



*Monthly Tips to Help You Care For and Maintain Your Landscape*

## **WILD CANARIES”**

Everyone knows that sugar water attracts hummingbirds in the summer and that Purple Martins nest in Martin houses in the spring, but few people in San Antonio know about attracting American Goldfinches or “wild canaries”.

These little birds are easy to identify. They are only about 5 inches long. In the winter, they are olive green on the back, yellowish beige on the belly and breast, with distinctive black wings with white markings. In the spring the males gradually lose their olive drab plumage and replace it with bright yellow color. This is one reason they are called “wild canaries”. They may be seen in all of the lower 48 states.

American Goldfinches are very easy to attract to your home. Usually all they require is thistle seed offered in a thistle feeder and some fresh, clean water. The beauty of feeding the goldfinches is that squirrels and other birds seldom consume the seed. Also, the seeds are so tiny there is little mess under the feeder.

Give the American Goldfinches a try, you will soon be enjoying your own flock of “wild canaries”.

Since April, May and June are the peak growing months for most of our plants, be sure to provide all your plants with the nutrients they need. Warm season turf, shrubs, trees, vines and groundcovers benefit from the application of fertilizer with at least half its nitrogen in a slow release form. Use a high nitrogen analysis on flowers and vegetables.



## **Roses:**

Just as the American Eagle is a symbol of strength and victory, the Rose is the symbol of love, friendship, beauty and peace. Hopefully your Roses are completely pruned by now, because new growth normally begins in late February. The new growth needs to be kept clean and healthy for bloom production in about mid-April. To keep new growth healthy, give a drenching spray, using a fungicide, insecticide and miticide. Mildew and blackspot are immediate dangers to Roses in early spring. Also, watch for aphids in early spring. You can give your Roses a "kick start" with a liquid 20-20-20, or similar, fertilizer. Feed your Roses about every two weeks throughout the first bloom season and then slack off on the feeding. A rich compost mulch will be a continuing source of nutrients for the Roses and also keep the soil moist and cool.



## **Tips for the beds, gardens and blooming plants:**

April is the peak growing month for most of our plantings. Be sure to provide the nutrients they need. Warm season turf, shrubs, trees, vines and groundcovers benefit from the application of fertilizer with at least half its nitrogen in a slow release form. Sprig or seed bare spots in your lawn.

April is also the time to check for insect infestation and to spray with insecticides and fungicides when needed. (Be sure to read directions carefully and use user friendly types).



### **Gardens:**

During this month, get your tomatoes, peppers and eggplant transplants in the ground. You can also plant green beans, squash, sweet corn, radishes, carrots, melons and okra in April.

Thin newly established vegetables as needed. Pinch "sucker" leaves from tomatoes and restart in potting soil for planting later in the season. Mulch around the plants to reduce the chance that soil will dry out. Add color to your garden: plant flowers!

### **Flowers:**

Prune spring flowering shrubs and perennials right after blooms die back. Cut or pinch just below seed pods to conserve stored food and nutrients in the stem for next season's buds. Reshape spring blooming shrubs and vines immediately after they finish flowering.

To keep tall plants, such as Fall Aster, Mums, Coleus and Copper plants compact, pinch out the growing tips. Bulb plantings should be fertilized.

Plant hanging baskets and patio containers into potting soil high in organic matter content. Containers must have drainage holes.

Re-pot overgrown houseplants into next larger pot sizes. Use quality lightweight potting soil.

### **"CALADIUMS"**

Versatility is the major characteristic of the Caladium. Its foliage, not its flowers, provide color from last frost to fall. It is a showy border, an edging, a container plant, a houseplant, even a "cut flower".

Caladiums are tropical plants which originated in the Amazon basin in Brazil. You might think that such a showy and fragile looking plant would be difficult to grow, but the opposite is actually true. They are forgiving of soil type demanding only that they not be in boggy conditions. They do best in partial shade. When planting Caladiums in containers, either indoors or out, be sure to provide good drainage.

Caladiums come in a wide range of colors; pinks, ranging in hue from delicate to splashy; deep to vibrant greens; vivid to muted reds; cool whites and rich creams.

There are two distinctive shapes to Caladium leaves. "Fancy Leaf" are the largest and most striking. The size and unique heart-shaped appearance of the foliage makes this variety the best pick for mass plantings, shrub borders, foundation edging and flower bed mixing. Window boxes, tubs, pots and even hanging baskets also offer ideal settings for these spectacular plants to show off their varied leaf patterns and color combinations. The smaller "Lance-leaved" Caladiums are just as colorful as their larger relatives. They are more compact, have ruffled edge foliage and are well adapted to their recommended use in containers of all kinds. Even rather small flower pots allow good growth all summer.

#### **Easy Inside Plant tips from a non-plant person.....**



- Do not water your plants each time you see them. You want the soil to be "moist" not wet.
- If you happen to water them too much place them near a window to dry out
- Remove them from the window within the day, you don't want to fry your plant
- If you "kill" plants let someone else adopt them
- Visit your adopted plants often.



## **HAVE A SAFE AND BLESSED EASTER!**

Have a Glorious Day and Enjoy the Outdoors,

Francisco Suarez-Pella, Owner  
Green Grass Inc.