

## DROUGHT & WILDFIRES

As most of you know, we are now in a Stage 4 drought. That can make things challenging for gardeners. Challenging, not impossible.

There are several things you can do in your home landscape that will provide you with beauty and color, while being water wise at the same time.

Choose native and adapted plants recommended for our area. These will be tough, hardy, and used to living through our roller coaster weather. Another choice is EarthKind roses. They will bloom from spring until first frost. Once established, the water requirements are reduced to annual rainfall.

One of the most important steps you can take to reduce your watering needs is to use mulch. A three inch layer of hardwood mulch in your flower beds will help keep the soil moist longer, up to a week in between watering. You will need to replenish the mulch about every six months. As the mulch breaks down, it will enrich the soil underneath, which will in turn help keep your plants healthy. Don't forget to mulch your flower pots too. Containers dry out faster, so check them regularly.

Watering is the last part of the process. Use drip irrigation. It will deliver the water exactly where it needs to go without wasting, due to runoff, blowing wind, and evaporation. Water early in the morning when possible and you want to get at least one inch of water into the soil, once a week. In the extreme heat of late July and August, you may have to water twice a week.

In your vegetable garden the same advice applies. Planting varieties recommended for this area. Mulching your garden once the ground warms up, using straw, old leaves, grass clippings or compost. Water with drip irrigation. Combined with the mulch, using drip irrigation will help reduce and almost eliminate disease by not allowing water to splash back on the plants, spreading soil borne pathogens.

On the wildfire front, while things are greening up, the dead and dry plant materials are still out there, and if this drought continues, things won't stay green long. With that in mind, the Texas Forest Service is planning a one day training in Firewise Landscaping, to help homeowners identify problem areas and the steps to take to help reduce damage in a wildfire situation. The training will be Wednesday April 20<sup>th</sup>, at the Forum, located at 2120 Speedway. The class will run from 9-4 with an hour for lunch. There will be time for Q&A from 4-5. The cost is \$12.00 and will be collected at the door. Please call Nick Harrison, with the Texas Forest Service, 817-894-4761. They need to know how many will be coming to have enough supplies.

Hopefully there is rain in our near future, let's keep our fingers crossed, and remember, get out and garden.