

Bell County Master Gardeners
Tip of the Week
By Jann Dworsky
Moss Roses Like it HOT!

Moss rose, or portulaca, is a beautiful and delicate flower that looks like a very small rose. Don't let the looks fool you though because this little flower is tough-as-nails and loves living in full sunshine. These little plants come in fuscia, pink, orange, scarlet, yellow and white and have a mossy tender foliage. They accept the Bell County heat as if it were a welcome guest, and flourish. Even now, in September, portulaca plants are available in the local nurseries to refresh the tired and burned out places in your garden.

Once you have a few established plants that do well, they often come up voluntarily nearby. If they are in the "wrong" spot they will transplant easily when tiny. Late in the evening just take an old tablespoon, scoop a spoonful of dirt and roots, then transplant and water it well. This year about 10 plants came up voluntarily, and every morning they do a great job of unfurling their delightful blooms to let the bees come in. The bees fly peacefully from one flower to another and crawl around leisurely, having a nectar breakfast. If you wanted to study bees, this is the plant for you because it is low to the ground. You can sit down beside the plants with your camera and wait for a good angle to take a photograph. The bees won't even notice you.

Years ago I killed (not on purpose!) every portulaca that I planted. Our daughter Carla, then a teenager, bought some moss roses and grew them right on our front porch all summer. I admired her ability and I finally broke down and asked her what she was doing that I wasn't. She said it was the full sun and the large, low clay pot providing great drainage for the roots that was the secret. Moss roses don't like their roots to stay wet and her secret was the great drainage with the big, clay pot. She could soak them without rotting the roots. She has since graduated from college and married, but I still plant moss roses in that pot every year. She reminded me on her last visit that she had bought that pot with her own money and I just agreed with her and smiled.

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

