

The Dirt on Hill Country Gardening

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What about the Weather?

What is the unseasonably warm and dry weather doing to our landscaping? The conundrum that our plants are facing dry conditions, but we don't need to water more than meets minimum requirements. Extra water will tend to cause new growth and can sometimes cause root rot. Plants are trying to harden off and go dormant, and the extra water along with the abnormal heat causes them a dilemma. Best suggestion is to water lightly when you dig down into the mulch and find that it is dry.

Grasshoppers seem to be multiplying which is also unusual for this time of year. You can direct spray with pyrethrum and/or Neem Oil, or you can dust their areas with diatomaceous earth.

This warmth can also cause some fungus on plants that may be treated with Neem Oil or baking soda.

Anything you have that is still putting on new growth should probably get a light dousing with a seaweed solution to help harden it off and get to a dormant stage.

It is still a bit early to transplant trees or shrubs as they haven't quite gotten to a dormant stage, and it is too early to start serious trimming.

And, it looks like we are going to be weeding forever as these haven't stopped growing either. Now is a good time to treat the small thistles that are coming up in droves with 20% vinegar solution. We've been recommending a solution with Orange Oil, but we're finding that straight vinegar does as well as the combination. The Orange is hard on the sprayer parts as well, and eats up the o-rings.

Personal Plant of the Week. Favorite plant of Evie Tyra, nursery manager for the Fullerton Arboretum at Cal State in Fullerton, California, is Woolly Blue Curls, *Trichostema lanatum*. This is an evergreen desert plant that loves heat and drought. It grows 2-5 feet tall and 3-4 feet wide. It is deer-resistant, and it has an incredible lavender aroma. The plant blooms April and June and much of the summer and fall if it is deadheaded. It needs good drainage; and, once established, it needs no water.

Chores for this week.

- Mulch around trees and shrubs, but not covering the trunk.
- Mulch tender perennials, covering 2 to 3 inches of their stems.
- Plant cold tolerant perennials and shrubs.
- Plant your pansies, kale, snapdragons, stock and other cold-hardy annuals.
- Wrap your water faucets.
- Remove sprinklers from the ends of hoses, and ideally put your hoses in the garage.

We'd like to do more articles in answer to your questions. We regularly encounter people who

ask for some specific, and we'd like more of you to ask us by email: dsteiny@krc.com or linda@hexco.com.