

Tarrant County Master Gardeners



TEXAS A & M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Volume 5 Issue 7

September 2021

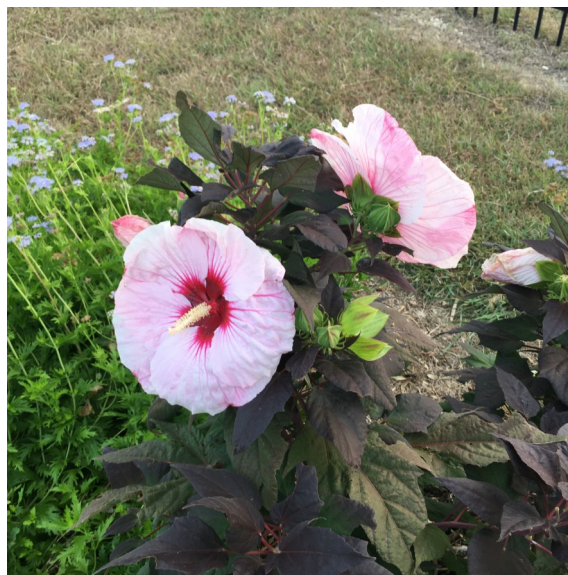
The Perennial Garden

By JoAnn Hahn

The perennial garden is a beautiful part of the TCMGA Community and Demonstration Garden. It was designed and developed in the fall of 2006. Aged horse manure was incorporated into the garden's heavy clay soil, and planting began in the Spring of 2007.

Our first group of plants was purchased locally and included native and native adapted perennials, which were chosen for their ability to flourish in a full-sun garden. These plants and all future plants needed to survive without the use of fertilizers and with minimal water usage. The plants also needed to have varying bloom time and varying textures to reveal interest and color from early spring thru late Fall.

The garden uses drip irrigation and is mulched throughout the year, helping to keep maintenance down to once a week. Two bridges were constructed over the garden to add aesthetics and accessibility to other areas of the garden. Currently there are over 100 varieties of perennials that show what can be grown and thrive in our clay soil without using fertilizers, have low water usage, and can survive our Texas weather.



Tarrant County Master Gardeners

The Perennial Garden photos continued



Earth-Kind Challenge

Be sure and take the Earth-Kind Challenge at <http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/> and see how knowledgeable you are! Each module taken counts for one hour of volunteer time. It might be fun to take when it's too hot outside. The web site keeps track of how many take it and from what county, that is about the only area we don't shine on as an Association. It would be cool if everyone in our group took the Earth-Kind Challenge one month, just think of the bragging rights we would have then!

Side-Oats Grama *Bouteloua curtipendula*

Lady Bird Wildflower Center

Not only is Side-oats Grama the state grass of Texas, but this medium-tall grass mixes well in plantings with spring wildflowers, because it stays short in the spring. This plant increases rapidly in nature when its site is damaged by drought or grazing.

Side-oats grama is a bunchy or sod-forming grass with 2-3 ft. stems in erect, wiry clumps. Purplish, oat-like spikelets uniformly line one side of the stem, bleaching to a tan color in the fall. Blooms June to November. The basal foliage often turns shades of purple and red in fall. This is a perennial warm season grass; clump forming. Two varieties are recognized: variety *curtipendula* is shorter and more rhizomatous and ranges from southern Canada to Argentina. Variety *caespitosa* spreads more by seed than by rhizomes, is more of a bunchgrass, and is restricted mostly to southwestern North America.

Often found growing with Little Blue Stem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) but doesn't compete well with very tall grasses. Provides bird food, nesting material, and cover, as well as graze for mammals. Attracts Birds, Butterflies Larval Host for Green Skipper, Sheep Skipper, Elissa Roadside Skipper and Dotted Skipper butterfly. Adult food for the Orange Skipperling and Bronze Roadside-Skipper. Deer resistant.

Easily propagated from seed sown unstratified in fall or stratified in spring. Sow 1/4" deep. Plants may be divided while dormant in spring or fall. Collect seed in summer.

It may be cut back in winter, but this is not necessary. The clump-forming, bunchgrass variety can be mowed or cut back only very sparingly; mowing more than twice a year (once before June and once after frost) may damage it. If you have to mow it during the summer growing season, mow no shorter than 8 inches and no more than once. The spreading, rhizomatous variety can be mowed more often and shorter with little or no damage.



