**April Calendar**

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The lawn should grow a lot this month. After you have mowed real lawn (not weeds) twice, it will be time to fertilize the lawn. It will be sometime after April 15 or even until May 1. Use a slow-release lawn fertilizer such as 19-5-9 and follow the label instructions for the application settings.

The cool weather weeds will be trying to seed and the warm weather weeds will be sprouting. Keep the cool weather weeds mowed or pulled to reduce seed production for the next year.

April is late to apply a pre-emergent herbicide to control summer weeds. Many will germinate before the herbicide works, but you may prevent some of the sand burs by applying Amaze or XL now.

The bluebonnets and other wildflowers should be blooming. Remember, if they are going to produce viable seed for next years’ wildflowers, the flowers need to fade and the seed pods need to be allowed to mature (pods form and then brown). Other plants that have to be allowed to decline naturally are larkspur, paperwhites, blood lilies, daffodils, hyacinth and iris.

In the flower garden, the snapdragons, stocks, pansies, cyclamen and calendula could keep blooming through April if the weather doesn’t heat up too fast. If you have dianthus or petunias, they may keep blooming through June. At some point in April or May, you will need to replace the cool weather flowers with warm weather color.

In the shade, plant coleus, caladium, begonias or pentas. My wife would add impatiens to that list as well, but I find them hard to keep alive, let alone blooming through a Central Texas summer. Over the last two years, I have used mostly coleus and begonias, so this year pentas will be my choice for the shade.

Pentas are available in red, pink, violet or white. Butterflies and hummingbirds like them as a nectar source. Pentas work equally well in containers or a raised bed. They are not xeriscape plants but require less water than coleus or impatiens.

A major positive feature about pentas is that they stay in bloom from planting day to Thanksgiving or whenever cold weather arrives.

Zinnias are a favorite hot weather blooming plant for full sun. Most selections offer red, crème, yellow, pink and purple blooms that make good cut flowers. Zinnias are also a favorite nectar source for hummingbirds and butterflies.

Cosmos are not as disciplined as zinnias, but they are just as popular with butterflies and are more drought tolerant. Plant cosmos seed in the garden or in a vacant lot. They make up for the “ugly period” when the wildflowers have lost their bloom and are maturing their seed. Cosmos come in pink, white and lavender as well as the showier and tougher colors of yellow and gold.

For low-growing color in the sun, consider moss rose and purslane.

In the vegetable garden, April is the time to plant tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and okra. Plant the okra late in the month.

Consider the shorter growing, faster maturing determinate or semi-determinate tomatoes. Among the best selections are Tycoon, Tigress, 444, Phoenix, Celebrity, Solar Fire, BHN 968 (Cherry) and Valley Cat. Plant tomatoes about 3 feet apart and cage them to keep the fruit off of the ground.

The cole crops and greens should still be productive in April. Harvest the leaves as you need them. Fertilize the onions and harvest green onions to leave 6 inches between the plants.