Desert Favorite  By Master Gardener Andrea Meckley

The Texas Ranger (genus *Leucophyllum*) is sometimes referred to as the “barometer bush” because it responds to humidity and temperatures with a great show of color in late summer. This evergreen shrub has at least 10 species and varieties available offering different mature plant size, and flower and leaf color. Extremely hardy, these Texas natives can be used as foundation plants or used for a hedge or screen plant. Leucopyllums can accept temperatures to around 10°F if allowed to go dormant in fall and winter (in other words, not fertilized or supplemented with water during that part of the year). Drought tolerant plants will have denser foliage and flower better if given supplemental water in the summer. Be sure to plant Texas Rangers in full sun with well-drained soil to avoid rot. Plants may be pruned in spring to increase density, and then left alone to grow naturally throughout the summer and fall blooming periods. Shearing Texas Rangers into shapes decreases blooms and general health of the plant. Selecting the right variety depending on space available for an area will decrease maintenance costs and frequency. Young plants may be eaten by animals such as rabbits; however, older, more established plants or ones that are grown with no supplemental water or fertilizer will be less likely to be eaten. Shown are ‘Lynn’s Legacy’ (*Leucophyllum langmaniae* ‘Lynn’s Legacy’) on the left, and Compact Texas Ranger (*Leucophyllum frutescens* ‘Compacta’) on the right which both mature to about 5’x5’. For those who desire a truly low maintenance plant for hot areas consider the Texas Ranger and get an added bonus when they bloom.
Oxblood Lily  By: Sandy Wilson, Smith County Master Gardener

Oxblood Lily, *Rhodophiala bifida*, provides an exciting burst of color in early September following a heavy August or September rain. Very refreshing after the heat of summer has taken a toll on summer blooming plants. This bulb has brilliant red blooms on foot tall stems. They resemble small red amaryllis and, in fact, are in that family.

Oxblood Lily is well adapted to about all soil types and is considered a tough, resilient plant. It has been in Texas at old home sites since the early 20th century when it was brought to Texas by German settlers. It can be hard to find and would be considered a good pass along plant. Luckily, the Smith County Master Gardeners Fall Bulb Sale usually has them.

Ideally, divide and share Oxblood Lilies after the foliage dies back. However, it doesn't really hurt them to divide anytime. Plant the bulbs about 6"-8" apart and about 3" deep. They can be left in place for years without dividing and still keep blooming.

Oxblood Lily blooms in sun or partial shade under deciduous trees. For the best effect, plant the bulbs in large drifts. The Ft. Worth [Texas] Botanical Garden has a stunning display in a lawn close to several live oak trees. Against a green backdrop like this or an all-green garden it provides that "Wow" affect you cannot ignore. In my own setting, I've planted a drift in part of the lawn where it meets the woodland edge. Dormancy of the grass in winter and little or no fertilizer to this area in spring makes it easy not to prematurely mow before the bulb foliage starts turning yellow.

Texas AgriLife Extension Service
“You know you’re a Master Gardener if you have a decorative compost container on your kitchen counter.”

October Planting

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Veggies by the Season

Veggies by the Season is a series of year round, month-by-month gardening classes designed to educate people on producing timely vegetables in their backyard gardens.

**Fall**
- Oct. 10 - Season extenders and mulching
- Oct. 24 – Seed harvesting and storing

**Winter**
- Nov. 14 - Course introduction, season extenders and mulching
- Nov. 28 – Planning your garden, raised beds, soil sampling
- Dec. 12 – Vegetable classification, seeds and plants and starting seeds indoors

$5.00 each

For more information call Denise at 702-397-2604 x 4
Or visit the website!

October Reminders

1. Be ready for the first frost
2. Thin seedlings
3. Over-seed lawns
4. Plant spring bulbs
5. Divide perennials
6. Don’t let weeds go to seed
7. Start a new compost pile
8. Plant flowers
9. Cut-back watering of trees and shrubs
10. Fertilize roses
11. Hose-off evergreens
12. Prune dead branches out of trees and shrubs
13. Add mulch around trees
14. Order seed catalogs
15. Fertilize spring bulbs
16. Discontinue deadheading roses
17. Apply preemergent weed control
18. Remove green tomatoes
19. Plant a cover crop if not planting a winter garden
20. Dig-up sweet potatoes

Free Mulch available at the Orchard

Currently there is about 300 cubic yards of mulch available at the Master Gardener Orchard. Make arrangements to pick up mulch Monday – Saturday between the hours of 8 a.m. and noon. In 2011, the mulch pile at the Orchard distributed over 2,400 cubic yards of wood mulch that would have gone into public landfills.

Please call 257-5532 or 466-4267 ahead of time to make sure the gates will be open and a tractor available if you need assistance loading. Call 257-5555 to see if mulch is available before you come. Sometimes they run out! The mulch is supplied by local tree services and diverted from local landfills.
Get the Facts on Climate Change

With this summer's extended drought and record-setting temperatures, global warming and its attendant climate change are on the minds of many. But it can be a confusing issue, with opinion and agenda mixed in with facts. That's why Dr. Craig Cogger, soil scientist with Washington State University Extension, has put together an online primer on the subject.

