



Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article March 8, 2016

Native Plant Series: Summer and Autumn Natives

by Lydia Holley

Our summers can become so hot that many plants will give up and go dormant. Many Texas native plants, however, will keep blooming despite the heat. One of my favorite plants is the native rock rose (*Pavonia lasiopetala*). I can count on it to display bright, cheery, hot pink blooms even in the hottest summer temperatures. It is also drought tolerant. Its blooms look like miniature hibiscus blooms, which open with the morning light and close again each evening.



If you're looking for something large, giant coneflower (*Rudbeckia maxima*) has yellow flowers on tall stems up to six feet in height. It will fill out a 3 ft wide spot in your garden with large leaves that are generally each over 1 ft long and several inches wide. Its size will amaze visitors. Native bees love this plant, and the seed heads can be left after blooming for the birds.

A great companion to giant coneflower is the purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*). Named for its original purple color, coneflowers now come in numerous colors and different bloom forms. You can find coneflowers in purple, pink, white, red, orange, yellow, or even green in color. Drought tolerant, coneflowers are notorious for attracting butterflies.

Another native plant that now comes in several colors is *Gaura lindheimeri*. Native to Texas and Louisiana, gaura is now available in colors ranging from dark pink to white.

Salvia gregii, or autumn sage, is another easy care native plant that begins to bloom in late summer and continues through the fall. Breeding has also given us a choice of *salvia gregii*'s in numerous colors, including red, pink, white, apricot and even purple.

When autumn arrives, pink muhly grass will show off its cotton candy blooms that wave in the breeze. Fall asters (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*), with their pink or purple blooms, are a great companion to muhly grass, and look lovely in any fall garden. Blanket flowers (*Gaillardia*) bloom all summer and autumn, and attract bees with showy red and yellow blooms. Instead of adding just one or two to your garden, try planting a large display of blanket flowers. It will be stunning.

Next week we will look at more native plants you can add to your garden to attract bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.

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