

Bell County Master Gardener
Tip of the Week
By Mary Lew Quesinberry
"October Color in the Native Garden"

October in Central Texas is a joy to behold. There is a wide selection of late summer and fall blooming plants, native and adapted that seem to be at their best in this mild time of year. Easy care, drought tolerant, and deer resistant plants that will provide many years of beauty in your garden are available and ready to plant.

Native and adapted plants require good drainage so add decomposed granite or expanded shale to the planting hole. Use these plants as specimens or in mass plantings. Mass planting these colorful, nectar rich plants will attract larger numbers of birds, bees, and butterflies to your garden. Damianita, Thyrallis, Bush Daisy, Copper Canyon Daisy, Skeletonleaf Goldeneye, Lindheimer Senna, Mexican Mint Marigold, Lantana, Hymemoxys, Calylophus, Bulbine, Flowering Senna and Zexmenia will shock your garden with their prolific, bright, yellow blooms.

Gulf Muhly, Purple Fountain Grass, Purple Salvia Greggii, Crape Myrtle, Black Dalea, Mexican Bush Sage, Gayfeather, and Fall Aster will add a contrasting color of purple. Add Woolly Butterfly Bush, Mexican Honeysuckle, Firebush, and Red Salvia Greggii to provide blooms in the red/orange range. Then insert some calmness with the white blooms of Blackfoot Daisy, Gaura, and the Sweet Autumn Clematis Vine. Blue perennials- Mealy Blue Sage, Salvia Indigo Spires, Bi-Color Sage Gregg's Blue Mist and Blue Mist Caryopteris will also add a touch of coolness.

Providing interest and the all-important texture are our wonderful native grasses. Fall is the season for the blonde seed heads of Mexican Wiregrass, the dazzling pink luminescent pink seed heads of Gulf Muhly and the spiky structure of Pine Muhly. Also beautiful at this time of year are roses. You will be happiest with Knockout Roses and the dependable antique roses like Belinda's Dream, Martha Gonzales, Mutabilis, and Ballerina. If you garden with deer, you will have to surround your rose with Mexican Oregano, Rosemary, or Lavender or other smelly perennials. This may confuse the deer so they will leave your roses alone. Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmqa@gmail.com

In the photo: A mass planting of Salvia Greggii will create a jewel box of color that is beautiful year round and especially so in the fall when many other plants are exhausted from the long, hot summer.

