

NATIVE PLANTS IN OUR LANDSCAPES by Kaye Corey, KFB

After the winter that we have just experienced and while we are considering replacing the plants that were lost in the freezes, maybe, now is the time to consider Texas Native Plants.

Using Texas native plants in our gardens does not mean all natives or nothing. Of course, we should incorporate our favorite hybrids with the natives for a beautiful and enriching landscape.

What are the benefits of planting native plants in our gardens?

- Water Conservation
- Eliminate the need for toxic chemicals
- Provide wildlife sanctuaries
- Low maintenance

Water Conservation is becoming a great concern in our state. With rainfall decreasing and our dependency on lakes, reservoirs and aquifers increasing with population growth, we can't waste water. Therefore, "xeriscape", meaning dry, gardening is being promoted. Native plants are not only drought tolerant, but heat and cold tolerant. Their roots grow deeply into the soil. They have survived and grown here for hundreds of years.

These plants are very low maintenance and will cut your maintenance hours per week to hours per year. The plants listed in this article grow well in the soil condition of our region, gumbo included. Give these plants a little care until they are established and fertilizer is usually not needed.

NO toxic chemicals aren't needed. A chemical free environment is healthy, saves you money and provides a safe habitat for birds, bees, butterflies, and wildlife in general. These plants have always been the food sources and shelter for Texas wildlife.

I do suggest you secure other references for growth characteristics and planting conditions for each species. Try the Native Plant Society of Texas website, www.NPSOT.org/hourston, or Native Texas Plants by Wasowski. Guide to Native Trees, Shrubs & Vines by the Houston Chapter of NPSOT. You will also find more selections than provided here. The following list was taken from a NPSOT source.

Once you have established your environmentally friendly Texas Native Landscape, you may want to investigate www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/texasparcs.cfm for your Backyard Habitats certification award.

TOP NATIVE PLANTS FOR THE HOUSTON/GALVESTON REGION

Big Trees: (40 to 60 ft) Swamp Chestnut Oak, Water Oak, Willow Oak, Wild Black Cherry, Black Gum, Loblolly Pine, Hackberry, Bald Cypress, Sweetgum, Red Mulberry

Small Trees: (20 to 40 ft) Mexican Plum, American Holly, Drummond Red Maple, Cherry Laurel, Redbud, Green Hawthorn, Carolina Buckthorn, Rusty Black-haw Viburnum, Farkleberry, American Fringe Tree.

Large Woody Shrubs: (small trees) Southern Wax Myrtle, Deciduous Holly, Youpon Holly, Rough Leaf Dogwood, American Elderberry, Flame Leaf Sumac, Parsley Hawthorn, black Willow, Coral Bean, Buttonbush

Small Shrubs: American Beautyberry, Dwarf Palmetto, Texas Lantana, Possum-haw Viburnum, Virginia Sweetspire, Red Chokecherry, Spider Lilly, Fragrant Sumac, Parsley Hawthorn, Yellow Sophora

Perennials for Sun: Purple Coneflower, Scarlet Sage, Maximilian Sunflower, Kansas Gayfeather, Eastern Gamagrass, Switch Grass, Indian Grass, Pink Evening Primrose, Guara, Giant Coneflower

Perennials for Shade: Turk's Cap, Strawberry Bush, Cardinal Flower, Blue Mistflower, Big Thicket Hibiscus, Gulf Coast Penstemon, Arkansas Yucca

Vines for the Sun: Coral Honeysuckle, Purple Passionflower, Carolina Jessamine, Carolina Snailseed, Globe Berry, Common Greenbriar, Mustang Grape, Prairie Rose, Trumpet Creeper, Curly Clematis

Vines for Shade: Cross Vine, Yellow Passionflower, Saw GreenBriar, Woolly Pipevine, Texas Dutchman's Pipe, Pitcher Clematis, Leather Clematis, Climbing Milkweed

Groundcovers for Sun: Frogfruit, Knotroot Bristlegrass, Gulf Coast Muhly, Prairie Verbena, Little Bluestem, Indian Blanket, Winecup, Fern Acacia, Purple Groundcherry, Scarlet Sage

Groundcovers for Shade: Pegeon Berry, Coralberry, Wood fern, Spiderwort, Maidenhair Fern, Horseherb, Partridgeberry, White Avens, Missouri Violet

Host Plants for Butterflies: Passionflowers (Gulf fritillary), Pipevines (swallowtails). Milkweeds (monarchs), Hackberry(question marks),