

MAY TO DO LIST

- Please note, most of the information shared here was obtained from Research-based sources (see contributors acknowledgements below), and from individuals who are considered very knowledgeable on a particular subject. While some little tidbits here may be of interest, they should be taken "with-a-grain-of-salt".

*"The
Gardener's Curse"
Awake, my muse, bring bell and book
To curse the hand that cuttings took.
May every sort of garden pest
His little plot of ground infest
Who stole the plants from Invereive,
From Falkland Place, Grathes too?
Let caterpillars, capsid bugs,
Leafhoppers, thrips, all sorts of slugs,
Play havoc with his garden plot.
And a late frost destroy the lot.*

- Lady Maconochie of Scotland, 16th Century

1st Week:

Yearling purple Martins could still be coming in looking for new nesting sites to colonize. No matter where you live, keep your housing open through June. Martins may arrive and begin nesting as late as the end of June, anywhere in North America! - PMA (visit their website @ <http://www.purplemartin.org>)

Goldfinches have migrated back up north! Watch feeder (especially if it is the "upside down" type) and take it down if not in use.

Even when the American goldfinches leave, you can attract lesser goldfinches, house finches and an occasional painted or indigo bunting to the thistle (niger) feeder.

Do not let Amaryllis or Daylilies form fruits. Cut them off! Seed production takes away food from future flowering.

If your lawn or plants are turning yellow, apply a chelated iron supplement to the soil (results are slower, but longer lasting, using a "granular" form of iron - *EO*), or as a foliar spray to correct iron deficiency, which causes CHLOROSIS (the yellowing).

Fertilize your lawn with a slow-release lawn fertilizer. Choose a fertilizer that is high in nitrogen and low in phosphorous and potassium. Many soil test are showing high amounts of phosphorous and potassium. Some of the common formulas are 19-5-9, 20-5-10, 21-7-14, 27-2-2, 21-0-0 and 9-1-1. (The "right" formula depends on your soil conditions, have it tested every 3 to 4 years or just watch the weeds in your yard, they can signal deficiencies or excesses. - *MB*)

Fertilize established potted hibiscus (every 4 to 6 weeks with a granular hibiscus food) and bougainvillea (every 2 weeks with a water soluble fertilizer) on your patio.

Plant caladiums, coleus, begonias and firespike for color in shady locations.

Control ANTS in your compost pile by renewing the active composting process. Turn the compost, wet it (like a wrung sponge) and add a cup of fertilizer to increase the temperature of the pile.

As outside temperatures increase, it is important to rinse and refill hummingbird feeders twice a week or more. Pour the old sugar water on a rock or in a bowl with a sponge for the butterflies (they like the fermented drink, that's why they fly like they do! - *me*)

There is still time to plant tomatoes. Use the largest plants available. - *CF*

Prune spiraea, quince and Indian hawthorn shrubs after blooming is complete, if needed. - *EO*

Onions are ready to be harvested when the tops fall over. Place the bulbs on the ground for a day or two to harden off. Harvest onions and allow them to air dry for a couple of days before storing.

Harvest columbine seeds now. Place stalks in paper bag to collect seeds.

Zinnia, lantana, firebush, sporrans and VIP petunias planted in full sun will add color to your landscape. Plant caladiums, coleus, begonias and firespike in the shade. - *TAE*

Look for LEAF SPOT on photinias and Indian hawthorns. Rake and remove leaves from beneath the shrubs and spray with a general fungicide (if condition is advancing, cut that limb from the main trunk - *me*)

Lookout for SPIDER MITES turning needles of junipers, cypress, arborvitae brown, generally from the insides of the plants outward, use neem oil or Kelthane miticide spray to control.

If GRASSHOPPERS are ravaging your gardens, use a general-purpose insecticide, sweeping downward from top to bottom of plants.

Look for POWDERY MILDEW on crape myrtles, euonymus, zinnias and other plants. Use *Safer Garden Fungicide*, *Neem oil*, or *Immunex*, *Triforine* (formerly *Funginex*) or *Fung Away* to control. Read label carefully before applying.

