Gardening Calendar for June

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In the flower garden most of the cool weather annuals have finished their bloom period. The exceptions may be Silver Stream alyssum and dianthus. Replace the snapdragons, stocks, pansies, in the sun with zinnias, cosmos, vinca, purslane, and moss rose. In the shade use pentas, caladium, coleus, and wax leaf begonias. The new Whopper begonia is spectacular with its large leaves, large flowers and fast growth rate. Try it in a container or hanging basket. They are available with bronze or green foliage and red or rose flowers.

The Whopper begonia is a Texas Superstar selection, another selection to consider is the Laura Bush petunia. It has superior heat tolerance and will reseed each year. Plant it now and expect it to bloom this summer with a new flush of growth this fall.

Most of the wildflowers have dropped their seed so you should be able to mow now without sacrificing bloom next spring. If you want a summer blooming flower for a vacant lot or roadside obtain the yellow or gold cosmos seed, sunflower, Salvia coccinea and coneflower seed. Salvia coccinea has some shade tolerance.

Do your part for restoring the Monarch butterfly population by planting 5 milkweeds if you have the room. Use native species if they are available but the easiest plants to find are usually the tropical milkweed. The milkweed are excellent nectar plants and the only Genus of plants where Monarchs will lay their eggs and the caterpillars will feed. Tropical milkweed and native butterfly weed have the most attractive blooms of the selections. The butterflies will find them!

Apply your second dose of pre-emergent herbicide to the lawn if you have problems with sand burs. Amaze, Crabgrass Preventer or XL works well. It is also a good time to apply a soil insecticide to control grubs if they damaged your lawn last year. The young grubs are susceptible to the insecticide and the application prevents the damage that would show up later. Sign up for the SAWS irrigation recommendation at the website, saws.org. It uses weekly weather data to make recommendations for adequate growth and low water bills.

In the vegetable garden the tomatoes should be in full production mode. If the birds are getting more than their share of the fruit try harvesting early when the fruit first changes color from dark green to light green or light orange. The fruit will ripen the rest of the way quickly on the kitchen counter. Another effective option is to put bird netting over the plants.

With the heat the peppers should begin to set fruit. Since they respond better to the summer heat than tomatoes, you could add more pepper transplants to the garden. Most nurseries still have large pepper transplants. I find bell peppers difficult to grow here in San Antonio but banana peppers are easy to grow and provide large numbers of mild fruit for fresh-eating, salads, and recipes. There are also large choices of hot peppers. All seem to be easy to grow. Peppers prosper in large containers and make a decorative patio plant in full sun.

Keep the squash, cucumbers and beans harvested to extend the production season. Don’t forget to apply Sevin at the growing point each week if you want to fight off the squash vine borers. Eggplants, southern peas, and okra should begin producing this month.

June is a good month to consider the hot weather root- hardy perennials. The list includes esperanza, poinciana, duranta, vitex, firebush and thyrallis. Grow them all in full sun. All are drought tolerant.

Esperanza has yellow tubular flowers on Kelly green foliage that the deer do not usually eat. They grow to 7 feet tall when they freeze back but will double that size if it is a mild winter. Seek out the “Goldstar” selection, it is a blooming machine. Butterflies and hummingbirds are attracted to esperanza.

Poinciana is also called “Pride of Barbados”. It has an airy, layered growth pattern and produces “glow in the dark” orange-yellow blooms on a 7ft. plant. Like esperanza it is a good butterfly plant but the deer do eat poinciana.

Duranta has light purple or white blooms followed by yellow berries. It is sometimes called Brazilian sky flower. It will also grow to about 7ft. tall. The berries are not a favorite bird food but there are times when the plant will be completely covered with butterflies.

Vitex generally does not freeze back so it will produce a 25ft. tall tree unless it is cut back. Some gardeners cut it back every year to the ground so that its purple blooms are formed on a 6ft. shrub. Deer do not eat vitex. It is a favorite hummingbird nectar source.

Firebush has small red tubular blooms. The plant grows to 7 ft. most summers. In the fall when the migrating hummingbirds move into the area, firebush is a favorite food source. Put it in a container on the patio and it will be the center of hummingbird aerial dogfights. In a 10 gallon container, firebush is a disciplined grower that only produces a 3 ft. tall and 3ft. wide plant. Deer will eat firebush.

Thyrallis produces yellow blooms on its 7ft. branches. The blooms are tiny but they cover the upright stems and are quite showy. I grow thyrallis in plantings with esperanza. They complement each other in landscape thickets and both are deer-proof in my neighborhood.