

# MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

DECEMBER 2016

## PLANT QUESTIONS

**My Christmas cactus blooms heavily but once the first crop of buds bloom, it quits.** You are probably depriving the plant of needed moisture and fertilizer. The plant should be kept very moist during growth and flowering. At other times it should be allowed to dry between waterings.

**Will container grown geraniums make it through the winter outside?** No. They need to be protected during freezing weather.

**Why isn't plastic as good as fabric in preventing freeze damage?** When foliage touches the plastic the cold transfers directly to the plant and kills it as quickly as direct exposure. If there is an insulating layer, such as warm air when the plastic is mounted on a frame of a combination of cloth and plastic, then plastic becomes an effective protector.

If you have gardening or landscaping questions we have the answers. Just ask any of the friendly, knowledgeable, and experienced nursery staff at Milberger's Nursery.



**Primula** is a spectacular winter bloomer. The flowers have unbelievable deep intense color: red, yellow, white, scarlet and blue. The foliage is also attractive — the leaves are dark green and crinkly. The variety "Acaulis" grows just like pansies with leaves and blooms close to the ground.

## WINTER GARDENING EXPERTISE

### Choose Primula for Intense Winter Color

Primula is a spectacular winter bloomer. Primula, also called primrose, grow much like pansies. They are relatively short plants (8 to 12 inches) and form clumps that are covered with blooms until hot weather arrives. Primula, however, requires shade to survive and offer more striking bloom colors than pansies. They do not need the direct light but can tolerate some. Primulas maintain blooms every day as long as temperatures remain cool. An essential part of primula care is to protect the plants from pill bugs, slugs and snails. The bloom colors are unbelievably intense, no subtlety here.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE THREE)

Our web site and the email version of this newsletter contain many color photographs, how-to-do-it diagrams, more complete articles, links to many gardeners references and many more answers to your gardening and landscape questions. Visit [www.MilbergerNursery.com](http://www.MilbergerNursery.com) to sign up. We respect your privacy and we will not share your address or information with anyone not associated with this newsletter.

**DECEMBER GARDENING EVENTS**

**Sat., Dec 3 all day**

**Milberger's Annual Christmas Open House.** Swing into the holiday season. Let the kids enjoy some fun activities while you pick the perfect Christmas tree, poinsettia, decorations or gift for the holiday. Photos with Santa. Ride the Little Red Choo-Choo. Caroling with the Sweet Adelines. Hot chocolate, wassail, candy canes. Fresh cut Christmas trees. Garlands, wreaths, Poinsettias, decorations and unique gifts for the gardeners on your list. (210) 497-3760.

**Sun. Dec 4- all day**

**Milberger's Annual Cowboy Christmas.** Cool Music and Hot Chili. Live music with the Texas Weather Band from 11am 'til 3pm. Chili by Prize Winning Chef Mark Hoffman (Donations to the Food Bank are matched by Milberger's). Hot chocolate, pop corn, wassail, Moon Bounce and Choo-choo rides in an Western-theme Holiday celebration at the nursery. (210) 497-3760.

**Mon. Dec 12- 6:00pm**

**San Antonio Rose Society Christmas Dinner and Awards Presentation.** San Antonio Garden Center, (210) 698-8440

**Holiday Break:** There is no **Kids Gardening Class** in November or December. Classes will resume in January and continue on the last Saturday of each month throughout the year.

**Find more Gardening Events – visit [www.MilbergerNursery.com](http://www.MilbergerNursery.com)**



To find us: Take the Bulverde Exit off of Loop 1604. The entrance to Milberger's is next to the Valero gas station.