Look for EARLY BLIGHT causing large yellow blotches on bottom sets of leaves of tomatoes, use *Neem oil* or a general purpose fungicide such as *Triforine* (formerly *Funginex*) or *Daconil*.

Watch out for NUTSEDGE or nut grass, use *Image* or *Manage*.

Continue to spray pecan trees with zinc. Check new nutlets for PECAN NUT CASE BORER. If treatment is necessary, use *Malathion* or liquid *Sevin*.

Fertilize container plants every week or two with liquid fertilizer.

Plant okra and southern peas.

Trim perennials of dead wood from last year. Prune suckers from crape myrtles. - *LR*

Plants selections for shady areas: A) Turf- St. Augustine, Zoysia; B) Shrubs- hollies, cleyera, aucubas, fatsias and viburnums; C) Groundcovers- English and Algerian ivies (*do not use Algerian ivy in colder areas north and northwest of San Antonio*), lamium, ajuga, mondograss and dwarf mondograss, liriopoe and ferns. Use aspidistra as a tall herbaceous ground cover, perhaps in combination with ferns, in a really shady bed; E) Perennials- Texas Gold columbines, violets, oxalis, ajuga, liriopoe, summer phlox and spiderwort; F) Foliage- pony-tail, split-leaf philodendrons, tropical ferns and unusual ficuses, sansevierias, fancy-

leafed begonias, crotons, dieffenbachias and aglaonemas. - NS

5 Natural Pest Repellants- Here are safer alternatives to commercial pesticides.

Ants: Sprinkle cinnamon, bay leaves, cayenne pepper or baby powder in problem areas and along baseboards and windowsills.

Cockroaches: Sprinkle equal parts of baking soda and confectioner's sugar in problem areas.

Mice: Place cotton dipped in peppermint oil near problem areas. Used kitty litter is another repellent.

Mosquitoes: Mix 2 teaspoons of apple cider vinegar in a glass of water placed on your deck or balcony or dab lavender oil on your wrists and elbows.

Flies: Small sachets of crushed mint placed around the home will discourage flies. So will a potted sweet basil plant. - SK

A smoky haze may be covering our area of South Texas and other areas. It's coming from out of control forest fires and brush burning (annually) in Central America and Mexico and may hang around for some time until they can gain some control. The pollution can be harmful to those with health risks, necessary precautions should be taken during his time. Watch your local news and weather for details. - SB

WEEDS: A Commonsense Approach - C. S. C. (*Texas Gardener*, May/ June 2003)

Think about it, even the lowly sandbur has a place in nature where it is useful in healing scarred and damaged land by preventing overgrazing by animals. But if you find it growing in your garden or lawn it is a nasty weed. My point is that a weed is not an inherently bad plant but simply a plant that is growing in the wrong place at the wrong time. Here are some simple rules to follow to help you keep weeds from driving you crazy:

- 1) Unwanted plants are more likely to sprout in areas where the soil has either been disturbed by plow or fire. Overworking the soil will create more opportunities for weeds to grow and more work for you.
- 2) Use organic mulches to prevent weed development in cultivated beds and gardens.
- 3) Attack weeds when they are young and small (and consequently easier to remove).
- 4) Avoid using herbicides, particularly products that contain *Atrazine*. *Atrazine* is a pre-emergent herbicide that can damage and kill trees and shrubs in the landscape. Some broadleaf herbicides can drift onto desirable plants, causing damage, even on calm days. Spend some money on a good hoe - it is the safest herbicide we know of and using it is great exercise.
- 5) Accept the fact that most gardens get a little weedy in July. Dr. Sam Cotner, former head of horticulture at Texas A&M, told me once that we ought to have a contest for the seediest garden in Texas and he was not joking. His point was that weeds get ahead of most folks towards the end of the season and we should wear them like a badge of honor, not shame.

In Our Rose Garden: "Failure is never fatal; success is never final - especially with roses"- (HW, everyone's rose friend).

Weather-wise, early May is a delightful time to work in the garden. There is much that can be done.

