



Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article

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Native Plant Series: Natives for Spring

by Lydia Holley

Native plants have a reputation for being easy to grow with minimum maintenance. It is always enjoyable to find plants that fit that description. This series of articles will explore some of the Texas native plants you can grow in your own garden, from the most common to the more unusual.



Spring holds so many delights for the gardener. There are large displays of blooms from climbing vines that can be seen from far away, while small blooms charm us and make us take a moment to look closely at these small treasures. If you are interested in introducing more native plants into your landscape, you can still enjoy both large and small displays in your garden.

Blue eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium*) is a native plant with sweet, small blooms. I have some blue eyed grass planted underneath a bench in my garden, where I can sit and look closely at its details. Although the leaves of blue eye grass are evergreen and have the sword shape of most grass, blue eyed grass is actually a member of the iris family. It is named for its blue blooms, which is always a wonderful color to introduce into the garden.

Violets (*Viola*) have gained a bad reputation due to the small, wild violets that often spread aggressively. However, there are a large number of different species of violas, and they are not all bad. Master Gardener Wayne Stafford donated some native violets to the Henderson County Master Gardener plant sale several years ago. This was not the small, aggressive violet. This violet has much larger leaves, larger blooms, and spreads slowly. I was lucky enough to acquire one, and it is a joy to see it blooming every year.

If you are wanting something that makes a large impact, look no farther than the native crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*). Its bright orange blooms in a tubular shape will attract hummingbirds to your garden. Crossvine has tendrils that dig into surfaces, allowing it to climb without having to be tied. To achieve a bright, stunning display each spring, plant it along a fence, up a tree, or on a wall. It will bloom again for you in autumn, and you will appreciate its evergreen display each winter.

Another evergreen vine that brings a cheerful display of yellow blooms is the native Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*). This vine is commonly seen blooming along fences. It is a wonderful pollen producer for native bees. However, if you are a beekeeper, you may want to be aware of research that indicates the pollen, in large quantities, may be toxic to the european honey bee.

Next week we will look at some native plants you may want to introduce into your summer garden.

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