Consisting of a narrated series of nine slideshow modules, each less than 10 minutes long, it covers a breadth of topics, including what the science really tells us, important (and often misunderstood) definitions, the evidence for current climate change, climate models and their projections for coming decades, what to expect from climate change, other points of view, and how to respond to climate disruption. There are also links to other scientifically-based websites if you'd like to get a deeper understanding of the subject.

This series is a great way to increase your understanding of an important issue that will have an impact on many aspects of our lives and the lives of all creatures on our planet.

To access the series, go to: http://www.puyallup.wsu.edu/soilmgmt/ClimateChange.htm

Questions and Answers

Q  We have several Italian cypress trees with brown areas that are dead or dying. The trees are over 20 years old and line our dirt driveway. We have applied fungicide and an insecticide, but the problem persists. What can be done to cure this problem?

A  It sounds like you do not have a fungal or insect problem but rather a spider mite problem.

Determining the cause of problems is the first step in diagnosis. To test for spider mites take a white sheet of paper and place it under a branch that is browning. Tap the branch. If dark spots move on the paper then you have spider mites. Smearing the mites will confirm their presence with streaks on the paper.

Control: Spider mites are not insects but in the arachnid group and produce silk-like webbing that can be seen on close examination of damaged plants. Therefore, using an insecticide will not control spider mites, but will most likely kill predatory insects and mites that feed on the spider mites. Acaricides (miticides) are not readily available to homeowners so other measures must be used. Spider mites like hot, dry, dusty plants - disrupting their environment will aid in their control. Spray the cypress trees
down with a hard stream of water. This will wash off many of the mites, remove the dust and get things back in balance. Predators of spider mites can gain the upper hand if mite populations are reduced by spraying water every couple of days until things clear up and new growth appears.

Q Surflan is called a preemergent herbicide. What does that mean, how, and why are they used?

A Preemergent herbicides are a class of weed killers that are applied to the soil before weeds emerge from the ground. The activity of these compounds usually kills germinating seedlings. The new roots and/or shoots absorb some of the material and the little plants die. The herbicides are applied to the soil and are usually incorporated into the soil by tillage or irrigation after application. This is necessary because environmental factors such as sunlight cause these products to degrade over time. With pesticides there are several names of each compound that must be understood to avoid confusion. For a single pesticide compound there are three classes of naming. The first is the long chemical name from which a good chemist can reconstruct the molecular structure. The second is the common name, which is registered and approved by the EPA, and is peculiar to that compound no matter the manufacturer. This common name is analogous to a scientific or Latin name of a plant. The third name is the trade name. This name is usually copyrighted by the seller, but the same chemical can have many trade names. After patent rights expire on the compound anyone can manufacturer the chemical and give it any name they choose. By law all of this information must be found on the label. Oryzalin (Surflan) and several other preemergent herbicides are in the dinitroaniline chemical family. Surflan, for example, is bright orange. These bright colored compounds were discovered and synthesized by the German dye industry. By accident they were found to have herbicidal activity. The best time to apply Surflan herbicide is in the spring and/or again in the fall. Surflan persists from four to six months, depending on environmental conditions and concentrations applied. It works well over crushed granite or gravel that does not have plastic under it and is best controlling grass weeds. Surflan can also be applied to established lawns, flower beds (where flower seed is not planted), or transplanted into, as long as the plant roots are below the preemergent herbicide “band.” Surflan must be watered into the soil a half an inch within 30 days of application. If not it will be broken down by sunlight. In the desert it is best to water it in within the first week. With proper and timely application a “weed barrier” is formed and many grasses and some broadleaf weeds will be controlled.

Read all pesticide label instructions three times and follow them exactly – once before you mix it, once before you apply it and once before you dispose of it.
A note from Denise

1. Practice eating what is locally in season locally. This will get your family accustomed to eating seasonal produce, and, therefore, what you can grow in your own garden.
2. Learn which herbs might help your family’s health issues.
3. All heirloom plants are open pollinated, but not all open pollinated plants are heirloom.
4. Try more than one variety of each vegetable to see which gives you the best results.
5. For survival, grow what the poorest farmers in third world countries grow. Sorghum, peanuts and chickpeas are three such crops.
6. High-quality tools are a must. Keep a bucket filled with sand and a bit of motor oil mixed in to clean off dirty gardening tools.
7. Solarize your garden soil to get rid of weeds a few weeks before planting season.
8. It is not legal to save seeds that have been patented.
9. Heat and moisture are enemies of seeds. Unhealthy seeds may sprout, but they may not grow anything. Stored properly, some seeds can last 5-10 years, but most will last just 2-3 years. Younger seeds will grow better.
10. Mail order companies are best when it comes to buying seeds because they store their seeds in optimal conditions.
11. Just because a nursery is selling certain plants does not mean that particular variety grows well in your area. They are selling what they know people will buy.
12. Never work the soil when it is wet or very dry and have your soil tested so you will know what amendments are needed.
13. Plan your garden so you are planting for a staggered harvest. Otherwise, you may be harvesting tons of zucchini, for example, during a single week and then have to wait several more weeks for another zucchini harvest.
14. Do not water at night, and be sure to water the soil, not the leaves.
15. The best pest control is the eyes and hands of the gardener.

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