A) **Watering** - Remember to keep the top 6" to 8" of your rose bed soil moist. Now is a good time to plan a weekly watering schedule for the upcoming summer season. Container roses

will dry out quicker, so water them more often.

B) Bush Grooming - Make sure all blooms have been cut (deadheading eliminates a haven for thrips to reproduce) from the first cycle. Cut to a five leaflet when removing old blooms. Cut out any spindly, cluttered growth (any canes crossing or growing toward the center of the bush) which is an ideal place for spider mites and fungal problems to start. Cutting out blind shoots (short stems that are not vigorously growing), check for dieback (stems turning black & moving downward) from previous cuts and any old or dead wood. Try and open up the bush as much as possible to provide good air circulation and make it possible to get better coverage with your spray materials.

C) Feeding - 1. Dry Feed - Once a month use 10-20-19 or 12-24-12, general purpose fertilizer (It doesn't have to say "Rose Food"; that makes it 3 or 4 dollars higher!). Give each bush one cup spread around the drip line. For mini's use $\frac{1}{4}$ cup per plant. Water in after applying.

2. Liquid or Soluble Feed - Every two weeks mix two cups of 20-20-20 in a 32 gal. garbage can and pour one gallon around each bush. Mini's get one quart each. (* Now's the time to launch a major thrust for more basal and lower breaks with a readily available source of nitrogen followed by Epsom salts applied just after the initial bloom cycle while roses are at their peak of vigor. Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate) works best when "available nitrogen" is present (a nitrate form is best). Use a soluble 20-20-20 the first week, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of Epsom salts the second week, with successive applications of 20-20-20 for weeks three and four. Cut the 20-20-20 concentration in half due to the frequency of application. New basals require "lots of energy" in the root zone for results, driven by "lots of water". - HW)

3. Slow Release Fertilizers - Use *Osmocote (Plus)*, or one of the new ones that release fertilizer based on soil temperature, not moisture content, such as *Sta-Green*. Make sure that if you use any slow-release fertilizers, use them according to directions.

D) Spraying - Maintain a regular 5 to 7 day spray interval to keep your rose garden free of Blackspot, mildew or other fungus problems.

1.) BLACKSPOT & MILDEW - use *Ortho Rose and Garden Disease Control* (formerly *Funginex*) at the rate of one Tbsp. per gal. of spray material (if you already have some blackspot in your garden, use *Manzate* (powder) @ 1 Tbsp. per gal. of spray).

2.) THRIPS - To keep your blooms clean and pretty, mist the buds and flowers with *Orthene* (*Spinosad* is a organic spray listed for thrips). Use either *Orthene* liquid @ 2 Tbsp. per gal. of spray, *Orthene* powder @ 2 tsp. per gal. of spray mixture.

3.) SPIDER MITES - Use a hard spray (enough to knock them critters off) water wash to the underside of the foliage every 3 days for 9 days. Seaweed extract as a foliar spray to clear them away and it feeds your bush. Use *Neem* oil on the underside of the foliage as a miticide. Chemicals such as *Avid*, *Mavrik* or *Floramite* can be use to control heavy infestation of spider mites (it is highly recommended that 2 or 3 different approaches be used over the warm season to ward off mites developing a resistance to the chemicals).

E) Mulching - This is a very important key to having good late spring and summer growth on your roses. There are some good combinations to use for mulching such as: 1) Lay down 2" of compost and on top of that put 1" of chopped up leaves (oak works well). 2) Lay down 2" of aged horse manure and on top of that put 1" of chopped up leaves. 3) Lay down 2" of

mushroom compost and on top of that put 1" of grass clipping (St. Augustine preferred, not Bermuda which may carry seed). Mulch does a number of things for your roses including preserving surface moisture, protecting feeder roots from the heat, retards weeds and encourages the natural soil processes.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO WATER THOROUGHLY BEFORE & AFTER FEEDING OR SPRAYING. Visit their website at www.sarosesociety.org.

