

Bell County Master Gardener
Tip of the Week
By Mary Lew Quesinberry
“Winter Visions”

Yaupon Holly and Nandina Domestica are full of red berries awaiting the arrival of the Cedar Waxwing. These birds travel in large groups and will strip the trees of berries within a few days. The Possumhaw, so unpretentious most of the year, loses its leaves in winter to reveal red berries beloved by birds. What is lovelier than the sight of a male Cardinal in a Possumhaw Tree? Cotoneaster, Holly, Pyracantha and Indian Hawthorn all have colorful winterberries. Seedpods of Flowering Senna, Goldenball Leadtree, Redbud, Esperanza, and crossvine hang like exquisite ornaments as do the hips of rugosa roses. The exfoliating bark of the Texas Persimmon reveals a smooth white trunk while the trunk of the Crape Myrtle has shades of white to tan to red, depending on the variety. Berries, seedpods, bare branches, exfoliating bark, migrating birds, piles of leaves on the lawn- all are signs of winter.

The bare branches of our deciduous trees are living sculptures in our landscapes. Red Oak, Bradford Pear and the dwarf varieties of nandina still display their winter colors of burgundy to red and with all the browns and tans in the landscape at this time of year; these spots of color are welcome. Though we miss the bees, hummingbirds and butterflies in the winter landscape, we have many birds migrating through and some will winter here until spring. Please provide these garden visitors a pesticide free environment because many of these birds eat only insects. Consider adding a berry-producing tree to provide a food source for berry eating birds. Clean fresh water and bird feeders full of black oil sunflower seeds will keep your winter landscape full of life. Get out your cameras and capture the colors of winter present! Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com

In the photo: The red berries of the Yaupon Holly Tree shine through the frost. When spring arrives, the Cardinal, Mockingbird and Cedar Waxwing will have devoured its berries.