**Milberger's Landscape Nursery**

Open 9:00 to 6:00 Monday to Saturday  
And 10:00 to 5:00 on Sundays

3920 North Loop 1604  
San Antonio, TX 78247  
(210) 497-3760

Or on the World Wide Web at  
[www.milbergernursery.com](http://www.milbergernursery.com)  
[nursery@milbergersa.com](mailto:nursery@milbergersa.com)

**Milberger's Nursery  
December Features**

*You are invited to our*  
**Annual Christmas  
Open House Weekend  
Saturday, Dec 3**

*Come and get into the holiday season. Let the kids enjoy some fun activities while you pick the perfect Christmas tree, poinsettia, decorations or gift for the holiday.*



**HOT CHOCOLATE ~ WASSAIL ~ CANDY CANES  
FRESH CUT CHRISTMAS TREES ~ DECORATIONS  
GARLANDS WREATHS ~ POINSETTIAS**

*And Unique gifts for the gardeners on your list  
Visit our web site for details, times and updates*



**MILBERGER'S  
COWBOY  
CHRISTMAS  
Sun., Dec 4**



**COOL MUSIC AND HOT CHILI**

Enjoy a bowl of delicious **HOT CHILI** prepared by PRIZE WINNING BBQ CHEF, MARK HOFFMAN. Noon until the pot runs out. A **donation** from food purchases go directly to the SAN ANTONIO FOOD BANK. Music by **THE TEXAS WEATHER BAND** 11am 'til 3pm **SANTA CLAUS**, train rides, pop corn, and hot chocolate, hot wassail.

**Watch for our weekly sale specials in  
The San Antonio Express-News  
or at  
[www.MilbergerNursery.com](http://www.MilbergerNursery.com)**

**Gardening South Texas on the air at KLUP (am 930)**

Saturday and Sunday 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

To have your gardening questions answered during show hours ONLY

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## WINTER GARDENING EXPERTISE

### The Color of Primula

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Most Primula grow well in loose garden soil enriched with plenty of humus, especially leaf mold.

Additional peat moss is helpful for species that require wetter conditions. Mulch is helpful to reduce heat and preserve moisture in the summer, and provide winter protection.

Primulas like moisture. They should be watered regularly and never allowed to dry out. Species that grow naturally in areas with monsoons may require extra watering during their growth period, and limited watering during dormancy.

“The color of primula blooms are more intense than pansies. There is nothing subtle about their color; they make me think of the colors that clowns use to paint their faces at the circus.”

~ Calvin Finch, retired Director of  
Water Conservation and Technology, Texas A&M

In most areas, Primula require protection from the hot afternoon sun. Full sunlight is fine in the spring. By midsummer, morning sunlight is fine, but afternoon sun should be filtered. High filtered shade is ideal for most species.



Grouped with daffodils and pansies, **primrose** will give your early spring garden beds a cheerful splash of welcomed color. Like pansies and sweet peas, primula requires cool weather to prosper.

Primulas can easily be increased by division, either when the plants are overgrown, or just to increase the number of plants in the garden. The best time to divide primroses is late winter or very early spring, just after the plants break dormancy. They can also be divided after blooming. It is not necessary to prune or deadhead Primulas, except to keep the garden tidy.

You will find winter blooming plants on sale at Milberger's Nursery through the season. Watch for our weekly ads in the **San Antonio Express News** or you can keep an eye on our web site at [www.milbergernursery.com](http://www.milbergernursery.com). Our web site will also provide you with many tips and guidelines for gardening, lawn care, tree selection and water gardening in our part of Texas.

## NEW LANDSCAPE IDEAS

# Sage Tips for Sowing Cenizo

By Brad Wier, SAWS Conservation Consultant

Cenizo is a stalwart in the natural Texas landscape. On a rocky western outcrop on a scorching August day, its blooms cover hillsides and valleys with pom-poms of pink flowers, all the way to the horizon — and it can do this with no help from sprinklers or hedge trimmers. Even on a winter day, it retains the silvery leaves that earned it the name Texas sage.

So if you're adding a watersaver garden to the home landscape cenizo is one of the easiest plants to use in an unwatered setting. (For fastest growth, though, give it some extra water in spring.)

Since it became commercially available, the ever-popular cenizo may have been overused a bit in San Antonio landscapes, especially in shade — it is frequently found fully irrigated under live oaks, looking weird and leggy. (Leggy plants can always be cut back and restarted.) But over-use doesn't detract from cenizo's essential advantages: it needs no water or trimming, and it's one of the very few evergreen native hedges for south central Texas.

For long-lasting shrubs and other architectural plants, why would you use something that needed to be trimmed and watered? For a scorching inferno strip on a big lot, cenizo provides year-round screening — so you can save your water for something, or someone, that needs it.