Tarrant County Master Gardeners

September Garden Tips

By Marilyn Sallee – Sharecropper – September 2007

September brings the southern garden a sigh of relief. It heralds transition with the official arrival of autumn and a return of cooler and wetter weather. Despite the lingering heat, September is one of the better times of the year to be gardening, especially for planting landscape plants. Fall is a good time to test your soil, especially to determine the pH, which tells you the acidity of the soil. You will also learn the correct fertilizer blend to apply for the best growth during the fall growing season.

Examine your flower, ground cover and shrub beds for unwanted volunteers - seedlings of invasive shrubs and trees, green briar, sedges and other unwanted weeds. If they are already well established, soak the ground to make them easier to pull. A pair of pliers may also help get woody plants out of the ground.

Check the soil below trees, shrubs and pre- pared beds with your fingers or a moisture meter to make sure the root ball and soil are get- ting enough water. The soil should be moist but not soaking wet. Just because it is hot doesn't automatically mean the soil is dry 3 or 4 inches deep. Check it out that deep to be sure. Don't allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture. Hollies will frequently drop their fruit under drought conditions. Some vegetables such as cucumbers or eggplants also become bitter if under watered during peak growing times.

Keep container plants well-watered and fertilized for the best fall show. Soak the root ball by placing the pot in a container of water for 15-30 minutes until well moistened. Proper care will keep them lush and attractive through fall.

Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning until mid-winter. Pruning now may stimulate tender new growth prior to frost.

LAWNS

Lawns need special care this month. Especially after our heavy spring rains, the sudden change to August heat may have damaged roots. Keep lawns evenly moist with one inch of water once a week.

September is the time to apply lawn fertilizer. Fall fertilized lawns are healthier and better equipped to make it through the winter and resume growth next spring.

If you had weeds last spring, they would have been cool season weeds that germinated last fall. A pre-emergence herbicide (weed preventer) applied this month will help reduce the weeds next spring (unless they are perennials like dandelions). Avoid pre-emergent herbicide applications on newly planted or weakened grass or in dense shade. Carefully follow label rates of application, since applying more than is called for can damage your lawn.

The hot, dry weather encourages chinch bugs that make St. Augustine look drought stricken. Lawns that suffered dieback from drought, chinch bugs or disease can be safely sodded in September. It's too late to try to establish Bermuda or Centipede from seed, but ryegrass and tall fescue can be sown toward the end of the month.

September Garden Tips continued

FLOWERS

Remove weak, unproductive growth and old seed heads from crape myrtles and roses the first week of September to stimulate new growth and a final burst of fall color. Don't take off much, no more than a quarter of the growth. Make a light application of fertilizer and watch for black spot disease that can be a problem. Continue a disease spray schedule on roses as blackspot and mildew can be extremely damaging in September and October.

Sow spring wildflower seed now; these can be purchased or seeds you gathered yourself from dried seed heads earlier this year. Soils should be lightly cultivated prior to planting. Consider bluebonnet, Indian paintbrush, coneflower, fire-wheel, black-eyed Susan, evening primrose and other native flowers. For more reliable, uniform seed germination of our state flower, purchase acid-treated bluebonnet seed. This treatment pits the seed coat, allowing nearly 100% germination in one to two weeks.

Divide spring flowering perennials such as iris, daisy, gaillardia, rudbeckias, cannas, daylilies, violets, liri-ope ajuga and other perennials. Move to new areas or share with friends and neighbors. Create new perennial flowerbeds, and dig, divide, and replant those overcrowded perennials. Spread a liberal amount of organic matter evenly over the area and mix into the soil at least 6 to 8 inches deep. Space divisions at least 1 foot apart in all directions so root competition will not be a problem for several years.

Prepare the beds for spring-flowering bulbs as soon as possible. It's important to cultivate the soil and add generous amounts of organic matter to improve water drainage. Purchase spring blooming bulbs as soon as they become available in the garden centers, or mail order special varieties. Plant bulbs by loosening the soil and make a hole with a trowel or bulb planter. Don't mash the bulb into the soil or you may damage the basal plate (bottom of the bulb), causing it to rot. Bulbs will rot without proper drainage.

VEGETABLES

In early September, plant lettuce and mustard. Late in the month plant snap bush beans, Lima bush beans, beets, onion seed. Any time in September plant broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, cucumber, parsley, English peas, Southern peas, radish, spinach, turnips greens and turnip roots.



Tarrant County Master Gardeners

BACKYARD SANCTUARY

By Derald Freeman – Sharecropper September 2008

During spring and fall we all tend to spend more time enjoying the outdoors of our home. A lazy lunch on the patio on Sunday perhaps, or relaxing on the deck with a cool drink as the sun goes down. Maybe an impromptu picnic in the backyard or a meal on the BBQ grill.

