

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENER
Tip of the Week
By Ursula Nanna
"Water-Wise Plants for a Sunny Garden"

Water-Wise, Smart-scaping, Xeriscaping (not Zero-scaping), is the description given to plants, when established in 1-2 years, that need little or no water above what Nature provides. Arid is not dusty front yards of agave or cactus or rocks. This is gardening with lush outdoor environments while saving 50 to 70 % in watering.

We are pouring purified drinking water on gardens and St. Augustine lawns without regard to wasting water. This adversely affects our wetlands and wild life populations, alters wild life preserves and habitats, and curtails breeding. To produce more water, new high cost stations are required which increases the cost of water thus motivating us into conservation. If all use less water, it will cost less for everyone.

Native and/or adapted plants and grasses will grow in the sun on the water Nature provides or with minimal watering. Water-Wise Gardeners are not shackled to plants that need water twice a day and which die without it. Bermuda, zoyza grass, or buffalo grass should replace St. Augustine lawns. In addition, here are some water-wise plants.

Deciduous Shrubs: flame acanthus, butterfly bush, American beauty berry, senna, Texas persimmon, white mist, althea, desert willow, mock orange, Crepe Myrtle, lantana, kidney-wood, Tecoma stans, bridal wreath, Turk's cap, rock rose.

Evergreen Shrubs: St. John's wort, damianita, gray-leaf cottoneaster, sotol, Salvia greggii, Jerusalem sage, Glossy abelia, Texas barberry, Agarito, red yucca, Burford and other holly, Yaupon Holly, Texas sage, compact Nandina, Oleander, Cherry laurel, upright Rosemary, Texas Mt. Laurel, and yuccas.

Ground Covers: Prostrate Rosemary, catmint, Asiatic jasmine, Liriope, Artemesia Powis Castle, gray and green santolina.

Water-wise Perennials: Texas aster, coneflower, Cannas, Hummingbird bush, Mexican oregano, coreopsis, plumbago, Autumn sage, skullcap, germander.

Vines: Coral vine, coral honeysuckle, Carolina jasmine, cross vine, Silver lace vine, Virginia creeper, and fig ivy vine.

If you are shopping now or planning your yard for the fall, use these suggestions to help all of us to be Water-wise!

The Bell County Master Gardeners Association is a Volunteer Education Outreach Organization in a collaboration with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Bell County.

To contact a Master Gardener simply e-mail ask.bcmga@gmail.com