

“Ask The Plant Groom(tm) by Dale Groom, The Plant Groom(tm)

QA1110

Dale,

I live in Tyler and would like to plant a Hummingbird garden. I have a 20x20 bed that has sprinklers and would like to know if there are any particular varieties of bright nectar producing plants that you would recommend. Thanks - J. P.

Cool! I love the Tyler area and host a live radio show weekly on News-Talk 600AM, KTBB, 9 - 10am. And, with a 1-800-477-5822 state wide toll free number I can help folks state wide even if they can't hear the show on their radios.

The answer to your question is appropriate state wide. These little garden guests all like blooms with relatively bright colors and long throats. In addition to the flowers a water source and shelter should be near by.

Here is a partial list of some plants that hummers prefer for you and anyone else in the process of creating a hummingbird garden planting.

Flame Ascanthus, (Anisacanthus wrightii), Hummingbird Plant(Anisacanthus insignis), Shrimp Plant(Beloperone guttata), Century Plant(Agave americana), Red Yucca(Hesperaloe parviflora), Cross Vine(Bignonia capreolata) and one of my favorites, Desert Willow(Chilopsis linearis) super plant, Cardinal Flower(Lobelia cardinalis), Coral Honeysuckle(Lonicera sempervirens) great native vine, Morning Glory(Ipomea coccinea, cristulata) and other species but may be invasive, Cypress Vine(Ipomoea quamoclit), I love this little dude in large containers, Spotted beebalm(Monarda punctata), 'Lady In Red Sage(Salvia coccinea), I have a large planting of this beauty and find it to also be very WaterWise in its' water requirements

Additional plants to consider include but are not limited to: Autumn Sage(Salvia greggii), this native Texan comes in several colors and may be maintained as a perennial by sever pruning one time annually or as a small shrub by allowing woody stems and trunks to develop and this puppy is very WaterWise. Nearly all members of the salvia/sage family work well in hummingbird garden plantings. One I will not plant or recommend are the many colors of Annual Salvia(Salvia splendens). I does poorly in Texas heat and requires more water than I wish to utilize in any garden planting. Tulip Tree(Liriodendron tulipifera), Turk's cap(Malvastrum arboreus), everyone should have a planting of this super easy to grow native. Drummond's Phlox(Phlox drummondii), Prairie Rose(Rosa serotina), Indian paintbrush(Castilleja indivisa), Texas Sage or Cenizo(Leucophyllum frutescens), a super shrub for full sun well drained location with colorful blooms and foliage, Harvards' Penstemon(Penstemon Harvard), Cup Leaf penstemon(Penstemon triflorus), Wright's Penstemon(Penstemon wrightii) and all species of Lantana.

Prior to planting your selections prepare your bed following the EARTH-KIND(tm) recommendations. If your soil is sandy loam blend 6 inches of plant derived finished compost into your soil two inches per pass with a rear tined tiller as deep as the tiller will dig. After 6 inches of the composted is blended into your bed's soil "crown" the entire bed. Raise its' center 6 - 9; and slope to the edges. Install your selections, water thoroughly, install a drip irrigation system and mulch the entire bed 3 - 4inches deep with shredded tree trimmings bark or other organic mulch. DO NOT utilize gravel, granite, ground tires or any other inorganic material as a mulch.

Annually add 1 - 2 inches or whatever is needed new organic mulch to maintain the 3 -4 inches depth. This combination will reduce potable water use by as much as 70% and no fertilizer of any type will be needed to grow a great looking and productive hummingbird garden planting.

Note: Folks with heavy clay soils should utilize 3 inches of expanded shale and 3 inches of finished plant derived compost to develop EARTH-KIND(tm) planting beds. Expanded shale is not needed in sandy soils. It is needed in clay soils.

Can I trim back my Oleander? Or can I transplant it? - I. H.

It depends on what you want to do with the plant. If you are in North Texas and this winter's freezes have browned all the foliage and stems perhaps cutting back severely may be the route to take. For plants with some leaf burn I would only remove the damaged foliage and leave the viable stems.

If individual stems are damaged it is best to prune back into viable tissue one stem at a time. And, this may be down to ground level.

It's your plant and sure you may move it but I suggest you answer ... why first. Transplanting will not help a dead plant.

Few varieties are winter hardy for most of Texas while many are on our Gulf Coast and Rio Grande Valley areas. In these locations oleander is utilized as a hedge in addition to single specimens. I think they bring gobs of super color to the landscape plus they are WaterWise and heat tolerant. However, in areas outside the coast and valley we have limited varieties that are winter hardy. If your plant in question is brown to the ground it may be ... gone. If your plant is terminal, ask for varieties that are winter hardy in your area and replant NOW.

Reader's Note: If you are not enjoying the pleasure of EARTH-KIND(tm) Roses in your home landscape let me strongly suggest selecting and installing one or more varieties in 2007. They are ... super!!

Dale Groom, Extension Horticulturist, Master Gardener Program Coordinator-Dallas County, Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A & M University System, Native Texan, Columnist, Author, Radio/TV Host is also known state wide as The Plant Groom(tm). Dale is also available at ktbb.com with Podcasts, Itunes casts and RSS Feeds. You may send your horticultural issues including lawns, gardens and landscapes to Dale at dalegroom@mycvc.net. The Master Gardeners live help Desk is available M - F, 8:30am - 4 pm at 214-904-3053.

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