For my watersaver gardens, I always try to find a way to include cenizo, whether as a single specimen or as an entire hedgerow — a drought-hardy native substitute for Burford holly, xylosma, and red-tipped photinia. Pair it with a couple of mountain laurels, silver sotol and a scattering of bluebonnets, and you've got a watersaver landscape worthy of a Texas patriot.



**Cenizo or Texas Sage** will bring you beautiful silvery or green foliage and compact growth. It is a wonderful background for the masses of lavender flowers produced, as legend has it, predicting rain.

Many varieties are available; all are native to the Chihuahuan desert, and none require irrigation to thrive. 'Compacta' grows to about 5' in height and width, with that perfect 'evergreen meatball' shape so loved by landscape architects and homeowners alike. As its name suggests, 'Green Cloud' is well-loved for its large and richly colored leaves.



## GROWING HERBS

# The Magic of Growing Herbs

By Melody Fitzgerald

Herbs are some of the best plants for Texas. Most herbs like it hot and dry, so they are a natural for Texas. Herbs are a pleasure to care for; as you trim them, they fill the air with their delightful fragrance. The cuttings can often be used in cooking. You need to understand the requirements for the particular type of herb you are growing. The following list will give you the helpful hints for cultivating some of the best herbs we can grow here. Try adding herbs to any ornamental or vegetable bed. Since most herbs are quite pretty, they belong in flower beds, often adding extra appeal, color, and fragrance.

Herbs are often overlooked as landscape plants, but in truth, they make some of the very best, easiest to care for, and cheapest plants you can use for shrubs and groundcovers. Powis Castle Artemisa is a fine border shrub, and thyme a great small border shrub as well. Try using Salad burnet wherever you might want a plant that looks much



**Thyme** is good herb, both for culinary and ornamental uses. Since it is low-growing, it makes a nice groundcover. It likes afternoon shade to protect it from the strong sun and heat of our summers. Look for the many varieties of this interesting herb.

“Herbs may be grown in flower beds, in rock gardens as borders, or as corner plantings.”

like a fern. It is pretty, and it can take much more heat and sun than ferns.

Culinary herbs may be grown in flower beds, in rock gardens as borders, or as corner plantings. Some herbs are annuals, meaning that they grow from seeds and complete their life cycle in one year; others are perennials that return year after year. Annual herbs may be planted in annual flower gardens or in vegetable gardens. Plant perennial herbs at the side of the garden where they will not interfere with next year's soil preparation. Many gardeners establish a small herb garden near the home. Generally, a 6- to 10-foot square or rectangular area is sufficient. Circular or free-form designs can also be used. Plant the tallest herbs to the back of the plot.



**Mint** can be used as a small shrub. It spreads very easily, so you will have to watch it or it will take over. It also comes in several leaf colors and flavors. If you keep it trimmed, it makes a nice little hedge.

**The San Antonio Herb Society** holds monthly informational and education programs on the second Thursday of the month that are free and open to anyone interested in using and growing herbs. You can contact the herb society at 210-494-6021 or visit their website <http://www.sanantonioherbs.org/>

## TREES AND SHRUBS

# Palms Trees for San Antonio

By Bob Beyer, Texas Master Gardener

Here in South Texas, we live in a stressful gardening environment which tends to limit our plant selection to those which are very drought tolerant, can endure temperature extremes, low humidity, and our alkaline soils. When thinking about what plants can thrive here, many overlook palm trees. Palms are not only for tropical regions of the world or Zone 9 and higher. In fact, there are many genera and species that are native to desert regions, and others which are very cold hardy. Most of the palms that fall into this category are fan leafed, shrubby, not tall, and many come in colorful silver/blue hues. Since palms are slow growing and are propagated from seed only, they will be on the expensive side to purchase, but a good landscaping investment.

Palms in general are shallow rooted with tight clumps of fibrous roots which makes them relatively easy to plant. As the foliage of fan palms is rather different from our local and native plants, they look best when planted as a specimen plant so that they are the featured attraction. Palms make excellent container plants as well. Do beware as there are some palms sold at local garden centers that won't make it through the winter in central TX, such as Pigmy Date Palm. If you invest in a quality palm, you certainly don't want to risk losing it, so stay with tried and tested varieties.