Organic Rose Program - by HG (see February Monthly List for complete program)

Roses should only be grown organically since they are one of the best medicinal and culinary herbs in the world. When they are loaded with toxic pesticides and other chemicals, that use is gone, or at least should be. Drinking rose hip tea or using rose petals in teas or salads after spraying with synthetic poisons is a really bad idea. For best results with roses, here's the program:

Selection: (* Although May is a little late to be planting a new rose bush, it can still be done. Cut back top growth back to about the size of your root ball, do not leave any buds forming. Plant the rose bush according to directions and water well. Continue to water until new growth is seen. - me) Buy and plant adapted roses such as antiques, David Austin's and well-proven hybrids (see "How To Grow Roses by San Antonio Rose Society", under Selecting Roses For Our Area). The old roses will have the largest and most vitamin C filled hips. R. roses have the most vitamin C.

Planting: Prepare beds (1,000 sq.ft.) by mixing the following into existing soil to form a raised bed: 6" compost, ½" lava sand; ½" expanded shale, ½" of decomposed granite, 20lbs. of alfalfa meal, 20lbs. cottonseed meal, 30lbs. of wheat bran/cornmeal/molasses soil amendment, 20lbs. of sul-po-mag. Soak the bare roots or rootball in water with 1 tbsp. of Garrett Juice (or seaweed) per gallon. Settle soil around plants with water - no tamping.

Mulching: After planting, cover all the soil in the beds with 1" of compost or earthworm castings followed by 2 - 3" of shredded native cedar. Do not pile the mulch up on the stems of the roses.

Watering: If possible, save and use rainwater. If not, add 1 tbsp. of natural apple cider vinegar per gallon of water. If all that fails, just use tap water but don't over water. Avoid salty well water.

Pest Control Program: Add the following to *Garrett Juice* (visit his web site to get his recipe or pick it up at a local nursery) and spray as needed.

Garlic tea or mild vinegar- 1/4cup/gal. or label directions for minor insect or disease infestations.

Potassium bicarbonate - 1 rounded tbsp. /gal. for minor diseases.

Liquid biostimulants - Use per label - *Medina Soil Activator*, or similar product.

Neem or plant oil products - Use per label directions for more serious insect and disease infestations.

For thrips, apply beneficial nematodes to the soil in early spring (*Spinosad* is listed as a treatment).

Fish emulsion - 2oz. /gal. for additional nutrients (may not be needed when using compost tea)

Spray Schedule: 1st spraying at pink bud in the spring. 1st two sprayings should include

Garrett Juice and garlic tea (additional sprayings as necessary). For best results spray every two weeks, but at least once a month. When soil is healthy, nothing but *Garrett Juice* is needed.

A Year In The Rose Garden: *A.J.W.*

The first week or two of May usually is the lowest point of the entire blooming season. Watch for spider mites. Take action at the first indication. They are not too hard to control if we do not let them get a head start. First-year gardens often escape mites if they were planted with clean stock, but before long the birds, the wind or whatever will bring them in.

Keeping spent blooms cut will make the garden look better, reduce thrips and improve the growth of the bush. If one is short of time, simply snapping off the faded bloom at the peduncle is quite acceptable. It may even make for better growth of young plants.

Adjust fertilizer application to the weather conditions. A period of heavy rains can leach much of the fertilizer, especially nitrogen, out of the soil. On the other hand, in dry times when the only water is the limited amounts applied by the busy rosarian, very limited amounts of fertilizer are needed. It has been established that if all the fertilizer applied were available and used by the plant it would take only about 2 ounces per plant per year. The rest we lose by leaching or other reasons.

Weekly spraying with Triforine has kept most rose gardens in the area free of mildew, but the few who did contact it brought it under control with *Rubigan*. Those who had blackspot, or suspected they were vulnerable, added $\frac{1}{2}$ Tablespoon of *Dithane M-45* to their spray mixture with excellent results.

The optimum temperature for growth of both blackspot and mildew on roses is around 70 degrees F., and by the end of the month we probably will be averaging well over that figure. As the weather gets hot some will try to stretch the spraying intervals or use weaker than specified dilutions of spray materials. As many of us have found out, this is a mistake.

