

## Bell County Master Gardeners

### Tip of the Week

By Myra Crenshaw

#### GET READY FOR WILDFLOWERS

Do you have an area in the back of your yard that is not very attractive? Do you plant bluebonnets and wonder why you have little success in having them grow and bloom? Do you drive around in the spring and gaze in awe at the beautiful wildflowers of Texas? Hopefully, some of the following tips will help you to achieve a beautiful display of Texas's wildflowers in your own yard.

Contrary to popular opinion, wildflowers should be planted in the fall rather than the spring. According to John Thomas at Wildseed Farms in Fredericksburg, wildflowers need fall rains and a wet winter. Site location and weather patterns are a big factor in planting. If you plant the seeds September through December, many of the species will germinate and allow the seedling enough time to establish a healthy root system before going dormant in the winter.

Pick a location that receives at least eight hours of sunlight a day. Also select a site that drains well. Wildflowers do not like wet feet; that is why so often you see them on slopes. It is recommended to start with a mix of seeds so that you can determine which ones do the best in your area. Be sure to buy bluebonnet seeds that have been scarified. The seed has to be treated to remove inhibiting properties of the seed's coat, which prevents water intake, and the initiation of growth. Seeds that have been properly scarified will germinate in 10 days after planting in moist soil.

To prepare the seed bed, rake the surface of the soil to a depth of one inch. Then broadcast your seed as uniformly as possible, broadcasting half of your seed in one direction, then the remaining in a direction perpendicular to the initial sowing. Press the seed into the bed by walking or rolling over the newly planted area. Do not cover the seed.

The seeds require ample moisture to germinate, so the area should be kept moist for 4 to 6 weeks. Do not keep the soil too wet, just moist. After the seedlings are 1 to 2 inches in height, watering should be gradually reduced and applied only if the plants show signs of stress. Your wildflowers will return yearly after blooming if allowed to reseed. When the dead brown foliage offsets the floral color, the area can be mowed to a height of 4-6 inches.

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

The Master Gardener fall garden tour is Sat. Oct 20<sup>th</sup> from 9:00-4:00, 7 locations. For more information call [254-933-5305](tel:254-933-5305).

