yellow blooms all summer long. It is very pest tolerant and looks good as an accent plant or in mass. It requires full sun, and reaches about 4 feet tall and 3 feet wide.





POLLINATOR INSECTS

To be healthy and successful, a landscape or garden must be full of life, and not with just plants. There need to be microorganisms in the soil, earthworms, insects and other things to reach full potential.

While there are lots of pest insects, there are also some that we can't do without such as pollinators. They are a very important part of a good garden.

The most commonly known pollinators are bees and butterflies, but there are others such as hummingbirds, beetles, ants, wasps, and moths. Bees pollinate the largest number of plant species, but all are important.

Some examples of plants that need pollinators would be squash, peaches, tomatoes and melons.

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, and also some old fashioned plants. And 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.

Finally, provide a source of water for pollinators to drink out of. Butterflies like a shallow saucer buried to the rim in a sunny spot, filled with pine bark or stones and water.



EDIBLE LANDSCAPE

Large-scale row crop vegetable gardening may not be for everyone, but what many people don't know is that they can have a wonderful harvest just from the home landscape.

Whether it be incorporating a tomato plant in a flower bed, planting a few herbs near the kitchen door, planting a fruit tree for an accent plant or simply finding out what existing ornamental landscape plants are good to eat, there are lots of ways to maximize yard space and make some delicious, interesting meals.

Fruit trees such as peach or apricot have gorgeous spring blooms and make a wonderful addition to the landscape. And while ornamental pears are popular small trees, fruiting pears are actually better suited for the area and are easier to care for than non-bearing.

The flowers of redbud trees are edible, along with many landscape flowers. It's important to not eat flowers from plants that have been treated with pesticides, but if grown in your own yard without chemicals they make a real conversation starter at dinner. To the right is a list of a few ideas to get you started, be sure to never ingest plant material unless it's properly identified and you are positive it's safe.

Attractive Edible Plants

Trees:

Redbud

Apple

Apricot

Peach

Plum

Pear

Fig

Edible Flowers:

Pansy

Rose

Daylily

Marigold

Hibiscus

Chrysanthemum

Dianthus

Gladiolas



Impatiens

Sunflower

Violets

Herbs:

Lavender

Rosemary

Thyme

Sweet marjoram

Oregano

Basil

Other:

Grapes

Asparagus

Greens:

Cabbage

Kale

Spinach

Swiss Chard

Nasturtium Ravioli Antipasto Salad



Upcoming CLASSES & PROGRAMS

JUNE 2012

Friday June 15, 12pm

Lunch N Learn Class - Herb Gardening

Location: Tom Green County Commissioner's Courtroom

Judge Edd B. Keyes Bldg, 113 W Beauregard

Cost: \$5. For more info, call 325-659-6522



Saturday June 23, 9am - 12pm

Landscape Drought Management

Location: Tom Green 4-H Center

3168 N US Highway 67

Cost: \$15. For more info, call 325-659-6522

Scan with smartphone to
get map to 4-H Center



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



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