Keep beds well-mulched. In our area a heavy mulch has proven very beneficial. Almost any organic material can be used that lets the rain and air through, yet minimizes evaporation from the soil. A good mulch keeps down the weeds, keeps the soil cooler and adds humus to the soil. Better growers in our area do not neglect it. Fluff it up from time to time with a fork to maximize its insulating quality.

Green wood cuttings can be made now, using one of the many rooting methods available. May is the best time to bud and now is a good time to learn how. Most serious rose growers will want to learn to bud the varieties not readily available commercially.

In Our Herb Garden: Start harvesting herbs as many perennials bloom this month. *Plant summer everlastings (examples are globe amaranth, sweet Annie, cockscomb, salvias, tansy, etc.). *Plant lemon grass and continue to plant basil. *Weed and water as necessary. *Hot rainy spells are hard on herbs as they do not like humidity. Solutions are good drainage (raised beds are a necessity in most of our area), a good quality soil from a local source (such as Garden-Ville, Fertile Gardens Supply, Living-Earth, and others) and mulch. *Herbs should be gathered in dry weather, first thing in the morning before their essential oils evaporate in the sun. Hang bunches of herbs upside down to dry so that the oils flow into the leaves. Once dry, store them in airtight containers away from sunlight and they

should last for several months.- TGS

Neat Stuff- According to naturalist "Wildman" Steve Brill, there is such a thing as free lunch. For years, Brill has dined on edible plants gathered in parks, empty lots, woods and meadows (places where, most likely, no spraying of chemicals has been done. - me). His book, *Identifying and Harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants in Wild (and Not So Wild) Places* (Hearst Books, 1994), is a beginner's guide to foraging. Two to try: **wood sorrel** (also known as shamrock), a weed that's found in moist, partially shaded areas (check your lawn) and has no poisonous look-alikes. The raw leaves add lemony zest to salads. **Field garlic** is another lawn dweller. It has a small bulb and tall, garlic-scented leaves that are hollow and tubular (like chives). Use the bulb and the finely chopped leaves as an herbal-flavored alternative to regular garlic. Wash any wild plant thoroughly before eating.

If you fertilize your tomato plants heavily with a nitrogen fertilizer at planting time, you will likely get very large plants but few tomatoes. Instead, wait until your plants have produced small tomatoes (about the size of a large marble) and then apply a handful or so of fertilizer to each plant every week during the growing season. You may not have 10-foot-tall plants but you should have buckets of vine-ripened fruit to enjoy and share with friends and neighbors. - TGS

2nd Week:

Fertilize vegetables. Side dress tomatoes, carrots, beans, squash, okra, peppers and other vegetables with 1 cup of slow-release lawn fertilizer per 10 ft. of row.

For highest quality, harvest crookneck, zucchini and other summer squash when they are immature and tender.

POWDERY MILDEW on roses and other plants is a problem. Control the disease with *sulfur*, (*Neem* oil can be used) *benomyl*, *Bayleton* or other labeled fungicide. (*Read more above "In Our Rose Garden".)

Re-apply *Amaze*, *Betasan* or *XL* to keep grass burs from sprouting.

Mallow hibiscus, firebush, lantanas and other heat-loving plants have begun to grow. Give them an application of fertilizer at a rate of 1 cup per 100 sq.ft.

Now is a good time to seed Bermuda or Buffalo grass.

Plant zinnias, marigolds and cockscomb (*celosia*) seeds.

Divide and transplant plumbago, sultana and pentas.

Remove faded petunia flowers to prevent seed set or cut back half way to encourage a fresh crop of flowers. - EO

Protect vegetables such as squash, eggplant, okra and tomatoes from harsh direct sunlight to keep them from burning or wilting.

Add compost around newly planted trees and shrubs. - TAE

Use an insecticide labeled specifically for **PECAN NUT CASEBEARER** to treat pecan trees against the boring insects (Spray only if you have had a problem in the past or see damage. - CF). Also, spray pecans with liquid zinc to prevent rosette.

Feed container-grown plants with a balanced fertilizer such as 20-20-20. Be sure to water before fertilizing.

