



Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article February 07, 2017

Blooms Spring Forth by Lydia Holley

Despite what Panxsutawney Phil has predicted, spring seems to have already sprung. Early blooming plants put a song in the heart of any gardener weary of winter.

Daffodils are starting to bloom with their bright, cheerful, yellow petals that stand out like yield signs, begging you to pause a moment and reflect on the turning of the seasons, the promise of blooms to come, and the wonder of life.

Tulip trees (*Magnolia x soulangeana*) are covered with large pink and purple blooms. This tree is a majestic symbol of spring's arrival, and it reigns as possibly the largest and the showiest specimen in early spring's procession of beauty.

The native Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) is just beginning to attract pollinators with its golden showers, while flowering quince (*Chaenomeles*) will not be ignored by either pollinators or humans with its bright, red, showy flowers. While Carolina jessamine is an evergreen, flowering quince usually blooms before it puts on leaves, so its blooms are especially noticeable.

If your garden has not yet started to show off its spring colors, take a trip to the Henderson County Master Gardeners' Dream Garden in the East Texas Arboretum. Flowering quince is the Plant of the Month, and its cheery, cherry-colored blooms will warm your soul. A late-winter bloomer, red flowering quince has been in bloom for several weeks, while the other plants listed above are just beginning to bloom.

Flowering quince is a native to China, and can be used as a specimen plant, as a hedge, or as a barrier due to the long thorns that grow on this shrub. Although the red flowering quince is the most popular, there are pink, peach and white colored cultivars, as well as a miniature red cultivar that only grows to around 3 feet tall.

Different cultivars, however, may not bloom as early as the regular red flowering quince. For instance, I have a 'Cameo', which blooms the most beautiful peach colored flowers. Unfortunately, it blooms later in the season, so it is not as thrilling for me to see its flowers as it is on the red flowering quince that comes into bloom earlier in the year, when colorful flowers are scarce and thus, highly valued.

Unless you are growing the miniature cultivar, give flowering quince plenty of room as most can grow to 10 feet tall and wide. After flowering, you may remove some of the oldest stems to encourage it to grow new ones.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com or visit www.henderson-co-tx-mg.org.

