

Grow a Garden and Beat the Heat

By Tanis Roelofs

Tanis is working on transitioning to a drought tolerant landscape. She offered to share what she has learned.

If your garden is taking a beating during the long hot summers, drought resistant native plants may very well be your solution. Till in a couple of bags of compost. The amount depends upon the size of your garden. The compost allows water to drain more easily in our clay soil.

The flowers listed below are native to Texas, perennial and heat tolerant. The key to establishing new plants is to maintain moisture between the root mass of the new plant and the soil it is planted in until it is established. Water the plant in the pot as you're digging the hole. Water the hole and let it drain. After you plant at the level it was in the pot (never sink it or raise it too high), water it again. Keep it moist through the summer as its roots are getting established. Be sure to add four to six inches of mulch to retain moisture. Cedar is excellent mulch, it smells nice and its reddish color is aesthetically pleasing.

Lantana – It's very colorful red and yellow flowers bloom more profusely as the heat gets more intense. Hummingbirds and butterflies are attracted to Lantana. It grows best in full sun to partial shade.

Skullcap – A great groundcover, it creates a low growing mound with pink flowers and is a real heat beater. Skullcap blooms from May to November.

Super Blue Liriope – A fast growing, clump-forming perennial that features dark green foliage. From early to late autumn, spikes of bright lavender flowers appear. Drought tolerant, this evergreen spreads as a ground cover.

Verbena – Bright and colorful, verbena thrives in heat and sun. The attractive foliage will stay lush and healthy all summer. It also attracts butterflies and comes in a large variety of colors.

Tickseed 'Nana' – Attractive, bright yellow flowers cover mounds of dark green foliage from late spring to fall. It is ideal as a ground cover or at garden's edge.

Pink and white gaura – Numerous species of small insects, especially small bees, visit the flowers floating above the plant like dancing butterflies. It is very easy to grow, growing up to 3 feet tall. It is a native and deciduous plant.

Coral and raspberry salvia – Hummingbirds and butterflies are attracted to this semi-evergreen and shrub-like plant. It grows up to 3 feet tall and is native and deciduous.

Turk's cap – The red and white flowers are shaped like small turbans on this easy-to-grow plant. It grows up to 4 feet tall in either full sun or full shade. The flowers bloom from May to November on this native and deciduous plant.