Perennial selections in nurseries are excellent. Choose vigorous summer and fall blooming plants.

If you want to encourage BUTTERFLIES in your garden, do not use insecticides, especially products with Bt (, which will kill the larvae (caterpillars).

Sharpen mower blades. Dull blades tear the grass, which makes plants more susceptible to disease.

Use scissors to thin out flowers you're growing from seed. Thinning will improve the quality of the flowers and cutting scissors will not disturb roots.

New plants require frequent watering to establish their roots. Prolonged dry soil can cause permanent damage. - LR

It is more than just an old wives' tale but also good practice to place a small piece of charcoal in each vase of cut flowers. The charcoal draws bacteria and keeps the water fresh and free of odor.

Vacuum those pesky bugs: By Chris S. Corby, Publisher

That's right. If squash bugs and stink bugs are giving you fits in the vegetable garden, here is a mechanical solution that is totally safe for humans but deadly to bugs. Beg, borrow or buy a small battery or rechargeable vacuum cleaner. Just hold the business end close to those bothersome bugs as they gather at the base of your squash plants and presto — they are sucked in to the reservoir for easy disposal. Also great for any other unwanted insects that comes your way.

Earthworms are one of the most valuable garden assets we have at our disposal. An average earthworm will produce its weight in castings (poop) every 24 hours. A healthy population of earthworms can deposit up to 50 tons per acre of valuable organic matter each year. They will burrow as deep as 6 feet into the soil, breaking up heavy clay soils and enriching sandy soils. - TGS

3rd WEEK:

Plant lantana, zinnias, vinca, gomphrena, salvia, moss rose, purslane, firebush and verbena for color in full sun.

Columbine seeds are mature. Plant them in containers in potting soil now and they will be ready to transplant in fall.

If you like glow-in-the-dark orange blooms during the hottest part of summer, plant Poinciana (Pride of Barbados) now. It is a root-hardy shrub that grows in full sun.

Re-apply iron supplements to lawns and acid-loving shrubs and trees to avoid drought-stress chlorosis. Mulch those shrubs.

The red powdery spots on the bottoms of snapdragon leaves are rust. It is time to relegate snaps to the compost pile.

The sucking insects are at work. Control SPIDER MITES with Kelthane. APHIDS, WHITEFLIES and LACE BUGS can be controlled with Malathion or Organo spray (Neem oil products are also effective at controlling these insects - me). Orthene works for all the sucking insects on non-food plants.

Control LEAF-ROLLERS and other CATERILLARS on cannas and other susceptible plants such as tomatoes and mountain laurels with "Bt" spray.

If trees are dropping leaves, it may be an adjustment to the dry weather and high temperatures. No treatment is required.

Be careful with the string mower around tree trunks. Girdled trees will die. Partially

girdled trees will grow slowly and be susceptible to other stresses.

Raise mower blades to summer mowing height (2 ½" to 3" for St. Augustine, 1" to 1 ½" for Bermuda). Leave clippings on lawn; they nourish the grass. (* If lawn is infested with annual and perennial weeds, keep weeds from flowering but gradually raise mower height over a couple of weeks. - me) - *CF*

Mulch shrubs well now to help them survive the hot, dry summer to come.

Cut off all spent amaryllis and day lily blooms so that they will not form fruit (affects next years blooms).

Keep peach trees well-watered as long as there is fruit on the tree. Pick when the green background on the fruit changes to yellow.

Plant peppers, southern peas and okra. - *EO*

4th WEEK:

To attract songbirds to your yard during dry weather, place a bird bath in an "open" area that is about 6 ft. from cover. You can enjoy their songs while helping to meet their water needs.

Water lawns only when blades first show signs of wilting (when your footprints do not spring up as you walk across it) in the morning. Avoid watering in the evening.

THRIPS are the culprits behind gnarled leaves on the new growth of pepper plants (and probably your roses). Use Malathion or Sevin spray according to the label directions.

Periwinkles (*Vinca minor*) planted now will bloom through the summer in full sun. Be careful, however, to water the plants at their base or with drip irrigation; they are susceptible to a blight caused by on their foliage.

