**Summer Color**

***For distribution 4/15***

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The cool weather flowers decline quickly once temperatures go to 80 degrees during the day.

Snapdragons are especially sensitive to heat and contract rust disease. When you see the yellow spots on the top of the leaf and rust spores on the underside, pull the plants and dispose of them in the compost pile.

Zinnias are great choice to replace snapdragons. There are many selections that can be planted by seed.

My favorite transplant is Dreamland. It has large rounded flowers in yellow, pink, red, lavender and white. The plants grow to about 20 inches tall.

Other transplants include the tough Profusion zinnias available in yellow or pink and Lilliputs. Lilliputs are 12-14 inch tall plants with quarter size blooms.

Zinnias require a planting site in full sun. The large bloomed versions such as Dreamland make good cut flowers. Hummingbirds and butterflies are attracted to zinnias.

They also do well in containers.

Zinnias can tolerate extreme heat and have the look of drought tolerance but are not xeriscape plants. Watering twice a week is the usual requirement.

In some neighborhoods deer do not eat zinnias. It is worth a few plants to test the attitude of your neighborhood’s deer. Spray the test planting with Liquid Fence once per week for three weeks to allow the plants to become established before the deer check them out.

Cosmos are just as heat- and sun-loving as zinnias. They are also more drought tolerant and can be seeded like wildflowers into vacant lots. Once established they will reseed themselves all summer. The gold and yellow selections are especially tough but cosmos are also available in pink, white and lavender.

The best low growing heat-lovers for the sun in a San Antonio summer are moss rose and purslane. Both species creep along the ground where they produce red, yellow, white, pink, red, orange and even bicolor blooms. The newest varieties claim that they bloom for more hours in the day. The main complaint against moss rose and purslane is that they only bloom until late afternoon each day.

Moss rose and purslane are an attractive choice for hanging baskets and containers. The foliage has the look of a succulent (without any thorns) and the plants are drought tolerant. Butterflies are attracted to moss rose and purslane.

For summer color with shade, consider begonias, caladium and coleus.

Begonias are just as drought tolerant as moss rose and purslane. The semperfloren varieties offer small flowers in pink, red and white. Many selections have red-green foliage.

If begonias are planted early in the season (before mid-May), they can survive our summer in the sun but certainly prefer the shade.

Caladiums are bulbs. If you plant the bulbs themselves, wait until May so there is no chance of soggy soil. The easiest way to use caladiums is to buy plants with foliage already growing. Caladiums are grown for their white and reddish foliage. Many selections also are decorated with etchings of dark green or white on the foliage.

Coleus is another summer annual grown for foliage color. The foliage varies from deep maroon to very yellow-green with lots of variations in between.

Coleus is on some deer-proof lists. Again, as in the case of zinnias protect the planting with weekly sprays of Liquid Fence for three weeks.