

The Dirt on Hill Country Gardening

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What about This Drought!

With everything so dry, we need to be taking extra care about newly planted trees and shrubs. Mulch the root zones of all of these, if you haven't already done it. Water deeply every two weeks, and this particularly applies to evergreen varieties. Evergreens continue to use more water than plants which have dropped their leaves.

For established lawns, trees, and shrubs, they can probably do okay without much moisture, but if a cold front comes breezing in, they will sustain much more damage than if they get period deep watering. This can be every 3-4 weeks. If you get advance warning of a cold front, it is always good to water your plants to give them a bit more protection.

Keep dry leaves raked away from your houses just as a fire preventative. Avoid using chain saws and lawn mowers as sparks can easily kindle the dry leaves into a fire. Don't drive over grass or park and leave your car running, as little sparks can cause big problems.

This is a good time to prune trees and large shrubs; but again, be careful with sparks from your chain saws.

Personal Plant of the Week. Recommended plant of the week is the Spring Bouquet Viburnum *Viburnum tinus*. This is a small shrub with 1" x 2" leaves that is evergreen and very deer resistant. The blooms start soon and are fragrant. Blooms are white to light pink and about 2-3" across. This shrub grows 5-6' tall with a 3-4' spread. Very underutilized, this one makes a great backdrop for deciduous plants in a bed. There are so many varieties that are so diverse that a landscape with only viburnum varieties would be interesting.

Chores for this week.

- Prepare for cold weather. It must really be on the way.
- Spread a pre-emergent, such as corn gluten meal to keep weed seeds from sprouting in the late winter and early spring.
- Plant all kinds of oak trees.
- Start pruning trees and use a mixture of wood glue and water to paint on all open cuts.

We encourage your questions, comments, or your own "Personal Plant of the Week" by writing David at dsteiny@kctc.com.