

Bell County Master Gardener
Tip of the Week
By Mary Lew Quesinberry
“Deer Resistant Hedges”

Q. My family has moved to Moffat, Texas. We have a lot of deer here. My husband and I have put up a dirt berm, and would like to plant a nice privacy hedge that is deer resistant. We have seen some bamboo down in Morgan's Point area, thought we might like to try it here. We also thought about wax myrtle, but after that, we are stumped. Can you suggest anything?

A. A berm is a wise solution for the foundation of a privacy hedge. It will provide added height and it will allow you to easily enrich the soil as you add plants to it. There are many large shrubs/small trees that will solve your privacy desires that are deer resistant. My first choice would be Texas Sage (Cenizo). It has beautiful soft silvery-gray leaves. Texas Sage is deer resistant, heat and drought tolerant. It loves our limestone/clay soil. It blooms in advance of rain and is sometimes called the barometer plant. Eleagnus, Leatherleaf Viburnum, Yaupon Holly, Lorepetalum, Gray Bush Germander are all evergreen, tall candidates for a deer resistant privacy hedge.

Wright's Bee Brush, Texas Vitex, Desert Willow, Texas Kidneywood, Texas Possumhaw, and Crape Myrtle are small deciduous trees and each would make a nice mass planting. A privacy hedge can also be layered with tall plants to the rear and shorter ones in front. Read the plant label to determine the height of the plant before placing it in your screen.

Native grasses such as Deer Muhly, Pine Muhly, Gulf Muhly and Mexican Wire Grass grow to three feet in height and would be attractive additions in front of a layered screen. As a bonus, layered plantings attract birds by providing nesting and hiding places. Be careful when considering bamboo. It can become an invasive nuisance in the landscape.

A word of caution: When deer get hungry enough, plantings considered deer resistant will be eaten also.

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

In the photo: Texas Sage (*Leucophyllum frutescens*, Green Cloud, is a green leafed version of Texas Sage (Cenizo). Texas Sages are native to Texas and Mexico. They are deer resistant, heat and drought tolerant and love our Central Texas limestone/clay soil. They can be used as specimen plants or as mass plantings to provide privacy.