Keep summer squash, peppers, tomatoes, green beans and other vegetables harvested to maximize production. To prevent BIRDS from pecking ripening tomatoes, hang a few red or orange Christmas bulbs or decorations on the plants now while the fruit is green. The birds will check out the bulbs and, not finding anything, will lose interest and pass up the real fruit when it ripens. - *CF*

Plant esperanza and blue salvias, both are water-wise summer bloomers.

Plant iris, spider lilies, gloriosa lilies and caladiums. - *EO*

Trim FIRE-BLIGHT infected pear trees 18 inches below diseased limbs. Be sure to use clean equipment and disinfect often.

If the weather has cooperated, we should have an abundance of LADYBUGS. Avoid use of pesticides and let the ladybugs do their work. Their larvae can eat as many as 400 aphids a day. - *TAE*

Check junipers, cedars and other evergreens for SPIDER MITES, which can cause stems to turn brown. Shake a branch over white paper and look for tiny red (like paprika) specks moving, which are spider mites. Apply proper insecticide.

Cut and collect fresh herbs early in the morning. The oils in the leaves are highest then (If your drying them for use later, hang them upside-down, this will help keep the oils in the leaves). - *LR*

FIREFLIES lighting up the night! Fireflies in San Antonio are not something that's real common anymore, mainly because of "urban sprawl", insecticides and fire ants. Good weather, keeping the use of pesticides down and fire ants having a bad year, these are

perfect conditions for fireflies (Fireflies can be seen arising in the evening out of meadow grasses or knee-high stemmy woodland ground covers. Planting a patch of bunch grasses would provide a place for fireflies to hide during the day. - *SW*). Lightning Bugs show up in South Texas in May and June, primarily in open areas adjacent to woods. - *THL*

* In updating this collections of useful tips, I have come across several comments, instructions and chemicals that are being replaced with newer techniques and materials. In some cases, I do not want to change what others have written, but I need to bring "them" up-to-date by putting a "(?)" right behind the point in question and maybe adding my own two-cents worth. - *me*

Many thanks to my contributors for sharing their wisdom so I can learn and share it with you.

PMA - Purple Martin Association; visit their web site @ www.purplemartin.org.

WBC - Wild Bird Center

CF - Calvin Finch, (former) Bexar Co. extension agent for horticulture, Texas Agricultural Extension Service (courtesy S.A. Express-News)

MB - Malcom Beck, lecturer on Organic Gardening and founder of GardenVille products; visit his web site @ www.malcombeck.com.

EO - Edna Ortiz, (former) Bexar Co. extension agent for horticulture, Texas Agricultural Extension Service (courtesy S.A. Express-News)

TAE - Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Bexar Co. (courtesy S.A. Express-News)

LR - Lyn Rawe, (former) Bexar Co. extension agent for horticulture, Texas Cooperative Extension Service; visit their web site @ www.bexar-tx.tamu.edu.

NS - Neil Sperry, publisher of Neil Sperry's Garden Magazine, also Garden Expert for S.A. Express-News. Visit his web site @ www.neilsperry.com.

SK - Sid Kirchheimer (from the May 2008 AARP Bulletin, pg. 29)

SB - Steve Browne, meteorologist with KSAT; visit their web site @ www.ksat.com.

CSC - Chris S. Corby, editor and publisher of Texas Gardener Magazine; visit their web site @ www.texasgardener.com.

HW - Howard Walters, the Rambling Rosarian, courtesy the American Rose Magazine; visit their web site @ www.ars.org.

HG - John Howard Garrett, aka the "Dirt Doctor"; visit his web site @ www.dirtdoctor.com.

AJW - A.J. "Pop" Warner, author of "A Year In The Rose Garden".

THL - Tracy Hobson Lehmann, Gardening Editor for the S.A. Express-News; visit their web site @ www.mysa.com.

SW - Sally Wasowski, landscape designer specializing in native plants, teacher and co-author of Native Texas Plants.

me - MG, CR Brian D. Townsend, can be e-mailed @ briandt@juno.com.