



## Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article

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### Plant of the Month: Rose of Sharon

by Lydia Holley

Texas gardeners are usually happy to see August coming to an end. That is because August is traditionally a brutal month for southern gardens. The heat, the humidity, and most years, the lack of rain, all take a toll on the garden. Most plants will stop blooming in order to conserve their energy for survival. So, it is exciting to see an entire shrub filled with blooms during this month of the year.



*Hibiscus syriacus*, otherwise known as *Althea* or Rose of Sharon, was named the Henderson County Master Gardener Association's (HCMGA) Plant of the Month for August. This shrub can grow up to 10 feet tall or more, and is hardy from Zone 5 to Zone 11. That means, it can withstand our winter freezes, as well as our summer's heat. It often blooms in summer, including the month of August, and it is exciting as well as comforting to the gardener to have something so large blooming during one of the most dreaded gardening months.

Rose of Sharon prefers full sun, even in Texas, and grows in a natural vase shape. This tall shrub can be grown in several ways, in the back of a mixed shrub or perennial border, as an accent plant, as a hedge, or more unusually, as an espalier. An espaliered Rose of Sharon with a low, colorful ground cover at its feet would dress up a blank wall memorably.

You can find Rose of Sharon in a variety of bloom colors. Pink, red, white, and purple blooming shrubs are commonly sold. The blooms may be of a single or double form. You will also find that bees, butterflies and hummingbirds will be attracted to its colorful blooms.

Do not be concerned if your Rose of Sharon remains dormant late in spring. This shrub is notorious for leafing out later than expected. That one idiosyncrasy is easy to overlook if one remembers how beautifully it explodes in colorful blooms during the harshest month of the gardening year. You can see a Rose of Sharon at the HCMGA Dream Garden located in the East Texas Arboretum.

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