

Bell County Master Gardeners
Tip of the Week
By Jann Dworsky
Artemesia--- Lace for your Landscape

A delightful plant I have discovered from my master gardening friends is artemesia. In one year, my first small plant became the size of the hood of a car!! The lacy-like gray leaves make a delightful mound and have a gentle camphor smell. I liked it so much I planted 7 more and they have all done well. These wonderful plants look best if planted beside or in a dark container, or in the foreground of a small dark stand of trees. Other plants with dark leaves, such as lantana, show a good contrast.

Artemesia Powis Castle is also called wormwood and is a perennial. It grows 24-36 inches tall and should be spaced 4-6 feet across. Many of mine are in partial shade, but they do well in full sun and dry areas also. Dave's Garden.com says that these beautiful plants have inconspicuous flowers that are sterile and do not mature into seeds. They do not like the acidic soils of East Texas, but prefer our alkaline Bell County soil. They will grow well in sandy or clay soils as well.

Herbaceous cuttings can be made by cutting a stem about 10 inches long by cutting all the leaves off the stem except a few tiny ones at the top. Next, take your fingernail and gently scrape the top layer of "skin" away from each node where the leaves were. Put this down in a well-drained pot and keep moist and in the shade for about a month and you will have a new artemesia. Digging and dividing the root ball also can propagate artemesia. This is the most energetic, but quickest method of having more artemesias. A large root ball could be divided into 2, 4, or 6 plants. Plant them in a new location and water for the first season or until they are well established.

If you are not that energetic, you can do what I have done. Gently pull an artemesia stem up until you can see under it, and notice where the curve naturally touches the ground. Leave the stem attached to the main plant. Pull the leaves off that stem and gently scrape the layer of "skin" away from the nodes. Dig a 1" depression in the ground and ease the stem into the small hole. Professionals have large bobby pin like devices to hold down the stem, but I usually just take a rock to maintain soil contact. In a month or two you will have an additional artemesia with roots that you can clip from the main plant and move to the location you desire.

Try this good little drought tolerant plant and you will have lots of "lace" in your garden.

Bell County master gardeners are now taking applications for the next class, which starts in January 2013. Applications can be downloaded from the website or picked up at the AgriLife Extension Office, 1605 North Main, Belton, Texas. 254-933-5305. The Fee is \$250 and covers cost of all materials and field trips.

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com

