**June Gardening Calendar**

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Wildflowers made a good showing this spring in many parts of south-central Texas. Any place that received a share of the erratic rainfall this winter translated it into a showy wildflower display.

Most of those wildflowers are now in the ugly stage. They have quit blooming and are working on producing seed for next spring’s crop. It is hard to resist cutting down wildflowers in the ugly stage, but that means there will be a limited seed supply for next year’s flowers on that site.

To perk up the wildflower growing area during seed production times, plant cosmos seeds or transplants. Cosmos are available in pink, lavender, white, gold and yellow. The yellow and gold selections are the toughest and showiest. Cosmos seeds planted now will bloom and reseed all summer to cover the wildflower’s growing area with a cosmos color show.

In the vegetable garden, the tomatoes should be ready to harvest. If they are left on the vine after they show color, expect the birds and squirrels to “share” the crop with you. It is best to harvest the fruit when it shows any orange color and let it mature in the house, out of reach of the beloved birds and not-so-beloved squirrels. It is not too late to plant pepper transplants or okra and southern peas by seed.

Last month I predicted that the Mexican olive would not bloom until fall, because they were defoliated by the freezes. I was wrong! They began blooming in April and are looking great all over the region. What a great plant for area landscapes.

Lawns are not in the best shape because of the lack of rain and resultant drought restrictions, but our lawns are tough and will recover quickly when the rains resume. Sprinkle irrigate every two or three weeks to keep the roots functioning. Mow on a regular basis to control weeds and keep everything neat.

If you decide to reduce the size of your flower garden because of the lack of rain, consider containers for high impact and reduced water demands. Check out the decorative containers at your favorite nursery. In the shade, plant begonias, caladiums, coleus and pentas in your new containers. Begonias are the most drought-tolerant of the shade plants. In full sun, consider zinnias, vinca, moss roses and purslane. Vinca, moss rose and purslane are all drought-tolerant.

Keep close watch on your newly planted trees and shrubs. Established plants can survive a long drought but trees and shrubs planted in the last two years probably have not produced an adequate root system to survive dry conditions. Hand water them deeply every two to three weeks to protect them from dry conditions.

Mealy cup sage and Turk’s cap are two of the native color plants blooming in May. They will continue to make a good show in June and through the summer.

Mealy cup sage, Salvia farinaceae, is drought-tolerant and pest-free. Deer do not eat Mealy cup sage, but butterflies and hummingbirds seek it out for nectar.

There are a number of versions of mealy cup sage, including some that are very large and some that are small. Victoria is a common selection. It is 18 inches tall, grows upright and makes a good garden border. Mealy cup sage can also be used as a specimen plant and in large drifts. Grow it in full sun.

Turk’s cap does very well in the shade. It freezes back to the roots most winters but comes back to 3 to 4 feet tall each summer. The foliage is a rich green that provides an attractive background for the quarter-size carmine-red blooms that appear throughout the plant. Hummingbirds seek the flowers for nectar, and fruit-eating birds quickly eat the cherry-size fruit. Use Turk’s cap for a tall ground cover under shade trees. Like mealy blue sage, Turk’s cap is a good xeriscape plant.