

Bell County Master Gardeners  
Tip of the Week  
By Gary Slanga  
“Earthkind Roses, Part Two”

This is the second of a three part series on the concept of EarthKind™ landscaping and planting.

EarthKind™ means no fertilizer, no chemicals, minimal watering, and very little human intervention. In particular, we are discussing roses, which are the only plants that currently carry the EarthKind™ designation. Roses were selected because they are considered most difficult to grow.

Dr. Steve George, a Landscape Horticulture Specialist at Texas A&M, was involved in the testing of roses that were candidates for the EarthKind™ designation. Each rose tested had to survive and remain healthy and productive for up to three years with very little water, no fertilization, and no chemicals to protect it from pests and disease. In addition there was to be no pruning of the plants during the test period.

Roses that continued to do well and produce fragrant blooms with no additional attention for that period of time were designated EarthKind™. Some pest and disease damage did occur during the tests. The roses to be designated EarthKind™ meant they maintained enough vitality to remain healthy, to look presentable as a landscape plant, and to produce blooms in spite of the minor pest damage that plagues all roses.

Roses that met expectations were then given the Texas A&M trademark name EarthKind™, which is prominently displayed on their identifying tags. In the future, several types of landscape plants will be tested to see if they too can survive with little or no care. If you use landscape plants that are native to Central Texas, they will need very little care and water. Texas natives are the best candidates for the EarthKind™ designation. Our third article will cover planting procedures for your selected EarthKind™ roses to get you on your way to a beautiful and carefree rose garden.

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact [ask.bcmga@gmail.com](mailto:ask.bcmga@gmail.com)