“Palms are being used more extensively as ornamental plants over a wider area. These exotic trees and shrubs are adapted to a greater climatic range in Texas than previously considered because they provide an interesting, aesthetic environment to the outdoor living of Texans.”

~ Robert S. Dewers & Tom Keeter, Extension Horticulturalist, San Antonio



**Texas Sabal Palms** are cold hardy to 16 - 18 degrees. Also known as Texas palmetto, Rio Grande palmetto, palma real, and palma de Micharas, is a native of the lower Rio Grande valley. A stocky palm that grows to twenty to forty-eight feet this palm will give you blue-green, fan-shaped leaves that form a thick, rounded crown.



Texas Sabal Palm  
Sabal texana

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Milberger's Tree Lot stocks only the most healthy trees ready for transplanting. Visit our web site, [www.milbergernursery.com](http://www.milbergernursery.com) where you will find illustrations and specific information on planting trees in South Central Texas. Also you can talk directly to the tree experts when you visit Milberger's Nursery.

## DECEMBER GARDENING AND LAWCARE TIPS

# Pruning and Planting In December

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

**In Your Garden Beds:** Plant pansies, the premier color plant for the winter here in South Texas. They're hardy, will bloom over a long season, and come in a wide array of colors. You can also plant flowering kale, Dianthus, calendula, viola, Johnny jump-ups, alyssum, and snapdragons.

**Plant** December is a good month to plant trees and shrubs. This is a good time to move trees and shrubs as well. Planting now gives the plant time to establish its root system before the shoot growth develops in the spring. Also, usually little supplemental watering is required through the winter. Look around at the fall color and see which plants you would like to add to your landscape. Make certain your final choices are from the list of recommended trees and shrubs for this area found on our web site.

**Prune** Lantana, mallow hibiscus, Esperanza and other cold-sensitive plants. Cut them back severely – to the ground. Over-plant the cut-back perennial area with winter annuals such as pansies, Johnny-jump-ups and dianthus (pinks), larkspur or bluebonnets rather than looking at the barren bed all winter. The lantana will come back

next spring in May to provide beauty during the hottest part of the summer. Most container plants react to the season by reducing growth rates. Cut back on the water and fertilizer until next spring.

**Prune** your trees and shrubs. If you have oak trees in need of pruning, begin now. It is especially critical in areas where the oak wilt fungus is a problem. Apply horticultural tree wound dressing on all oak cuts. Prune out dead, damaged or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Avoid topping or dehorning.

**Lawn Care:** If you have procrastinated the application of the most important lawn fertilization of the year – the application of a “Winterizer” fertilizer to condition the grass for winter survival – do it now.

**Odd Jobs:** Do not allow heavy accumulations of leaves to pile up on the lawn area. If they get wet and pack together, the grass can be damaged. It is best to rake leaves or pick them up with a mower and bagger and place them in a compost pile or spread them over the garden area and work them into the soil. Add additional fertilizer to assist in decomposition.

For more detailed and complete Gardening Tips from Jerry Parsons go to our newly redesigned website: **www.MilbergerNursery.com** and follow the newsletter link that reads “**Monthly Gardening Tips.**”

### SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE FREE

Subscriptions to Milberger's Gardening Newsletter for South Central Texas are free, compliments of Milberger's Landscaping and Nursery. The newsletter is published at the beginning of each month.

TO RECEIVE this free newsletter, complete this form and return it to **Milberger's Nursery** or by calling (210) 497-3760. You can sign up on-line at **www.milbergernursery.com**.

**We respect your privacy. Your name will not be shared with anyone not associated with Milberger Nursery.**

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## **Christmas Trees**

Milberger's offers the most reliable Selection of Christmas Trees. Fresh cut and displayed and kept in water

### **Noble Firs**

**Nordmann Firs**

**Frazer Firs**



Nothing welcomes the holidays like **poinsettias**, a tropical winter blooming plant that has become the center piece for our holiday celebrations. What did it was the blazing red color of the large bracts that drape over the rich green leaves. The poinsettia flowers are small, green or yellow, and grow inconspicuously in the center of each leaf bunch. You will find spectacular poinsettias in a variety of colors at Milberger's this Holiday season.