Choosing the right plant for your landscape

As spring has given way to summer, hopefully your landscapes have all flourished and your yards are the talk of your neighborhood. However, if this doesn't sound familiar then perhaps you aren't planting the right plants.

In this edition of tips and tricks I would like to talk to you about choosing the right plants for your central Texas landscape. Proper plant selection is among one of the most important aspects of becoming a successful gardener.

The first thing to know is that we are in zone 8 on the USDA plant hardiness zone map. The USDA plant hardiness zone map is the standard by which gardeners and growers can determine which plants are most likely to thrive at a location. The map is based on the average annual minimum winter temperature. The lower the number then the cooler the winter average and the higher the number then equates to much warmer winter averages. When purchasing plants make sure that they are for our zone.

Another thing to keep in mind is that our soil is very basic on the Ph scale. This is important because some plants prefer a slightly acidic soil in order to thrive. There is a reason why you don't see very many azaleas and hydrangeas planted in the ground here and that's because these are two plants that grow in more acidic soils. Understanding this will help you make appropriate plant choices for your landscape.

That brings us to the next point…if you don't see a lot of a particular plants in the landscapes around town and in your neighborhood, there is probably a good reason why. So, look around on your next walk and see which plants are thriving and think back while you're plant shopping. If you do see something that catches your eye but haven't seen it anywhere else in town, then just try one and see how it does before investing too much time or money into it.

Where you buy your plants is also important! If possible, try to use independent garden centers when purchasing plants rather than the big box stores. You are more likely to receive plants from Texas farms when using small independent retailers, so these plants have been getting used to the weather here and will be less likely to experience transplant shock. As a bonus you will have experienced nursery folks to ask question to and rely on their experience to help guide you.

The last thing to consider are the sun exposure requirements of the plants you are considering; this information should be listed on the plant tag along with many other helpful pieces of information such as hardiness zone…remember we are zone 8! Full sun is a time measurement and does not mean all day sun. Our sun is very intense here during the summer so most plants will welcome some afternoon shade. Keep this in mind when selecting plants for certain spots. I recommend using native plants in areas with all day direct sun, they have gotten used to this type of intense sun and heat.

Part shade loving plants need 2-4 hours of direct sun and should be exposed to low angle sun in the mornings or evenings. These types of plants will not tolerate their sun allotment if the sun is directly overhead, let's say 12-4…instead try placing these plants in areas where they will receive the sun they need in the morning or later in the evening. Shade loving plants will need 2 hours or less of direct sun and it must be low angle sun (early morning or late evening).

With these tips for plant selection, I hope you can become a master at picking out plants that you can be successful with in your home landscapes. I have included a list of a few of the plants we have had success within your community here at Texas Lawn and Garden. Thank you!

Jack Gardner – Owner, Texas Lawn and Garden
Texas Certified Landscape Professional

Plants for full sun

Mystic spires salvia – This is the purple blooming plant at the community center.
Salvia Greggii – Many different colors, cut back by half when too leggy.
Roses
Lantanas – many colors and forms.
Damianita – xeriscape compatible.
Four Nerve Daisy – xeriscape compatible, reseeds.
Frog Fruit – sun loving ground cover.
Mountain Pea – sun loving ground cover, prefers gravel over mulched beds.
Silver Ponyfoot – sun loving ground cover, no bloom.
Brazilian Rock Rose – Reseeds, constant bloomer.
Mexican Bush Shrub – blooms later in the year.
Moss Verbena – Xeriscape compatible.
Wooly Stemodia – Sun loving ground cover.

Plants for part shade

Bi-color Iris – Good structure plant.
Catmint walkers low – reliable bloomer.
Copper Canyon Daisy – Fall bloomer.
Fall obedient plant – attracts pollinators.
Mexican Honeysuckle – Hummingbird attractor.
Gregg's mist flower – Very good for monarch and other butterflies.
Penstemon (Brazos, rock or Hill country)
Pigeonberry – Source of food for native birds.
Heartleaf skullcap – low grower.
Texas Betony
Turks cap – Hummingbird attractor.

Plants for shade

Leopard plant – Large leaf
Sandankwa viburnum
Ferns
Flax Lily
Cast Iron Plant
Lily of the Nile
Caladium

 Mystic Spires Salvia  Leopard Plant

 Turks Cap