



Henderson County Master Gardeners

Weekly News Article

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The People in Your Garden: Josiah Gregg

by Lydia Holley

If you are a gardener, you may know of plants named for Josiah Gregg. If you are a historian interested in the Southwest, you may have come across Gregg's writings. If you are a collector of antique cartography, you may be interested in Gregg's maps. Gregg is hard to categorize, having started as a bookkeeper, attended medical school, and eventually got caught up in the frenzy of the Gold Rush.



Pictured is Autumn sage (*Salvia greggii*).

Gregg was born in Tennessee, but he ended up loving the American Southwest. He first went to New Mexico for health reasons, and changed his career to wagonmaster, trader, and merchant. During that time, he traveled from as far east as Missouri and as far south as Mexico.

In 1844, Gregg wrote the book "*Commerce of the Prairies*" from his experiences. This book was very successful, with six editions being printed over 13 years, and translated into French and German. Gregg recorded such vivid details of the areas in which he traveled that his book became an important resource for historians. Over 150 years after first being published, Gregg's book continues to sell, and as late as 2010 "*Commerce of the Prairies*" was republished by Applewood Books. It is now available free online through Kansas Collection Books.

In 1848, Gregg joined a botanical expedition in the Southwest, and it is for this work that he is honored with the plants named for him. Numerous plants are named for Gregg, too many to list here. Many of these plants are native to Mexico or the Southwest and may not grow well in East Texas. The two most commonly grown in our area are Autumn sage (*Salvia greggii*) and Gregg's mistflower (*Conoclinium greggii*), both of which are native to West Texas. Like the man they are named for, they are colorful and undemanding. Both these plants, like Gregg himself, have a reputation for spreading to neighboring soil.

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