**Weekly Express-News Article**

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**“More Summer Blooms”**

Last week we described sun loving hot weather bloomers such as esperanza, poinciana, duranta, firebush, and lantana. Here are a few more sun lovers plus two shade tolerant selections to consider for summer blooms.

Texas sage is also called “cenizo”. It is the silver leafed shrub with lavender blooms that has been blooming off and on this summer. I include it along with the steady summer bloomers because when a cenizo blooms it steals the show from the “steady bloomers” for the period it is in bloom. Besides, you can count its silver foliage as color as well, and it is visible all summer.

There is debate whether cenizo blooms prior to a rain or after a rain. In my experience, it will do either or both. The bloom trigger is probably related to humidity. One of the most spectacular cenizo bloom periods was in late May this year just before a forecast rain that never occurred!

Texas sage is pest free and very drought tolerant. The easiest way to kill it is to over water or plant it in a low wet spot. Its natural growth pattern is mostly upright but with weeping stems. Left as a specimen with plenty of space the cenizo will grow eight feet tall and nearly as wide. It does, however, perform well as a pruned hedge complete with showy blooms. Grow cenizo in full sun.

Turks Cap is available in two versions. The native Turks Cap grows to about three-and-a-half feet tall in typically poor San Antonio soils. It has nickel size scarlet colored blooms interspersed in its heart shaped foliage. The leaves are about three inches across and are an attractive light green. Most winters the Turks Cap in my landscape die back but in a mild winter they may just defoliate.

Turks Cap flowers are noticeable but the plants most desirable characteristics are that it is shade tolerant, it is not a favorite deer food, and it is a favorite hummingbird food source. The bed at the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center is always loaded with hummingbirds.

The non-native Turks Cap grows much larger than the native plant and has larger blooms. At the Schultz House Gardens on Hemisphere Park, it grew to eight feet tall and wide in a sheltered location between the two buildings.

Shrimp plant is another shade tolerant plant that is blooming now. It grows to about three feet tall on most sites. Its foliage is light green and the growth habit is compact and upright enough that it can be used for a formal line planting or in a circle around a tree.

The most common shrimp plant flower color is an orange-rust but there is also a yellow/white version that is very showy.

Shrimp plant use to be on every deer proof list but the hungry pests have learned to eat them during droughts in most neighborhoods, including mine. Hummingbirds use shrimp plant as a nectar source.

There is also a shrimp plant with a variegated leaf on the market.

Mexican honeysuckle grows to four feet tall and has small orange blooms that cover the upright growing shrub. It reminds me more of a firebush than a honeysuckle. Like firebush (and honeysuckle as well) it is a favorite hummingbird plant but unlike firebush the deer in my neighborhood do not eat it.

Grow Mexican honeysuckle as a specimen plant or as part of the shrub border. It grows best in full sun but seems to do well in partial shade.

Thryallis has small yellow flowers that cover its upright stems for most of the summer if the plant is grown in full sun. Like all of the other plants described in this article, it tolerates poor soils and hot, dry conditions.

Thryallis grows four or five feet tall in a typical season after dying back to the roots in the winter. Hummingbirds utilize its flowers for nectar but deer seem to pass up its stems and foliage.