If you happen to live in a country setting, your closest neighbors are probably deer and bunnies. But for most of us, suburban living means that our homes are in fairly close proximity to those of our human neighbors. You don't have to be a hermit to want a little privacy when relaxing in your backyard. But at the same time, you don't want to build a Berlin Wall and alienate the neighbors and everything around you. So, what can you do to create a private haven in your backyard?

You can create privacy with trees, shrubs and other plants. Of course, living plants are a lot more aesthetically pleasing than a stone wall or an expanse of bare fence. Additionally, tall hedges and appropriately sized trees are a friendlier barrier between you and your neighbors than a solid wall. Medium size trees provide shade and deaden sound. "Appropriately sized" is an important factor here. A relatively small space would not be a suitable location for oak or elm trees because they would eventually dominate your yard and block out all sun.

So what to plant? Every situation will have its own unique characteristics, but a good starting point would be to look at Crape Myrtles, Nelly R. Stevens, Flowering Bradford Pears, Wax Myrtles and trees with a maximum height of 20-25 feet. For shrubs consider Burford Holly and dwarf hollies, Pittosporum, Indian Hawthorns, boxwoods, and varieties of ornamental grass.

Now, you will notice that everything mentioned except for Crape Myrtle and Bradford Pear trees are evergreen. I love to see color all year because our backyard is used as a sanctuary all year. I want to see green and not dead looking plants in the winter even if I am just looking out the window.

Hummingbirds are particularly fond of red; good choices would be hollies, fuchsia, salvia and penstemon if you want to entice hummers. To create a successful butterfly garden, you must be willing to live with and encourage caterpillars. No caterpillars equal no butterflies, and both need food. To create a haven for butterflies, plant a variety of native flowers and shrubs that bloom throughout the year. Good choices include milkweed, aster, and, of course, butterfly bush. Butterflies love many weeds, too.

Think about what you want to see when you are sitting on the patio in your favorite chair and then sketch the design for plants, edging, mulched areas, and don't forget to write in the height you want for mature plants. Think about walking paths and a bench at the far end of a path. You want to be able to enjoy the view every time you walk out into the yard and never tire of it.

So far, I have not mentioned water features. I would love a waterfall or water fountain, but I know that a lot of work is involved in running water to the location, digging and installing a pool, pond, waterfall or other feature. This also involves an ongoing expense of water, treatment of water, filtering and upkeep. This, with trimming, pruning, and mowing is a little too much, but if it is in your plans, go for it!

We have a neighbor a few blocks over with a large flat back yard who keeps it simple for mowing and has lined the fence area with plants, interesting features, and

BACKYARD SANCTUARY

mulch. This could work for you if you don't mind the mowing.

Don't over plant with too many different plants. Use fewer varieties with good placement and avoid the hodgepodge look from planting everything different. If you are sufficiently stimulated, why not start tomorrow?



A note from the editor:

Our members would enjoy seeing photos of other Backyard Sanctuaries. Please send me pictures and comments of yours.

My email address is
lgrandclair@gmail.com

Thanks and I look forward to seeing your photos.

As always, thanks to Theresa Thomas for contributing content.

Lorie Grandclair-Diaz

Tarrant County Master Gardeners

Welcome to Our New Transfers!

Tarrant County Master Gardeners Association is pleased to welcome three transfers to our Association. Terry Anseman transferred from Lafayette, Louisiana, Connie Eggleston from Collin County, and Paul Westmore from Travis County. We'll feature them in our Newsletter over the next couple of months. Below is an introduction to Connie Eggleston.

Connie Eggleston

I credit my mother with my life long love of gardening. Growing up in the Midwest, we always had a garden plentiful enough to freeze and can enough vegetables to last until next harvest. We didn't fertilize, tilled, maybe a little composting, we just spread some seed, stuck plants in the ground and things miraculously grew. It seemed that simple. Not at all like the veggie battlegrounds of Texas.

I joined the Collin County Master Gardeners with the class of 2018. Until moving to Hurst in the latter part of 2020, I co-managed the vegetable research garden at Meyers Park and managed the park's ornamental grasses and shrubs research garden. I also volunteered at the perennial gardens. Most recently, my focus is on design and companion planting as I rework the beds surrounding my new home.

I'm excited to join the Tarrant group and look forward to meeting you all. Hopefully, COVID will let us resume group meetings soon. Until then, see you in the gardens.

