



October 2013

Unique Plants

Submitted by **Bonnah Boyd, Somervell County Master Gardener**

Looking for an unusual plant to add to containers or in beds? The eyeball plant, a short sprawling annual with copper-tinted foliage and unique golden “eyeball shaped” flowers may be a choice.



Native to South American tropics, *Acmella oleracea* (also known as *Spilanthes oleracea*, and various common names as eyeball plant, toothache plant, peek-a-boo or paracress) is an herb used to add flavor to a bland diet. The foliage has a pleasant salty flavor that eventually leaves a numb feeling to the mouth. It may have received the common name of toothache plant because of its use as a local anesthetic for gums and teeth. Some sources

attribute that common name to the appearance of the flowers that resemble a sore tooth. The flowers are bi-colored red and gold, looking like a yellow olive stuffed with a bright red pimiento “eye”.

This plant is easily grown from seed. Although it can be sown directly outdoors, it is better to start plants indoors 6-8 weeks before the last frost, because it will not tolerate frost and requires warm soil to germinate. Seeds should germinate in a little over a week. The plant grows about 12”- 15” tall and spreads 24”- 30”. The flowers are produced on the ends of long stems. A little extra maintenance will improve the plants appearance. Pinch at about 3 weeks after transplanting, leaving 2 sets of true leaves intact. Pinching encourages better branching and a more uniformly shaped plant, but will delay flowering by about a week.

Plant in full sun or very light shade. The plants prefer rich soil and evenly moist, but not wet soil. Irrigate when dry and do not allow the plants to wilt. The plants bloom repeatedly from midsummer to early fall. Use it as a summer flowering container plant for sunny patios.

References: University of Wisconsin – Extension Master Gardener Program

Esperanza – Favorite Plants of Master Gardeners

Esperanza or Yellow Bells, *Tecoma stans*

Submitted by Donna Hagar, Somervell County Master Gardeners



Have you been in downtown Glen Rose lately? If so, you surely have seen the large yellow blooming shrub on the north east corner bed of the square by the Coca Cola building. Many folks have asked what this showy shrub is. The answer is an Esperanza or Yellow Bells, scientific name *Tecoma Stans*. This is a Texas Super Star, and is gaining popularity as an ornamental plant in Texas gardens. In the wild in Texas it can be found growing on rocky slopes near San Antonio and in the Trans-Pecos. This is a cold tender plant, hardy to zone 8b. In our area, if you plant it on the south side of a home or structure, protected it from the north winds, mulched HEAVILY in the winter, it will die back but should come back from the roots. It can also be used as a fast growing, large container plant which may be moved into warmer winter quarters. The striking, tubular 2 1/2-inch bright yellow flowers are highlighted by the attractive, shiny, green foliage and continue through the heat of the summer. The flowers have sweet pleasing fragrance and also provide nectar for bees. Plant with the purple fall aster for an amazing show of contrasting purple and yellow flowers for this time of year.

Plant Habit or Use: small shrub medium shrub

Exposure: sun

Flower Color: yellow

Blooming Period: spring, summer, fall

Fruit Characteristics: 4- to 6-inch-long capsule

Height: 3 to 6 feet

Width: 3 to 4 feet

Plant Character: deciduous,

Heat Tolerance: high

Water Requirements: low

Soil Requirements: neutral, alkaline

Gardening Tips for October

By Shirley Smith, Somervell County Master Gardener

Thank goodness the weather has begun to cool down a little and we can get back outside without the fear of heat stroke! So now is the time to look around your area and see what needs attention.

If you are going to be putting in a fall garden and you want to be certain you get what you think you are ordering, then be wary of catalogs that only give you the common name of a plant. Often, the common name can vary from region to region. Only the scientific, or Latin, name ensures you will get exactly the plant you are looking for.

Okay, while we are on the subject of correct wording, here is another tip: The word “native” refers to plants that grow in the same habitat in which they originated. “Exotic” plants are those growing in a different area where they originated. Plants can be native to a continent, state or region.

Buy green. Buy garden products that don't pollute. Try organic fertilizers and pesticides which won't harm the environment after they break down.

Plants can help improve the air inside your home. The foliage and roots filter such household pollutants as benzene and tobacco smoke.



Just in time for Halloween, here is a tip about pumpkins. The pumpkin is one of the most versatile members of the gourd, or cucurbit, family. It is not only used for pies and soups, but also has seeds that make tasty snacks when dried and roasted. And, of course, the proverbial jack-o-lantern will be seen all over during the month of October.

Add a little color to your garden by painting your flowerpots (terra cotta or plastic) bright colors and placing them strategically around your beds. You might even want to paint that old chair a bright color. Try it and see how you like it!

Want your clematis or other climbing vine to cover your light post, but there is nothing on the smooth surface of the post for the plant to cling to? To solve this problem, use a scrap of heavy-gauge wire to create an excellent support. First, attach the end of the wire to the screw or lateral extension at the top of the post. Then coil the wire down around the post and insert it into the soil.

To protect perennial vines during that cold spell that we always seem to get, untwist the wire and, with the vine attached, gently push it to the ground. Mulch over the vine for the cold period. Be sure to uncover it when the danger of frost has passed.

I use a lot of “staples” for my drip irrigation system and found that these can be quite expensive. I give my husband the task of cutting up old coat hangers to the length I need and bending them to fit either over my ½' main line or the ¼" line. They work wonderfully and I don't have to worry about losing them down in the mulch!

Keep 1-gallon milk jugs filled with water near thirsty plants that always seem to need watering but are a pain to reach with the hose. Keeping jugs handy not only reminds you to give them a drink, but it also makes watering a breeze.

Happy gardening!

Community Horticulture Education Series

Monday, October 14, 6:30 pm

Somervell County Citizens Center

209 SW Barnard, Glen Rose

Free and Open to the Public

Fun Container Gardening and What Works and What Doesn't



This month's CHES meeting will be presented by two of our very own Somervell County Master Gardeners. Come and hear our President, Shirley D. Smith, share with you what has worked around her gardens and what has been a flop! She will share a slide presentation showing some of her foul-ups as well as some of her successes. Then, the SCMGA Historian, Julie Conner, will talk to you on "Fun Container Gardening." Julie is quite talented when it comes to planting container gardens and decorating them with ordinarily "found" objects.

As usual, we will have door prizes. So, come join us in this very informative two-part program. You will NOT be disappointed.